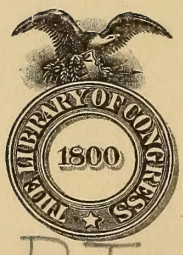

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THEOLOGY,

EXPLAINED AND DEFENDED,

IN

A SERIES OF SERMONS,

BY

TIMOTHY DWIGHT, S. T. D. LL. D.

LATE PRESIDENT OF YALE COLLEGE.

WITH

A MEMOIR OF THE LIFE OF THE AUTHOR.

TO WHICH IS PREFIXED,

AN ESSAY ON THE INSPIRATION OF THE SCRIPTURES,

BY DANIEL DEWAR, D. D.

PRINCIPAL OF MARISCHAL COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY ABERDEEN.

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INSPIRATION OF THE SCRIPTURES.

The authenticity and genuineness of the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, being incontrovertibly established by full and appropriate evidence, the next thing to be considered, is their claim to the character of an infallible revelation of the will of God. The importance of this claim, and the momentous consequences involved in it, demand the deepest seriousness and attention in investigating the grounds on which it rests.

Is it not possible, it may be asked, that Christ was a Divine Messenger, that the persons whom he chose to be his witnesses to the people, were endued with the power of working miracles; and, yet, that in recording the history of his life, and in publishing the doctrines of his religion, they were altogether left to the exercise of their natural powers? May not the miracles of Jesus and his apostles be received as facts established by historical evidence, and be considered as proofs that the person who performed such works, and who gave to his disciples powers similar to his own, was a teacher sent from God; while, at the same time, their writings are viewed as human compositions, distinguished from those of other men merely by the superior advantages which the authors had derived from the instruction and conversation of Christ? This is the system of the modern Socinians. They regard the Evangelists simply as historians, whose credit must be determined by the circumstances in which they wrote, and the nature of the facts which they relate.

This theory will be proved to be false not merely by its utter incompatibility with the purposes for which a divine revelation has been given, but by the direct and ample evidence which attests the inspiration and infallible authority of the Holy Scriptures.

But before we proceed to adduce this evidence, it is proper that we notice some theories which have been formed with the view of explaining the nature and extent of inspiration. These, though held by respectable divines, appear to me to be not only unwarrantable opinions, but justly exposing their authors to the charge of an attempt to unfold the *mode* in which the Holy Spirit operated on the faculties of the inspired penmen;—a labour unwise and unphilosophical, and which can never lead to any useful result.

It is certain, that many things which the sacred writers have recorded, were known to them without any direct revelation; and it has been therefore inferred, by the theorists to whom I allude, that, in relating such things, they only required to have been infallibly preserved from error. In many of the events narrated by Moses, for example, he himself was concerned: and the apostles were eye-witnesses of many of the facts to which they bear testimony. In the publication of such facts, it is supposed that such divine superintendence as was requisite to preserve them from mistake, was all that they needed. But, to me it appears, that, even in historical narration, the holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost; and that the selection and the recording of the facts of which they had personal knowledge, was as much by inspiration of God, as the communication of the deepest mysteries of the christian faith. It was not they, but the Spirit of God which was in them, who introduced the facts and reflections of which their narratives are composed; so that these narratives and the observations mingled with them, are not only important truth, but form a portion of that divine truth, which God in his wisdom and mercy has designed for the instruction, the correction, and sanctification of mankind. It constitutes a part of that Scripture which cannot be broken, which is an infallible rule, and possesses absolute authority.

Nevertheless, theorists have presumed to distinguish those portions of Scripture to which these observations relate from the rest of the oracles of God, by styling that supernatural influence under which they were written, the inspiration of superintendency. This distinction, it is unnecessary to say, is a mere gratuitous assumption, without any other support than the idle opinions of those who make it, and calculated to diminish the influence and lower the authority of divine revelation.

Further; it is alleged that there are many portions of Scripture which would require in the writers a still higher degree of enlargement of understanding, and elevation of conception. The grandeur both of the thought and of the style far surpassed the ordinary powers of the penmen; some of whom were from the lower ranks of life, and had not acquired the qualifications to excel in the art of composition. It could only be by supernatural aid that such men were enabled to give the sublime descriptions of the character and majesty of God, which they have recorded. Their representations of the high and lofty One, are not only elevated in accordance with the grandeur of the subject, but are consistent throughout, and commend themselves by their truth to every enlightened mind. They required similar elevation of conception in describing the character of Christ; a char-

acter which consists of perfect purity, and consummate wisdom, and which stands alone in the history of the human race. Their memories and understandings must have been invigorated by divine influence, in order to have been capable of selecting from the numerous events in the life of Jesus, and from the sayings, which, in the course of his ministry, he uttered, such as were peculiarly fitted to give a complete view of his character, and to furnish, in every future age, instruction and improvement to mankind. The degree of inspiration required in this case, has been termed by the theorists on this subject, the inspiration of elevation.

There is still another distinction made by the persons to whom I refer. There is much in the Bible that could not have been known to its writers by any natural means: nor even by the extraordinary and supernatural elevation of the faculties. It contains many truths that are not discoverable by human reason, and many predictions of events which Omniscience alone could have foreseen. The great scheme of redemption, so remote from the apprehensions of man,—forming as it does the most wonderful of all the results of the wisdom and knowledge of God, could not have been known to mortals but by immediate revelation. The persons, therefore, who were employed in publishing it to the world, and in committing it to writing, were merely the vehicles of conveying the counsel and the will of God; inasmuch as the thoughts which they expressed, and the language in which they were clothed, were directly communicated by God. Hence the apostle Paul says, that "by revelation the mystery was made known to him, which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it was then revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit:" and having remarked, that "eye had not seen, nor ear heard, neither had entered into the heart of man the things which God had prepared for them that love him," he adds, "but God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit." The degree of inspiration required in this case, has been called, in the language of theory, the inspiration of suggestion.

But these, and all such distinctions, in regard to the degree and the extent to which the several parts of the oracles of God have been inspired, are unwarranted and hurtful. They are *unwarranted*, for they are made not only without the authority of Divine Revelation, but in seeming opposition at least to its explicit affirmation, that "all Scripture," without distinction, "is given by inspiration of God." They are *unwarranted*, moreover, because they are made in a department which is exclusively God's, to which the human faculties cannot reach, and the attempt to intrude upon which savours of folly and impiety. They are also *hurtful*, for they have led good men to speak and write concerning some parts of Scripture in language derogatory to the authority of God's word, revolting to pious minds, and calculated to confirm the unbeliever in his infidelity. Every part of the sacred volume, whether doctrinal or preceptive, whether historical or prophetical, whether it relates to this life, or to the glories of immortality, has been given alike by inspiration of God, and is to be received throughout, without any exception or reservation, not as the word of man, but as the word of the living God.

It is not surprising that the persons who have so unwisely and presumptuously speculated on the subject of inspiration, should have maintained the opinion, that in the choice of words the sacred penmen were left to their own discretion, and that the language of Scripture is human, while the matter is divine. Discarding such puerile fancies, we affirm, in accordance with the dictates of enlightened reason and of revelation, that in all the expressions which they used, as well as in the sentiments which they recorded or uttered, they were under the supernatural teaching and infallible instruction and guidance of the Holy Spirit: They spoke not in language of their own selection, but in words which were given to them by God.

In proof of this important position, it may be remarked, that the inspired penmen were of themselves incapable of conveying those truths which were new even to them, unless He who had communicated them, had accompanied them with the words proper to express them. The language was as necessary as the thought, since without the medium of words the ideas could not have been conceived. "No man can write an intelligible discourse on a subject which he does not understand, unless he is furnished with the words as well as the sentiments:" and that the penmen of Scripture did not always understand what they wrote, might be safely inferred from the comparative darkness of the dispensation under which some of them lived, as is intimated by the apostle Peter, when he says, that "the prophets inquired and searched diligently what, and what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ, which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow."

Had the sacred writers been entirely left to their own discretion in the selection of words, would they have invariably succeeded in expressing the whole truth, and nothing but the truth? Every one is aware how much the alteration of a word may affect the meaning of a proposition; and that the full and fair communication of his sentiments depends upon the expressions which are employed. Uneducated men, as the apostles generally were, could not have failed, had they not been under supernatural direction, to have written inaccurately, to have obscured, overcharged, and misrepresented the truth. In order to accomplish the mighty work which was intrusted to them,—to furnish mankind with a volume which should have no mixture of error, which should be absolutely perfect, and form an infallible standard of the mind and will of God, it was necessary that the words in which it is expressed, should have been given to them by God. Does not the declaration of our Lord to his apostles warrant us to believe that this was the case:—"When they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak: For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you?" If they were thus assisted when brought before kings and governors for Christ's sake, may we not be assured that they enjoyed the same supernatural aid, when, for the benefit of all succeeding ages, they committed to writing the gospel of the grace of God? Is not this affirmed by the apostle when he says in refer-

ence to the doctrines of Christ,—" which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth?"

The words already quoted, and which apply to every part of the canon of divine revelation, namely,—all Scripture is given by inspiration of God—affirm the verbal inspiration of the "lively oracles." For, if all the writings contained in the sacred volume, are, as the apostle here asserts, inspired, the words written, which constitute the writings, must be inspired. He makes no distinction between what was well known to the penmen employed, and what could only be known to them by immediate revelation, between an incidental allusion and a fundamental truth: he makes the same claim for "all Scripture," that is, for *all the writings* included in the canon; and consequently declares respecting all the words of which these writings are composed, that they have been given by inspiration of God. "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." Their writings are on this ground entitled to the designation of "The word of God."

The objections to the plenary verbal inspiration of the Scriptures, are,

I. That there is an observable difference of style in the sacred writings corresponding to the different talents and genius of the persons who were employed in their composition. But a complete uniformity of style could not have taken place unless their mental faculties had been entirely suspended, so as to have rendered them the passive vehicles of the divine truths communicated. On the contrary, we have reason to believe, that the writers, while their powers were elevated and controlled by supernatural influence, were fully conscious of their operation; and that, therefore, the style of the same persons, and much more of different persons, would vary, according to the degree in which their native energy was exerted. This much we are warranted to infer from the information which is given us of the variety of the divine operations. There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God who worketh all in all. For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit. But all these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.

As the sacred writers were employed by God in communicating his will to mankind not as passive machines, but as intelligent agents, a diversity of style, according to their different habits of mind, was the natural result. "We grant," says Dr Owen, "that they used their own abilities of mind and understanding in the choice of words and expressions. So the preacher sought to find out acceptable words. But the Holy Spirit who is more intimate into the minds and skill of men than they are themselves, did so guide and operate in them, as that the words they fixed upon were as directly and certainly from him, as if they had been spoken to them by an audible voice."

II. Another objection alleged against the plenary inspiration of the Scriptures, is the verbal differences which are found in the statement of the same facts. In two or three of the evangelists, we often find the same discourse or sentence of our Lord, expressed by each in different words, though with precisely the same sense. If, then, we demand a verbal inspiration in any one of these cases, it is presumed that we destroy the possibility of it with respect to the corresponding passage. But the answer to this frivolous objection is obvious. The Holy Spirit has made use of that variety of expression in relating the same occurrences which would have existed on the supposition that the writers had been uninspired men. Why should He not have spoken the same thoughts by different persons in different words? Who would find fault with an individual on his oath, who, when required to relate the same fact several times, gave each successive account with considerable variety of phraseology? Would it not give force to the evidence furnished by the testimony of several individuals in regard to any matter of fact, that while they were substantially agreed, there was that variety in the expressions, as well as in the arrangement of the details, which is always to be found in the statements of witnesses between whom there is no collusion. We are so far from feeling any difficulty in believing that God, in communicating a revelation of his will, made use of this established law of human nature; —and that, in doing so, he dictated to the intelligent agents whom he employed, his own words, in such a way that they were theirs also,—we are so far from feeling any difficulty in admitting this, that the procedure appears to us to be worthy of the wisdom and goodness of God, and fitted to strengthen the evidence for divine revelation.

III. Admitting the plenary verbal inspiration of the original Scriptures, this claim cannot be put forth on behalf of translations. No one has ever been so foolish as to suppose that it can. The providence of God in the use of ordinary means, has secured the general accuracy of copies and translations of the original text. They are made by men of learning and integrity; and should any errors be incidentally committed by them, they may be corrected by recourse to the original.

There are some other frivolous objections advanced to the plenary verbal inspiration of the whole Scriptures, which I shall not particularly notice. One of these is, that according to this doctrine, the erroneous opinions of Job's friends, and of other speakers introduced in the Bible, must be held as inspired. We maintain, not that they were inspired, but that their insertion in the Scriptures was the dictate of inspiration.

It is further alleged, in regard to certain parts of Scripture, that they are uninspired, because the apostles "sometimes candidly admit, that they are not speaking by inspiration." In the seventh chapter of the first epistle to the Corinthians, when the writer says, in answer to a question about marriage, "I speak this by permission, and not of commandment," he is supposed by some to disclaim inspiration. But this supposition will appear to be utterly unwarranted, when it is observed that the meaning of the apostle's words, is, that marriage is allowed or permitted by the divine authority, and not enjoined as an indispensable duty. A similar mode of expression occurs, 2 Cor. viii. 8. At the tenth verse of the seventh chapter of his first epistle to this church, he says, "Unto the married I command, yet not I but the

Lord:" that is, he had no new commandment to give them in regard to the particular point on which he was now addressing them,—he had no new commandment from himself only, but one which the Lord Jesus Christ had himself personally delivered. But, "to the rest, speak I, not the Lord:" that is, there was no commandment given by the Lord in respect to this matter, to which he could refer them; and, therefore, he now, as his inspired servant, delivers to them the will of God concerning it. In the same way we understand the words, "Now, concerning virgins, I have no commandment of the Lord; yet I give my judgment as one that hath obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful." The words with which this chapter ends—"I think also that I have the Spirit of God,"—express strong assurance, and not doubt. When he says, 2 Cor. xi. 17—"That which I speak, I speak it not after the Lord, but as it were foolishly, in this confidence of boasting;" he refers not to the authority, but to the example of the Lord.

But there are other passages in the New Testament, which refer to matters so unimportant, as is alleged, that they cannot be the dictates of inspiration. These are, 1 Tim. v. 23, "Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake, and thine often infirmities," and 2 Tim. iv. 13, "The cloak that I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comest, bring with thee, and the books, but especially the parchments." Even the pious Doddridge derides the idea "that Paul would need an immediate revelation from heaven, and a miraculous dictate of the Holy Ghost, to remind Timothy of the cloak and writings which he left at Troas, or to advise him to mingle a little wine with his water.

But this flippant language, so unworthy of the pen from which it has proceeded, assumes the dangerous principle, that we are at liberty to select from a book, all of which, it is affirmed, has been given by inspiration of God, those passages which we may think relate to matters either too unimportant or too well known to the writers, to admit of their having been thus communicated. Such conduct would be culpable, even if we had been unable to ascertain the purposes for which they have been inserted in the sacred volume, but with regard to the passages in question, we can perceive some valuable ends, which their insertion in the Bible was intended to serve. To point these out, does not come within my present design: but I cannot forbear noticing with Grotius and Erasmus, the proof which is incidentally furnished by the apostle's message to Timothy, regarding the cloak which had been left at Troas, of his poverty—poverty which is casually brought to our view, and is corroborative of the truth of other passages in which it is affirmed,—and thus tending to establish by undesigned coincidences the accuracy of those accounts that have reached us, of the privations and sufferings of the early teachers of the Christian faith.

We now proceed to consider the evidence which proves the divine inspiration and infallible authority of the Holy Scriptures. I feel much difficulty in doing justice to this important subject within the limits to which I am restricted.

I begin by remarking, that the Bible alone has any pretensions to inspiration and divine authority. We enter on the consideration of this great question with minds perfectly unembarrassed with various and conflicting religions; for Mohammedanism and the different forms of Paganism are destitute of even such slender evidence of their divine authority as would entitle them, in this view, to a careful examination. The Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments have alone professed to have been introduced and established by the evidence of miracles: all the hopes and expectations of mankind, therefore, and all the presumptions arising from the character of God that such revelation would be given, centre in the sacred volume. This forms the only religion that has ever claimed to have been attended in its first promulgation with the evidence of miracles. Mohammed openly and frequently disclaimed such evidence. Though in different ages and countries, numberless enthusiasts have arisen, very few have dared to advance this plea, and wherever any have had the temerity to recur to it, they have found it to prove the bane and not the support of their cause. This circumstance affords a strong presumption in favour of the divine authority of the Bible;—such presumption in regard to its divine authority as gives it a claim to the serious attention of every man.

Many, accordingly, of the wisest and best of mankind in every age, have agreed to receive the Scriptures as a revelation from God:—persons who have been distinguished by the soundness and perspicacity of their understandings, the extent of their erudition, and the candour and seriousness of their minds;—who detected, with much labour and patient investigation, the impostures by which their cotemporaries were duped, but whose assiduous examination confirmed them in believing that the Scriptures are the word of God. "I cannot but suppose," says the pious and laborious commentator, Mr Scott, "that if a being of entire impartiality, of sound mind, and holy disposition, should be shown the two companies, of those who have received, and of those who have rejected the Scriptures; and should compare the seriousness, learning, patient investigation of truth, solid judgment, holy lives, and composure in a dying hour, without unmanly terror or indecent levity, of the one company, with the character and conduct of the other,—he would be induced to take up the Bible with profound veneration, and the strongest prepossession in its favour."

Besides, all who attentively read the sacred writings, must be struck with their perfect consistency and correspondence. The spirit and manner are not only the same throughout; but there is an entire accordancy in the subjects. While there is diversity of style, the same design is kept in view from the commencement to the close of the sacred canon; and though the topics noticed and illustrated are numerous, the spirit and sentiments are harmonious.

The harmony and intimate connexion subsisting between all the parts of Scripture, form a striking peculiarity of the sacred volume, and furnish presumptive evidence of its inspiration and divine authority. This is the more remarkable when we consider that the writers lived in dis-

unit places, and in the different ages included in the long period of sixteen hundred years;—that their education, talents, and occupations, were extremely various; and that the subjects on which they wrote, are momentous and profound. While the mode of expression, and the illustration vary according to the characteristic genius of each, the doctrines and precepts, the representations of God, his attributes, government, and providence;—of man, his fall, recovery, and final destination, are essentially the same. This exact agreement was not, and could not be, the effect of concert on the part of the writers. While each was executing the task which was assigned to himself, he was ignorant of the part allotted to others, and often of the ultimate end of even what he himself was required to perform.—The monarch and the plebeian, the orator and the poet, the historian and the legislator, the learned and the unlearned, had each his peculiar part to perform, and all of them tally with the most perfect agreement. The ordinary methods of imposture were here of necessity excluded. This entire harmony without previous concert and design,—this uniformity without contrivance, form a species of evidence in favour of the Scriptures, peculiar to themselves, and which, the more it is considered, cannot fail to leave the impression on the mind, that they have been given by inspiration of God.

This impression is deepened when we attend to the peculiar spirit that pervades the Scriptures,—a spirit the opposite of that of the world;—and also reflect on the infinitely momentous nature of the information which they contain. Consider the representations which they give of the character and moral government of God. These form a contrast to all human compositions; and especially to such compositions as do not derive whatever excellency they possess from the Bible. In them all, the weakness of man appears, prone to mistake and error. But when we read the Scriptures with attention, we feel that the Spirit which they breathe is heavenly; that we are in the presence of a Being who is infinitely perfect,—holy, just, and good,—the Creator, Preserver, and sovereign proprietor of all things. We are taught that it is in him, we, and all dependent beings live, and move, and have our existence; that he has formed, and continues to sustain every particle of matter no less than the numerous planetary worlds, which he guides through the immensity of space; that of him, and through him, and to him, are all things; and that glory is for ever due to him from all his works. We have thus presented to our view, a Being of unrivalled excellence, who is entitled to the supreme homage and obedience of every intelligent creature; and who commands all to make his will the rule, and his glory the ultimate end, of all their actions. It is to the Bible alone that mankind owe whatever just notions they have of God, of his being, attributes, government, and laws, and of the worship which is due to him. Hence, the least educated christian, who knows his Bible, knows more of God, of true religion, and of his various duties and obligations, than the best informed pagan that ever lived. The inhabitants of the heathen world were as to the natural powers of reason, not inferior to us who enjoy the light of Christianity; and the visible things of God, which are clearly seen from the creation of the world, were as open to their view as they are to ours: but their notions of the first principles of religion were obscure and erroneous; darkness covered the earth, and gross darkness the people.

Consider, further, the representations which the Scripture gives of the character of Christ. This character is perfectly peculiar and divine, and it was impossible for the human mind, unaided by supernatural influence, to have conceived it. The properties attributed to Christ, are of a very extraordinary nature,—those of the divine nature, and those which are characteristic of real though sinless humanity. He is presented to our view as perfectly pure, unerring in wisdom, boundless in power, unfailing in kindness and compassion, uniting in himself the dominion and majesty of the Deity, with all the virtues of unfallen man. The character which he sustained amid the various circumstances through which he passed, is exactly that of a person who is divine and yet human; who, though in the form of God, took upon him the nature of man, and the form of a servant.

This character, be it observed, was drawn by unlearned men, who were not possessed of extraordinary genius or talents, and who had no model in any individual that had ever lived in any country or nation. To account for their success, we must not only admit that they painted from the life, but that the divine Person whose life they described, endued them with supernatural power to guide them into all truth, and to bring all things to their remembrance. Inspiration alone could have furnished a perfect delineation of a perfect character.

The character of Christ, thus distinguished by its moral perfection and matchless wisdom, furnishes indubitable evidence of his having been, what he declared himself to be, the Son of God. The moral greatness which he displayed was never before exemplified to the view of mortals. The best of men have fallen far short of it. Why should this faultless and glorious character, remote alike from every thing that preceded, and from all that followed it, have been manifested in Christ alone? What was there in the circumstances in which he appeared in the world, and in the persons by whom he was surrounded, fitted to produce it? He was born, and he lived, in an obscure station, was related to those in the humbler ranks of life, conversant with persons of similar condition and attainments, excluded from the schools of learning, possessed of scanty means of intellectual improvement, and had before him no model save the patriarchs and the prophets. After he had passed his early years in the lowly condition in which he was born, he at once presented himself to the view of mankind "perfect in the spotless purity of his moral endowments, and in that divine wisdom which baffled his opponents, and rendered his cause triumphant against the utmost exertions of policy, power, and malignant cruelty."

Further: the means which the Scriptures exhibit to our view, as employed for reclaiming a sinful race from their wanderings, and for restoring them to holiness in order to qualify them for happiness, are such as give a just representation of the character of God, and make a powerful appeal to the feelings of the human heart. No one can duly reflect on them, without being forced to pronounce them to be in full consistency with all that

can be known, of the laws and principles of God's moral government, and the faculties and affections of the mind of man. Abstract principles stand forth embodied in living action, in a form which developes the divine character, which illustrates the extent of the divine law, and which is calculated to produce that conformity to the will of God, the necessity of which it demonstrates. We may say, without presumption, that if God had purposed to use means for regaining the love and confidence of his disobedient children, and of thus rescuing them from final perdition, means could not have been exhibited more likely to attain these great ends than those which the gospel brings into operation.

In extending pardoning and redeeming mercy to sinful man, it is clear, that to the accomplishment of so beneficent a design, it was necessary that a correct representation should be given of the character of God, and that the boon should be communicated in a way calculated to insure the grateful return, and the willing obedience, of those on whom it is bestowed. Unless it had been accompanied with a just representation of the character of God, its value would not be appreciated, and the nature of his government would be liable to be misunderstood: and unless it were given in a way fitted to affect the heart, and to attain the holiness of man, what would be its utility? Had it been the design of God (had such a design been possible) merely to confer forgiveness on the human race without any ulterior effect on the renovation and purification of their character, the announcement of pardon might have been reserved till the judgment of the great day. But forgiveness in such circumstances, even had its bestowment with such limitations been possible, would have been of little advantage. In order permanently to benefit man, it was necessary that such revelation should have been given of the character of God, as would deeply humble the sinner before him, awaken in his heart the desire for reconciliation, and produce in him hatred of sin, and love of holiness.

The Scriptures accordingly exhibit the mercy and the justice of God in a way which shows alike his abhorrence of sin, and his compassion to the sinner. He is presented to our view as the just God and the Saviour;—as sparing not his own Son, but giving him up to the death for us all. This divine Person voluntarily submitted to unexampled sufferings, underwent the deepest humiliation, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. While his cross, therefore, shows the inseparable connexion between sin and misery, it proclaims the greatest love, it unveils the divine perfections, and it allures a wayward and rebellious race to the love of that God, who has thus demonstrated that he has no pleasure in the death of the sinner.

Forgiveness of sin is thus connected with a sacrifice of infinite value,—a sacrifice which unfolds the boundless mercy, and the ineffable purity, and the inflexible justice of God, in a way which is admirably fitted to affect the heart. We see how a belief in its reality becomes the channel through which a principle of vitality and renovation is introduced into the soul. The glorious discovery which God has given of himself,—the divine remedy which he has provided,—can be of no avail to the purification of the heart of the man who discredits its existence. Its light and power are excluded by his unbelief; and a remedy, which, under the application of the Holy Spirit, works its cure in accordancy with the powers and principles inherent in human nature, is personally inefficacious, so long as all access to them is refused by the only appointed medium of operation.

Do we not see in this glorious scheme the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God? Can any one who examines it in reference to the character and government of God, and the admitted necessities of man—hesitate to believe that the sacred writers in making it known, spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit? To this divine source, they themselves ascribe the doctrine of salvation which they taught. "I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man, for I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ."

Reflect, further, on the tendency of the Bible. It directly inculcates, and it is admirably fitted to produce, the practice of whatsoever is just, or honest, or true, or lovely, or of good report. It authoritatively enjoins the duties which are peculiar to every relation, and to all the circumstances of life. It requires purity of heart, as well as righteousness of life; and it allows none, whatever be their rank or station, to deem themselves exempted from the obligations of morality. In place of conniving, as false religion has always done, at sinful indulgences, it affirms that all inordinate indulgence is offensive to God, and excludes from the kingdom of heaven. It commands us to give our hearts to God, to seek our chief enjoyment in his favour, to consecrate ourselves to his service, and to glorify him by our spirits and our bodies which are his.

Christianity *produces* this purity of character which it requires in its disciples. It begins its operation on the heart; and by its doctrines and precepts, it assumes the necessity of that great change which is included in regeneration. By the example which it exhibits for our imitation, and the high standard of holiness to which it teaches us to aspire, it reminds us of our need of the purifying influence which the gospel brings to our aid. But surely the book which possesses this holy tendency, and which has been so extensively efficacious in the changing human nature and human character, must have been dictated by the God of truth and holiness. It is the reflection of his own purity and perfection.

But we shall now direct our attention to the evidences for this great truth, different from those which have been mentioned.

I. Inspiration is necessary. While I admit that this forms no proof of its having been granted, I notice it here as a circumstance, which, when well weighed, will have some effect on every candid mind in coming to a conclusion on this subject. All the arguments which can be employed to show the necessity of divine revelation, may be urged to prove that such revelation when given, must be inspired. For, such a communication of the will of God must be infallible and authoritative—free from every mixture of error,—and contain much that can be known to man only by revelation from heaven.

The sacred writers accordingly deliver the doctrines which they teach, not as matters of opinion,—not as their own thoughts, which we may receive or reject;—but as the oracles of God which demand our assent. Thus saith the Lord, is the ground which they assign for claiming the submission and obedience of mankind to their communications.

II. It is asserted in Scripture, that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God. This testimony is decisive of the question. For, if the genuineness and authenticity of the books of Scripture be admitted; that is, if all the things which are there related really happened as they are there recorded, no one can doubt that the writers were commissioned of God, and that their declarations regarding their own inspiration and the inspiration of one another, are to be received as the oracles of God. If the miracles recorded in the Bible be received as matters of fact, incontrovertibly established, its testimony regarding its own inspiration is just as authoritative and final, as its testimony respecting the ground of justification before God, or the immortality of the soul.

The reception of the doctrines and institutions of the Mosaic economy, as founded in miracles, by the Israelites who were eye-witnesses, was an acknowledgment that Moses was divinely commissioned. The books in which these mighty works are circumstantially recorded, give an account of supernatural events accomplished at the command of Moses in the presence of Pharaoh and of the Hebrews, before they were released from captivity; of their miraculous transit through the Red Sea to the wilderness; of the miracles which attended the giving of the law; of those which were wrought for their sustenance and preservation during forty years in the wilderness; of the visible symbols of the presence of God which accompanied them all that period; of the miraculous providence which put them in possession of the land of Canaan, and which protected them in the observance of the institutions peculiar to that dispensation, nearly a thousand years.—It is not more certain that the Pentateuch was written by Moses, than it is clear that the miracles recorded in that history, were wrought by that legislator with the view of proving his divine commission, and that all his writings were given by inspiration of God.

It is not only to the books of Moses, but to all those which were received by the Jews on the same divine authority, and which, therefore, were included in the canon of Scripture, that this character applies. The books of the New Testament were received by christians on similar evidence, as a revelation from God. These writings, while they asserted the inspiration of the Scriptures of the Old Testament, claimed this also for themselves; and on grounds which cannot be questioned, this claim was admitted, and the New Testament Scriptures were received by the church as the word of God.—Let us briefly review the evidences for the inspiration of this portion of the sacred volume: for if the writers of this were inspired, the inspiration of the writers of the Old Testament Scriptures must also be admitted.

I. The inspiration of the apostles is implied in the commission which they received from Christ, and it was absolutely necessary for its fulfilment. When Jesus had completed his personal ministry, and had fully proved that he is the Son of God, by the mighty and miraculous works which he performed, he commanded his chosen servants to go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

In fulfilling this commission, it was required that they should be faithful historians of the life, ministry, and sufferings of their Divine Master; and become the infallible guides and authoritative instructors of mankind by adding to, and completing, the revelation of the will of God. But in order to write a history of what they had seen and heard,—to furnish mankind with such a full and unerring narrative of the discourses of Christ, and of the leading events of his life, as would exhibit to every future age a *perfect* representation of his character and of his religion, it was necessary that they should have been under the supernatural power and direction of God. On any principle it seems impossible to admit, that the numerous discourses recorded in the gospels, connected with the places and events which are there alluded to, composed, as they generally are, of questions, answers, and objections, specified with extraordinary particularity and minuteness, could have been written by the Evangelists, by any mere natural force of memory. For the earliest of the gospels was written several years after the death of Christ; and the latest of them was composed at least thirty years after that event.

Consider the nature of the task, which, as historians and teachers of religion, they had to perform. Their condition was not that of the disciples of a philosopher, concerned for the reputation of their Master, and who, in order to perpetuate and extend his fame, published an account of his character and philosophical creed. Such disciples might consider themselves at liberty to feign many things concerning the subject of their memoir, because it was of little consequence to the world, whether the instruction conveyed to them proceeded from one philosopher or another. How different were the circumstances and the responsibility of the apostles! The Person whose character they were to portray, and whose discourses they were to record, was the Son of God, the Saviour of the world, and the knowledge of whose work of redeeming love and power is essential to salvation. The love of truth, and tried integrity, were not sufficient to qualify them for the *perfect* accomplishment of this arduous duty: it was necessary that they should have been under supernatural influence, to have enabled them to communicate, without deficiency or redundancy, without mistake or error, all the sayings of Jesus—to give such an account of his actions and sufferings as the divine wisdom required, should form a part of an infallible revelation from God. We may be assured, therefore, that He who gave them their commission, and who possessed all power in heaven and in earth, would furnish them with that extraordinary and miraculous aid which was requisite for its fulfilment.

Besides their character of sacred historians, the apostles acted as the authoritative instructors of mankind, by adding to, and completing, the volume of divine revelation. To this high office the Saviour had appointed them, when he said unto them, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when He the Spirit of truth is come, He will guide you into all truth: and He will show you things to come." The meaning of this language, is, that the completion of the christian scheme in the revelation of divine truth, was reserved for the ministry of the apostles. To them the task was assigned of giving to the world the full and comprehensive development of the plan of redemption, —such a luminous view of the whole, as would show the connexion and the harmony of the dispensations of religion, and the different parts of divine revelation in Christ, who is their sum and their centre,—the way, the truth, and the life. They were to act in Christ's stead, as God's ambassadors to man. "As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whosesoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosesoever sins ye retain, they are retained." This was a trust of the most awful magnitude, which they were utterly unable to execute by any mere human wisdom and strength. They were required not to enter upon it till they were endued with miraculous power: "He commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me."

The apostles were thus appointed to an office which they could not have discharged, unless they had been under the inspiration of God. They were to act as the infallible teachers of the human race; and on the full and faithful fulfilment of their commission, the salvation of millions of immortal beings was to depend. They who believed their statements were to be saved, and they who believed them not, were to be condemned. If, therefore, we admit the divine mission of Jesus, we must also admit, unless we impeach the wisdom of God, and charge the Redeemer with folly, that the doctrines which the apostles published and wrote in his name, are pure, unmixed, infallible truth. But, this we cannot admit, without at the same time believing, that they spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost; that what they uttered in the name of Jesus, they delivered under the inspiration of God.

II. This was expressly promised by our Lord. When he discoursed to them concerning the difficulties, trials, and labours, which should attend the fulfilment of their mission, he said, "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever: even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him. But ye know him, for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. The Comforter which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit, when he the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth; for he shall not speak of himself, but whatsoever he shall hear that shall he speak; and he will show you things to come."

In this promise, it is expressly declared, that the Holy Spirit would descend on the apostles after the ascension of Christ; that he would guide them into all the truth, which they could not then bear; that he would show them things to come, or endue them with the gift of prophecy, and that he would fully bring to their remembrance all that Christ had taught them. In this promise, are contained all the things that are included in the plenary inspiration of the apostles. It is foretold, that they should be favoured with the perpetual inhabitation of the Spirit, to preserve them from error, and to lead them into all truth, in the discharge of their official duty as ambassadors of Christ. If this promise was fulfilled, then the apostles wrote and preached the gospels under the plenary inspiration of the Holy Ghost: and on the supposition that Christ is a true prophet, and the Son of God, it is impossible that it should have remained unfulfilled. Agreeably to the command of their Lord, they waited at Jerusalem till, on the tenth day after his ascension, the Holy Spirit descended upon them, who qualified them for their office by accomplishing in them the various things that were included in the promise, and by enabling them to speak in foreign tongues, and to work miracles. The great seal of heaven having been thus appended to their commission, they were constituted the infallible instructors of the world, were divinely authorized to furnish the rule for the faith and the practice of mankind, to expound the Scripture which had been previously written, and to complete and close the canon of God's revelation of his counsel and will to the human race. The doctrines and commandments which they were to deliver or to record, were thus placed on a footing, as to their truth and divine authority, with that which had been spoken by Christ himself: "He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me; and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me."

It is true, one of the persons employed in writing a large portion of the New Testament, was not called to be an apostle till after the day of Pentecost, and, therefore, was not favoured with the abundant effusion of the Spirit which took place on that occasion. But this task was amply supplied to him. As he journeyed to Damascus, with authority and power from the chief priests, to bring the christians who were there bound to Jerusalem, "he saw at mid-day a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about him, and them who journeyed with him. And he heard a voice saying, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the Gentiles to whom now I send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God." In this extraordinary manner, was Paul called to the apostleship. He himself assures us that he was taught the gospel by an immediate revelation from heaven; that his designation to his office, and his qualifications for its exercise, were

alike of God. "Paul an apostle, not of men, neither by men, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father who raised him from the dead. I neither received the gospel of man, neither was I taught it, but by revelation of Jesus Christ." His profound and comprehensive views of divine truth, show how fully the Spirit of revelation rested upon him. While his fellow apostles teach the same truths, he takes a wider range, by expatiating on the divinity of our Lord, the reality and efficiency of his priesthood, the excellency of his mediatorial office, the doctrine of gratuitous justification by the righteousness of Christ, without the deeds of the law; the connexion between the old and the new dispensations; the glory of the Redeemer as exalted to the right hand of the heavenly Majesty, far above all dominions, and principalities and powers. With the exception of the apostle John, he gives the fullest representation of the last judgment, the splendour of the Judge's appearance, the solemnities which shall accompany the irreversible sentence which shall fix the condition of mankind, and the consequences which shall follow, both in regard to the righteous and the wicked.

III. The apostles affirmed, concerning themselves, that they published and wrote the gospels under the inspiration of God. Their having recorded the declaration of their Master, in which he promised that they should be furnished with this inspiration, is a virtual attestation of its having taken place. They also testify that the Holy Ghost descended on them in accordance with the promise of their Lord; that when they were assembled together on the day of Pentecost, they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. They claimed the character of inspired messengers of Heaven, who were commissioned to show unto men the way of salvation; and they demanded from all men, implicit subjection of the understanding and the heart to the doctrines and commandments which they delivered, because they were the oracles of God. The appellation by which they designated themselves the apostles of Christ, shows how fully they laid claim to speak by the authority and under the infallible guidance of the Spirit of Jesus. "God hath revealed," say they, "the dispensation of the gospel unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea the deep things of God. Now we have received not the Spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things which are freely given to us of God; which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth. If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you, are the commandments of the Lord. For this cause, thank we God without ceasing, because when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of man, but, as it is in truth, the word of God. Peter places the commandments which were delivered by the apostles in the same rank with the words of the holy prophets: and classes the writings of Paul with the other Scriptures. John claims inspiration both in regard to himself and the other apostles: "We are of God: he that knoweth God, heareth us; he that is not of God, heareth not us." Paul commands that his epistles should be read in the churches, where those books only which the Jews believed to be inspired were read: and he says that believers are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets;—a conjunction which intimates that the former was inspired as well as the latter.

It is proved by these, and other passages, that the apostles really believed, and intended that their readers should believe, that they wrote and spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. To deny their inspiration, therefore, is to charge them with daring imposture, inconsistent with their whole character, and with the miraculous gifts which they unquestionably possessed.

IV. The validity of their claim to inspiration is proved by the miracles which they wrought, and the prophecies which they delivered.

Miracles are the attestation of God of the reality of any fact, or the truth of any doctrine which they are designed to confirm. On the supposition of a divine revelation, is not this mode of attesting its truth both suitable and essential? If, while there was nothing in the doctrines taught absurd, impious, or immoral, the teacher appealed to God for the truth of his pretensions to divine inspiration, by raising in our presence a person to life who had been dead,—we should have the most satisfactory evidence for regarding such messenger as sent from God. Would not the only objection to the truth of his declarations arising from the extraordinary nature of his claims, be removed by the performance of the miracle? When so much preternatural power was visibly communicated to him, no one could reasonably question his having received an equal portion of preternatural knowledge. A palpable deviation from the known laws of nature in one instance, is a sensible proof that such a deviation is possible in another, it is the witness of God to the truth of man.

A miracle cannot be wrought but by the power of God employed immediately by himself, or mediately through the instrumentality of others. If it be highly probable, considering the necessities of mankind, and the goodness of God, that a divine revelation would be given, it is not less probable that the persons through whose agency such a revelation is communicated, should have the power of working miracles in confirmation of its truth. But it appears to be altogether inconsistent with the goodness of God to suffer a miracle to be wrought to establish a falsehood, "since it would leave his creatures in perpetual uncertainty, and an uncertainty that would be most painful to the virtuous, who have always wished most for a revelation. We have, therefore, a moral certainty that the evidence furnished by miracles is the seal of God himself to the truth of the facts and doctrines which it is designed to certify. It was the language of common sense which Nicodemus uttered, when he said to our Lord, "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God, for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him."

Accordingly Christ and his apostles appealed to the miraculous works which they wrought as unquestionable evidence of their divine mission, and of the truth and divine authority of their doctrine. "The works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me."

Commissioned to speak in the name, and by the authority of God, they affirmed that the doctrines which they taught should be received and believed as his oracles; as truths, which He through their agency was pleased to reveal; and all of which, therefore, had the sacred character and the sanction of a divine revelation. "My doctrine is not mine," said Jesus, "but his that sent me. I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath instructed me, I speak these things."—When, therefore, it is considered that the writers of the New Testament who laid claim to plenary inspiration, proved the truth of their declarations by the miraculous works which they performed in attestation of them, there can remain no doubt with any reasonable mind, that the portion of the sacred volume which was written by them, was given by inspiration of God.

But miracles of power are not the only external and extraordinary evidences of this unquestionable fact. To disclose events which are distant and future is a miraculous interposition of omniscience, and is as much above the agency of mortals as the performance of works which are characteristic of omnipotence. It furnishes an argument the most convincing and irrefragable for the inspiration and divine authority of the Holy Scriptures. It is so admirably adapted to the nature of man, and to the circumstances of the human race, that the lapse of ages serves only to strengthen the evidence rendered for the support of the divine authority of the Bible by the fulfilment of prophecy.

That the prophecies which are contained in the Scriptures were written, some of them long before the occurrence of the events which they describe, and to which they relate, we have the most perfect certainty. Those in the Old Testament were proclaimed to a nation separated from the world to be the depositaries of divine knowledge, by a succession, not of obscure, but of accredited individuals, during upwards of a thousand years; they were not delivered for the purpose of gratifying the passions, or of promoting the worldly views, of any class of persons; and they were publicly incorporated with the records of a kingdom. While they served the important purpose of continually reminding the Jewish people of the extraordinary character of the economy under which they lived, and of confirming their faith in the divine authority of the Mosaic Scriptures and institutions, they directed their views to the coming of the promised Deliverer, who was to introduce a more perfect dispensation. The circumstances which rendered it necessary to separate the Jews from every other people, unite in showing the necessity of having confined the mission of the prophets to the Hebrew nation. What would have been the consequences, had the case been otherwise,—had they been dispersed indiscriminately over the heathen world? would not their predictions in all human probability, have become subservient to the worst superstitions, and would not their ultimate design have been completely frustrated? "They would have been mixed and confounded with all the absurdities of the heathen oracles, and must soon have become incapable of answering the purposes of a divine revelation."

In proof of the fact, that the prophecies contained in the Old Testament, and which relate to the characters and events under the christian dispensation, were delivered and recorded long before the existence of the persons and circumstances which they describe, it may be mentioned, that the Old Testament Scriptures were translated into Greek, about two hundred years before the christian era; and were in consequence in circulation over many parts of the Roman empire in the days of our Lord. Even had the Jews been inclined, as they certainly were not, to have conspired to alter the Scriptures, they could not, from the rival sects into which their nation was divided, have succeeded in the attempt. It is morally certain, that persons who differed so widely in their opinions as the Pharisees and Sadducees, and who were so jealous of each other's influence and reputation, would exercise a mutual and salutary control in reference to their guardianship of the Scriptures.

In like manner, the prophecies contained in the New Testament were recorded long before the occurrence of the events to which they relate: and their fulfilment affords indubitable proof that the writers were acting by divine authority, and that the Scriptures of which they were the penmen, were, as they declared, given by inspiration of God. They could not have uttered a falsehood in the name of the God of truth, whose power miraculously attested the divine origin of their doctrines: they could not have set forth a claim which was without foundation: they could not have represented themselves as inspired, unless they really were so. The seal of Heaven visibly affixed to their commission proves that all their declarations were true;—that they were under the constant guidance of the Holy Spirit when they preached the gospel, and under his infallible direction when they committed it to writing. Of the reality of all this, "God bore them witness, both with signs and wonders, and divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost."

V. The claim of the apostles to plenary inspiration was fully admitted by the christians of their own day, and of the age which followed. The books of the New Testament were received by them as the oracles of God, as well as those of the Old. They were received by them, not with a careless acquiescence in their divine authority, and not with the coldness of mere speculative assent: but from a sense of duty, and with a firm faith, founded upon the most abundant evidence. Men who exposed themselves to the loss of all that was dear to them on earth, by embracing the religion of Jesus, would carefully examine the grounds on which they received as inspired the books in which its doctrines and precepts were authoritatively made known. The universal reception of these books on the ground of divine authority as the Word of God, proves, that those who lived in the apostolic age beheld the miracles which were wrought by the writers, and that they had the fullest conviction and the most absolute certainty that they spoke and wrote under the plenary inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

They have, accordingly, left their testimony to this important fact. All the christian writers of the first three centuries, whose works have reached us, speak of the apostles as having been filled with the Holy Spirit, and of their writings as the Word,—the Oracles of God. They regard their plenary inspiration as an incontrovertible fact.

Though Mark and Luke were not apostles, they received like the apostles, the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit, and the parts of the New Testament of which they were the penmen, were admitted by the first churches, "under the immediate guidance and superintendence of the apostles," into the canon of Scripture. They were thus placed on an equal footing with the other Scriptures, which were received by them as the rule of faith and practice, read in their public assemblies, and as forming a part of that "Word of God which cannot be broken," and by which we shall be judged at the last day.

The inspiration and divine authority of the New Testament having been thus established, the inspiration and divine authority of the Old Testament follow of course; since the writers of the former invariably acknowledged the divine origin of the latter, and affirmed, that christianity is only the accomplishment of its prophecies, and the substance and development of its typical institutions. It is of the books of the Old Testament in particular it is declared, that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God: and it is to them our Lord alludes, when he says, "Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me." The Jews were never charged either by our Lord or his apostles with having introduced into the sacred canon any merely human compositions: on the contrary, they refer to them as possessed of infallible and absolute authority, and speak of them as the Oracles of God—the Word of God—the Holy Scriptures which are able to make men wise unto salvation.

All the books of the Old Testament were included in three classes by the Jews, namely, the prophets, and the Holy writings: to this division our Lord alludes, while he gives the sanction of his authority to the inspiration of all these Scriptures: "These are the words which I spake unto you while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning me." In these words there is an explicit acknowledgment of the inspiration of each of the books of the Old Testament; from many of which there are quotations in the gospels and epistles, introduced by the title, the Scripture. There cannot be a stronger recognition of the divine authority of the Jewish Scriptures than that which is contained in the words of our Lord, when he says, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot, or one tittle, shall not pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." The same sanction is given to the writings of Moses and the prophets, in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, in which our Lord represents Abraham, as saying to the rich man concerning his brethren, "They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.—If they believe not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead."—On another occasion, our Lord said to the Jews, "Had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me, for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?"

Our Lord, while he opposed oral traditions, and did not once quote the apocryphal writings, some of which were then extant, referred only to the books which had been received by the Jews, under the direction of the prophets, as the Word of God; and he thus by his repeated attestations, established the plenary inspiration of the Old Testament Scriptures. Besides his frequent allusions to the books of Moses, and of the prophets, and his quotations from them, he refers to the books of Samuel, of the Kings, and the Chronicles, as the Word of God; and he thus authenticated, as parts of inspired Scripture, these historical narratives. To the book of Psalms, he often referred, and characterised the whole as "the Scripture which cannot be broken." Why can it not be broken, but because it is the word of Him who changeth not, and whose word, therefore, cannot be altered or disannulled? He mentions the writings of Isaiah, Hosea, Jonah, Micah, and Malachi; and he gives his attestation to all the prophets, by declaring that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the prophets, as well as in the law of Moses, and in the Psalms, concerning Him. "Indeed, all those passages in which Christ speaks of his sufferings, death, and resurrection, with the various circumstances connected with them, as what must be, with reference to the types and prophecies, prove, as far as men regard his testimony, that no one tittle of those sacred books could pass away, till the whole had received its full accomplishment: for which no other satisfactory reason can possibly be given, except this, that the whole is a divine and infallible revelation from God: 'For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.'"

To all those who are convinced of the inspiration and divine authority of the New Testament, this testimony to the inspiration and divine authority of the Old, is decisive. It was no more possible for the writers of the New to have erred in giving this testimony, than to have been mistaken themselves in communicating the doctrines and duties of the christian religion: and their declarations in the one case as well as in the other, are to be considered as the dictates of the Holy Spirit. They affirm, that, not only a part, but the whole of the canonical books, as received by the Jews, were given by inspiration of God; that whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning; that we, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope.

But the inspiration and divine authority of the books of the Old Testament may be satisfactorily proved independently of the testimony of our Lord and his apostles. If we admit the genuineness and authenticity of the books of Moses, points which are established beyond the possibility of a doubt, it must also be admitted that he laid claim to a commission from God, to be a Deliverer, a Legislator, and a Prophet to Israel. But the fulfilment of this divine commission implied and required supernatural influence and inspiration. He could not have forced the reluctant consent of Pharaoh to the departure of Israel, nor have guided that people through the wilderness, unless he had been the immediate instrument of God, and invested with miraculous power. He could

not have communicated the doctrines which his writings contain, and the commandments which they enjoin, without the inspiration of Heaven. It is unnecessary to say, that the numerous prophecies which he delivered, and which have been fulfilled, and are fulfilling at the present day, furnish the strongest evidence of his having spoken as he was moved by the Holy Ghost. These fully establish his claim to the prophetical character; and in union with the numerous miracles which he performed, afford the highest assurance that the whole of what he delivered in the name of God, was written under the superintendence, and by the suggestion of the Holy Spirit. Having been supernaturally enabled to attest his divine commission by miracles of power and of knowledge, what stronger proof could have been given that he was under infallible guidance in revealing the will of God; and that the words written by him were not his but God's, and are, therefore, possessed of absolute authority?

Moses laid claim to inspiration. He affirmed, that the doctrines and commandments which he delivered, were immediately from God, and the direct communication of his mind and will. The words which he uttered are said to be the words which the Lord commanded Moses to deliver to the children of Israel: and he asserted his divine commission and inspiration in the following terms: "Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you. Behold I have taught you statutes and judgments even as the Lord my God hath commanded me.—The Lord commanded me to teach you statutes and judgments, that ye might do them. —The Lord will rejoice over thee for good, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God to keep his commandments and statutes which are written in this book of the law." In these declarations, there is a claim to inspiration in its fullest extent. If we admit the integrity and veracity of Moses,—and these are placed beyond a doubt by his whole character, by the exercise of the miraculous gifts which he unquestionably possessed, and by the doctrines and precepts which he taught,—we must believe that he was the inspired Messenger of Heaven, empowered to reveal, without mistake or error, the will of God.

This claim was fully admitted when it was made, and it has been admitted ever since by the whole body of the Jewish nation. They, in consequence, received as of divine authority the five books which Moses wrote; notwithstanding the burdensome rites which they prescribed, and the purity, both in regard to worship and to practice, to religion and morality, which they enjoined. Some of the duties which Moses commanded, implied and required the miraculous interposition of Providence to enable the Jewish people to persevere in their observance; and consequently exhibited a standing and unequivocal proof that their great legislator and prophet spoke by the immediate and infallible inspiration of God. All the males were commanded to repair thrice every year to Jerusalem, and thus to leave the preservation of their country from the incursions of its enemies, to the extraordinary providence of God. They were also commanded to let their lands lie fallow once in every seven years, and two years together at the Jubilee. Yet, Israel received the books as the Oracles of God which contained these and other extraordinary injunctions; and their unhesitating reception of them in this character may surely be regarded as a proof that such works had been performed by Moses in their presence, as fully assured them that in all which he did, he was under the supernatural and infallible direction of God. The numerous miracles which he wrought left them no room to doubt in regard to the character which he sustained, as a divine Messenger; and they felt themselves bound to receive from the Ambassador of Heaven, as equally true and authoritative, every thing which he delivered in the name of God, whether law, history, doctrine, or prediction.

I have only farther to remark with regard to the inspiration of the books of Moses, that this is fully established by the testimony of a long continued series of prophets, who affirmed the divine origin of that dispensation of which Moses was the founder, and in connexion with which they exercised the prophetical office. We have, therefore, the testimony of numerous and divinely accredited witnesses to the fact, that Moses acted by a commission from God. I call them divinely accredited witnesses, not only on account of the miracles which they wrought in attestation of their office and mission, but because of the fulfilment of the prophecies which they delivered. Their acknowledgment of the divine authority of the Mosaic writings, and of the Mosaic economy, is to be viewed as as much the dictate of the Holy Ghost, as any other truth which they uttered.

The inspiration of the books of Moses being established, that of the other historical, devotional, and prophetical writings of the Old Testament, follows as a necessary consequence. These books were composed by men who possessed the prophetical Spirit. The divine authority of many of them was confirmed by the fulfilment of the prophecies contained in them. The writers declared, that the word which they spoke and wrote, was the word of God; and they, therefore, announced it to the people by telling them, "Thus saith the Lord God."

These writings were also received by the Jewish nation as the Oracles of God: they were thus received by a people "who having already in their possession genuine inspired books, were the better able to judge of others which advanced a claim to inspiration; and who, we have reason to think, far from being credulous with respect to such a claim, or disposed precipitately to recognise it, proceeded with deliberation and care, in examining all pretensions of this nature, and rejected them when not supported by satisfactory evidence. They had been forewarned that false prophets should arise, and deliver their own fancies in the name of the Lord; and while they were thus put upon their guard, they were furnished with rules to assist them in distinguishing a true from a pretended revelation. We have a proof that the ancient Jews exercised a spirit of discrimination in this matter, in their conduct, with respect to the apocryphal books: for although they were written by men of their own nation, and assumed the names of the most eminent personages,—Solomon, Daniel, Ezra, and Baruch, yet they rejected them as human compositions.

The testimony, then, of the Jews, who without a dissenting voice, have asserted the inspiration of the books of the Old Testament, authorizes us to receive them as those Oracles of God which were committed to their care."

Before concluding these remarks on the evidence of the inspiration of the Old Testament Scriptures, I shall notice a decisive proof furnished by the Epistle to the Hebrews. No reasonable doubt can be entertained that that most comprehensively instructive portion of the New Testament was written by the apostle Paul. But in place of having enforced by his apostolic authority the truth which he communicated, according to his usual manner when addressing the churches composed of converts from the Gentiles, he waives the sanction of his apostleship probably on account of the prejudices which many of the Jews entertained against him; and confirmed his statements by constant references to the Scriptures of the Old Testament. The apostle by this procedure, clearly proves, in the first place, that the inspiration and divine authority of these Scriptures were fully admitted by the Jews; and, secondly, that their belief in these was perfectly accordant with truth. He thus certified in a manner peculiarly solemn, that the writings of which the Old Testament is composed, are on a level as to authority with those of the New; that both are to be received as dictated by the same Holy Spirit; and that as one connected and harmonious whole, they form an infallible and divine revelation.

This is the Word of God; and its Divine Author has solemnly prohibited any attempt to add to it, take from it, or, in any way, to corrupt it. In regard to the law, the prohibition is, "Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it." The division of the Scriptures, called the Holy Writings, is guarded in these words, "Every word of God is pure: He is a shield unto them that put their trust in him. Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar." At the close of the sacred volume are these remarkable words; "I testify to every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life."

How great and invaluable are the advantages to be derived from the possession of a divine revelation concerning themes so deeply interesting and momentous as are those to which the Scriptures relate! The knowledge communicated is not only most certain, as proceeding from God, but most grateful in itself as the expressions of love and mercy, and essentially necessary to the attainment of man's peace and purity. If He who is the predominating theme, the beginning and the ending of the Bible, be the Light of the world;—the way, the truth, and the life;—who alone can rescue man from the mazes of ignorance and error in which he is naturally lost, may we not address those who are favoured with this inspired volume, in the words of the prophet, "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee?"—"The Law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple: the statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes."

MEMOIR

OF THE

LIFE OF PRESIDENT DWIGHT.

Men of Letters pass their lives in a course so tranquil and uniform, it is generally supposed, as to furnish but few incidents for the labours of the biographer, or the entertainment of his readers. Mankind are attracted rather by what is brilliant in character and daring in action, than by the less splendid achievements of learning and piety. The exploits of the hero are recounted with applause while he is living, and after his death are enrolled with admiration on the records of nations; but the minister of Christ must usually wait to receive his honours in eternity, and expect the due estimate of his labours only as they are written on the tablet of the skies.

There are, however, exceptions to this remark. Sometimes the good man, by the uncommon powers of his mind, by peculiar incidents in his life, by having exerted a commanding influence on the interests of the public, or by having acquired an unusual share in their affections, presents the most attractive subject of biography. Contemporaries indulge a strong desire to view more minutely the life and character of the man, whose living excellence they have often felt and acknowledged; and posterity receive with admiration the history of one, who so widely blessed a preceding generation.

The Author of the following discourses claims a high rank among men of this class. The testimonies, far and wide, given by the public to his excellence, the heart-felt sorrow so extensively occasioned by his death, and the honours so profusely poured upon his memory, persuade us, that we shall be listened to with lively interest, while we attempt, in the following Memoir, to sketch the most important incidents of his life, and to delineate the most striking traits of his character.

Timothy Dwight was born at Northampton in the county of Hampshire, and state of Massachusetts, on the 14th day of May, A. D. 1752. His parents were Timothy and Mary Dwight. The first ancestor of his father's family in this country, John Dwight, came from Dedham in England, and settled at Dedham in Massachusetts, in 1637. From him, the subject of this Memoir was descended in the oldest male line; and he was able to look back on each individual in that line, including five generations, and reflect, that he was a member of the church of Christ, and had a fair reputation for piety. His father received his education at Yale College, where he entered on his bachelor's degree in 1744, He was by profession a merchant; and owned a handsome landed estate in the town in which he lived.. He was a man of sound understanding, of fervent piety, and of great purity of life. His mother was the third daughter of Jonathan Edwards, for many years the minister of Northampton, and afterwards president of Nassau Hall:—well known in this country and Europe as one of the ablest divines of the last century. She possessed uncommon powers of mind, and for the extent and variety of her knowledge has rarely been exceeded by any of her sex in this country. Though married at an early age, and a mother at eighteen, she found time, without neglecting the ordinary cares of her family, to devote herself with the most assiduous attention to the instruction of this son, and her numerous family of children, as they successively claimed her regard. Perhaps few instances can be found, in which this great duty has been performed with more scrupulous fidelity, than in the case now under consideration. With a mind originally vigorous and discriminating, she had been accustomed from infancy to the conversation of men of literature, who resorted in great numbers to her father's house; and thus was forcibly taught the importance of that learning, the effects of which she had so often had opportunity to witness. It was a maxim with her, the soundness of which her own observation through life fully confirmed, that children generally lose several years, in consequence of being considered by their friends as too young to be taught. She pursued a different course with her son. She began to instruct him almost as soon as he was able to speak; and such was his eagerness as well as his capacity for improvement, that he learned the alphabet at a single lesson; and before he was four years old he was able to read the Bible with ease and correctness. His father was so extensively engaged in mercantile and agricultural pursuits, that he was necessitated to confide the care of his family, and particularly the superintendence of the early education of his children, chiefly to their mother. With the benefit of their father's example constantly before him, enforced and recommended by the precepts of his mother, he was sedulously instructed in the doctrines of religion, as well as the whole circle of moral duties. She taught him from the very dawn of his reason to fear God and to keep his commandments; to be conscientiously just, kind, affectionate, charitable, and forgiving; to preserve on all occasions, and under all circumstances, the most sacred regard to truth; and to relieve the distresses and supply the wants of the poor and unfortunate. She aimed at a very early period to enlighten his conscience, to make him afraid to sin, and to teach him to hope for pardon only through the righteousness of Christ. The impressions thus made upon his mind in infancy were never effaced.

A great proportion of the instruction, which he received before he arrived at the age of six years, was at home with his mother. Her school-room was the nursery.

Here he had his regular hours for study, as in a school; and twice every day she heard him repeat his lesson. Here, in addition to his stated task, he watched the cradle of his younger brothers. When his lesson was recited, he was permitted to read such books as he chose, until the limited period was expired. During these intervals he often read over the historical parts of the Bible, and gave an account of them to his mother. So deep and distinct was the impression, which these narrations then made upon his mind, that their minutest incidents were indelibly fixed upon his memory. His relish for reading was thus early formed, and was strengthened by the conversation and example of his parents. At the age of six, he was sent to the grammar school, where he early began to importune his father to permit him to study Latin. This was denied, from an impression, that he was too young to profit by studies of that description; and the master was charged not to suffer him to engage in them. It was soon found to be in vain to prohibit him: his zeal was too great to be controlled. Not owning the necessary books, he availed himself of the opportunity when the elder boys were at play to borrow theirs; and, in this way, without his father's knowledge, or the master's consent, studied through Lilly's Latin Grammar twice. When his master discovered the progress he had made, he applied earnestly to his father, and finally obtained a reluctant consent that he might proceed; though every effort short of compulsion was used to discourage him. He pursued the study of the language with great alacrity, and would have been prepared for admission into college, at eight years of age, had not a discontinuance of the school interrupted his progress, and rendered it necessary for him to be taken home, and placed again under the instruction of his mother. By her, his attention was now directed to the study of geography and history. With no other help than Salmon's Grammar, the only work on the subject then to be procured in the country, and a set of valuable maps of the four quarters of the globe; under the faithful tuition of his mother, he became thoroughly versed in the former science. In the latter, his father's library furnished him with the requisite books, and the wisdom and affection of his mother with the necessary guidance. He was previously familiar with the historical parts of the Bible. She first turned his attention to Josephus and Prideaux, and the more modern history of the Jews. After this he read Rollin, Hooke's History of Rome, Histories of Greece and England, and accounts of the first settlers of New England, and their wars with the Indians. Often has he been heard to say, that almost all his knowledge of geography and history was acquired at this period; and it is believed, that few persons have possessed a more extensive or accurate acquaintance with either of these sciences. This domestic education rendered him fond of home and of the company of his parents; and led him to feel a livelier interest than is usual with boys of the same age, in the conversation of those who were older than himself. It also saved him from the school-boy coarseness and effrontery; often thought in this rough world a necessary, but by no means an ornamental, appendage of the youthful character.

His father was particularly fond of the society of men of education and intelligence; and his hospitable house was the well known resort of gentlemen of this character. To no one of the family were they more welcome, than to his son. Even at this very early period of life, while listening to their conversation on the character of the great men of the age, both in the colonies and in Europe, a deep and last impression was made upon his mind; and he then formed a settled resolution, that he would make every effort in his power to equal those, whose talents and character he heard so highly extolled.

In his twelfth year, he went to Middletown, for the purpose of pursuing his studies, under the late Rev. Enoch Huntington, a gentleman of high classical attainments. He boarded in the family, and devoted himself to his books with unusual assiduity and success. Not content with the time regularly allotted to study in the school, he spent most of his leisure hours at home in intense application. So entirely was his mind absorbed by his books, that it was no uncommon thing for the members of the family to pass through his room, and even to call him by name, without being perceived by him. During his residence at Middletown, his conduct was marked with the strictest propriety, his manners were amiable and affectionate, his attention to his studies was intense and unremitted, and his progress in them rapid and honourable. When he left Middletown, he had acquired a very accurate knowledge of the Latin and Greek languages; and had read not only those classical authors, which were necessary for admission into college, but those also which were studied during the two first years of collegiate life.

In September 1765, when he had just passed his thirteenth year, he was admitted as a member of Yale college. At that time, unfortunately, the freshman class had no stated tutor: but were dependent for their instruction, sometimes upon one officer of college, and sometimes upon another: a state of things too irregular and unsettled to produce any substantial benefit to the pupils. During the winter he had the misfortune to break his arm; and, for several months in the spring and summer, he was prevented by sickness from pursuing his studies. Near the close of the collegiate year, president Clap resigned his office; and the students for a short time were dispersed: a series of calamities, by which the year was in a considerable measure lost to him as a student. The discipline of college had been for several years chiefly annihilated. Loose opinions on morals, and religion, prevailed extensively in the country; and their pernicious influence was too obviously felt in the various seminaries of learning. Owing to the bad state of the college commons, the students had been indulged in the practice of providing entertainments at their rooms. This naturally produced a great degree of inattention to their studies, and gave rise to scenes of revelry and riot, in the highest degree injurious to the pursuits of literature. It is not surprising, that in such a state of things the practice of gambling had become unhappily prevalent in College. Under all these disadvantages, young Dwight gained considerable reputation for genius and acquirements. His information and address rendered his society generally pleasing. It was courted, even by members of the higher classes; who strongly solicited him to join them in their pernicious amusements. But the instructions of his parents had made so deep an impression upon his mind, that no importunities of this nature could prevail upon him to engage with them in gambling. He was at length so far wrought upon, however, as to play for amusement; and, not being necessitated to study his lessons, gradually yielded to their solicitations, until much of his time was wasted in this manner. In no instance, however, did they influence him to play for money, or to stake even a farthing. Yet playing for amusement had so far become a habit, that, when he returned to college upon the commencement of his second year, he entered upon the practice with considerable ardour. From this danger he was fortunately rescued by the exertions of his tutor and kinsman, the Hon. Stephen Mix Mitchel, late Chief Judge of the Supreme Court of Connecticut; to whom, for this and many other acts of kindness, shown him while a member of college, he ever after acknowledged himself to be most deeply indebted. During the sophomore year, he was badly poisoned; by reason of which he was confined at his father's house four months, and obliged to discontinue his studies during that period.

It is apparent, from the foregoing recital, that the

two first years of his collegiate life must have been in a great measure lost.

On commencing his junior year, he devoted himself seriously to study. He was now fifteen; had lost a great part of the two preceding years, and had but two remaining, in which he might hope to redeem his loss and lay the foundation for future usefulness and respectability. He entered on the studies of the year with great zeal, and pursued them with unremitting assiduity and perseverance. At that time college prayers were attended at half past five o'clock in the morning in the winter, and at half past four in the summer. He began the year by qualifying himself, every morning, to construe and parse a hundred lines in Homer before prayers. This lesson, which formed no part of the regular college exercises, was, of course, acquired by candle light; and his object in attending to it was, to render himself more thoroughly master of the Greek language than he could expect to become in the common round of studies pursued by his class. The lesson, as he advanced, was gradually increased to a much larger quantity. His eyes being seriously affected by this intense application, at such unseasonable hours, it is not improbable, that the foundation was thus early laid of that weakness in them, which caused him so much distress during the remainder of his life.

In addition to the ordinary pursuits of the year, he devoted a considerable portion of his time to the improvement of his hand-writing; and by dint of his own exertions, attained a degree of excellence in penmanship, that has rarely been equalled. So elegant, indeed, was his writing, that it was with difficulty distinguished from the handsomest engravings. We have seen several of the diplomas, which he wrote for his particular friends, and think some of them decidedly more beautiful than the usual copperplate impressions.

This is the earliest period in which he is known to have paid any attention to poetry and music. The date of his first poetical composition cannot be precisely ascertained. Two or three specimens, however, are preserved, which bear the date 1767, and, of course, were written when he was fifteen years of age. His attachment to music, particularly sacred music, was ardent. His voice was at once melodious and powerful; and his ear exquisitely discriminating. He began a collection of church music in the course of the year, but left it unfinished, probably because it interfered with his more severe and important pursuits.

This may with propriety be considered as the era of his excessive devotion to study, and the acquisition of knowledge. At the commencement of the year he formed a resolution, to which he faithfully adhered during the remainder of his collegiate life, to employ fourteen hours each day in close application to his studies. Such intense and unwearied diligence, with the aid of his natural genius, soon established his reputation as a scholar, and placed him among the first of his class. He received the degree of bachelor of arts in the year 1769, when he was a little past seventeen years of age. At the commencement, but a single appointment was made from the class, which received the degree of bachelors. Before giving it out, the president sent for Dwight and Strong,* and informed them, that in the view of the officers of college they were at the head of the class, and equally deserving of the appointment; but as Strong was the elder of the two, it would be given to him at that time, and to Dwight when the class entered on the degree of masters.

A short time after leaving college, he was employed to take charge of a grammar-school at New Haven. In this situation he continued two years, highly esteemed as an instructor both by his pupils and their parents. This was the commencement of that course of life, which with very little interruption, he pursued for nearly fifty years: a course of life in which providence had peculiarly qualified him to excel. Probably few men have lived, who, in the same mode, have rendered more eminent services to mankind.

During these two years he made great advancement in literature and science. His time was regularly divided, and occupied:—six hours in each day in school; eight hours in close and severe study; and the remaining ten hours in exercise and sleep.

In September, 1771, when he was past nineteen, he was chosen a tutor in Yale college. In this situation he remained for six succeeding years, performing its duties with distinguished success and reputation.

When he entered upon the office. More than half the members of his class were older than himself; and the freshman, who waited upon him, was thirty-two years of age.† Notwithstanding a circumstance generally so disadvantageous, he proceeded in the discharge of his official duties with firmness and assiduity; and in a short time gained a reputation for skill in the government and instruction of his class rarely known in the former experience of the college. It ought here to be observed, that the study of the classics and of the mathematics had been for a number of years vigorously pursued, owing to the exertions of several superior men; and the discipline of the seminary raised to a higher standard. His associates were men of distinguished talents; and by their united efforts the institution soon acquired a new and most important character. The study of Rhetoric had been, till then, in a great measure neglected. The period, from 1771 to 1777, will ever be considered as forming an era in the history of the college. Through the exertions and influence of Howe, Trumbull, and Dwight, a taste for those pursuits was excited; the effects of which have been experienced to the present time. The 'art of speaking' had previously been thought scarcely worthy of attention. Of so much importance, however, was it considered by these gentlemen, that they not only taught it to their respective classes, but, from time to time, went upon the college stage to enforce their precepts by their example. Poetry was cultivated by them, especially by Trumbull and Dwight, with all the enthusiasm of genius. It was in the first year of his tutorship, at the age of nineteen, that the subject of this memoir commenced writing the Conquest of Canaan, a regular epic poem, founded upon the portion of Sacred History to which its title refers, and which was finished in the year 1774, when he was twenty-two years of age.

No tutor was ever more faithful in the instruction of his class. His attention to their oratory has been mentioned. In addition to the customary mathematical studies, he carried them through spherics and fluxions, and went as far as any of them would accompany him into the Principia of Newton. He also delivered to them a series of lectures on style and composition, on a plan very similar to that contained in the Lectures of Blair, which were not published until a considerable time afterward. His application to study during the time he remained in office was intense. He began to study so early in the morning as to require candlelight, and continued the employment until late at night.

While a tutor, he was inoculated for the small pox. The disease affected him mildly; but upon his recovery, he too soon resumed his former habit of severe application to study. Long before this, his eyes had been greatly weakened, and probably for that reason were more sensibly affected by the small-pox. On being subjected to such rigorous exercise, before they had recovered their natural energy, they were so far injured as to cause him, through life, a great degree of pain and embarrassment.

* The late Dr Strong of Hartford.

† David Bushnell, a man of strong mechanical genius, and the inventor of 'the Submarine Boat.'

In the year 1772, he received the degree of Master of Arts. On that occasion he delivered, as an exercise at the public commencement 'A Dissertation on the History, Eloquence, and Poetry of the Bible.' This production, composed and delivered by a youth of twenty, on a subject then so new and of such high interest, was received by the audience with the strongest marks of approbation. A copy was immediately requested for the press; and it was afterwards republished, both in this country and in Europe. We have seen it mentioned, in several instances, with very high respect, on the other side of the Atlantic. It is now rarely to be met with. Those, who have read it, need not be informed that it was an effort of no common character. It unfolded, at that early age, the bolder features of the author's mind; and evinced uncommon maturity of judgment and taste. The style is dignified and manly, and formed by a standard truly classical. The field of thought was new in this country. The Lectures of Lowth, if then published, were not known on this side of the Atlantic; nor do we know of any work, except the Bible itself, to which the author appears to have been indebted for his plan or his illustrations. The knowledge of criticism displayed in it is profound; the conceptions are bold and original; the images are beautiful and distinct; and the very spirit, which breathes in the sacred writers, appears to animate his own mind. This was his only effort in public which his father ever witnessed.

At a subsequent period, during his residence in college as a tutor, he engaged deeply in the study of the higher branches of the mathematics. Among the treatises on this science, to which his attention was directed, was Newton's Principia, which he studied with the utmost care and attention, and demonstrated, in course, all but two of the propositions in that profound and elaborate work. This difficult but delightful science, in which the mind is always guided by certainty in its discovery of truth, so fully engrossed his attention, and his thoughts, that for a time he lost even his relish for poetry; and it was not without difficulty that his fondness for it was recovered.

During the second year of his tutorship, he attempted, by restricting his diet, to remove the necessity for bodily exercise, and yet to secure himself from the dulness incident to a full habit and inactive life. He began by lessening the quantity of his food at dinner; and gradually reducing it, until he confined himself to twelve mouthfuls. After a six months' experiment of this regimen, being still somewhat dissatisfied with its effects, and feeling less clearness of apprehension than was desirable, he confined himself for a considerable period to a vegetable diet, without, however, increasing the quantity. His other meals were proportionably light and abstemious.

After this system of study and diet had been pursued about a twelvemonth, his health began insensibly to decline, and his constitution, naturally vigorous, to give way. During the summer of 1774, he first perceived the reality of this change; but had no suspicion of the cause. Though he had suffered several distressing attacks of the bilious colic before the college commencement, yet after the vacation he renewed the same course of regimen and of application to study. But a short time had elapsed before these attacks were repeated with increased violence; and his friends, becoming seriously apprehensive of the consequences, informed his connexions of his situation. His father, on his arrival at New Haven, found that his disorder had indeed made dreadful ravages in his constitution; his frame was emaciated, and his strength so far reduced, that it was with extreme difficulty he could be conveyed to Northampton. When he left New Haven, his friends and his pupils took leave of him as they supposed for the last time; and he had himself relinquished all hope of recovery. In the course of two months he had nineteen severe attacks of the disease. An eminent physician, whom he now consulted, after successfully administering to his immediate relief, recommended to him, among other things, a daily course of vigorous bodily exercise as the only means of restoring his constitution to its primitive vigour. He followed his advice; and, within a twelvemonth, walked upwards of two thousand miles, and rode on horseback upwards of three thousand. To his perseverance in this system, he was probably indebted for his recovery; as well as for the uninterrupted health and vigour of constitution, which he enjoyed for the ensuing forty years.

In the year 1774, Mr Dwight united himself to the college church. At this time, it was his expectation to pursue the practice of law; and, towards the close of his residence in college as a tutor, his studies were directed towards that object.

The first class, which he instructed, entered on the degree of Bachelors in September, 1775; the year before the declaration of independence. At that time, he delivered them a 'Valedictory Address,' everywhere sparkling indeed with brilliant imagery; but everywhere fraught also with strong thoughts and noble conceptions. In two points of view it deserves notice. It unfolds to his pupils the duty of fixing upon a very high standard of character as intelligent and as moral beings; in a manner which proves at once that this was literally the rule which governed his own conduct; and that he was admirably qualified to influence others to adopt it. It also communicates to them views of the growth and ultimate importance to this country, which were at once new, noble, and prophetic.

In March, 1777, he was married to Miss Mary Woolsey, the daughter of Benjamin Woolsey, Esquire, of Long-Island, the class-mate, room-mate, and intimate friend of his father. They had eight sons; of whom six survive their father. Mrs Dwight is still living.

In May of the same year, the college was broken up. The students left New Haven at the commencement of the vacation; and pursued their studies during the summer, under their respective tutors, in places less exposed to the sudden incursions of the enemy. Mr Dwight retired with his class to Weathersfield, and remained with them till September. Early in June he was licensed as a preacher, by a committee of the Northern Association in his native county of Hampshire in the state of Massachusetts. Besides instructing his class, during the summer, he preached on the sabbath at Kensington, a parish in Weathersfield.

The following fact is a striking proof of the respect and affection with which he was regarded by the students. It being well ascertained that the existing head of the college would relinquish his connexion with it: the students, as a body, drew up and signed a petition to the corporation, that he might be elected to the Presidency. It was owing to his own interference, that the application was not formally made.

He left college early in September; and soon after was appointed chaplain to General Parsons' brigade, which was part of the division of General Putnam, in the army of the United States. In the British army and navy, this office is too often filled by men, who are distinguished only for their ignorance and profligacy. We are also compelled to admit, that, during our late war, this was most extensively true of those who held the same stations among our own forces. But in our war of the revolution the very contrary was the fact. The generous enthusiasm, which then pervaded the country, not only prompted our young men of honour in civil life to take the field, but induced many of our clergy of the first reputation for piety and talents to attach themselves to the staff. The soldier of the revolution need not be told how animating were their ser-

mons and their prayers, nor how correct and exemplary were their lives.

Mr Dwight joined the army at West Point, in October, 1777. Although the scene was entirely new to him, he was not idle nor inattentive to the business which now devolved upon him. He performed the appropriate duties of his office with strict punctuality and with uncommon reputation. The troops, who composed the brigade, were principally Connecticut farmers; men who had been soberly educated, and who were willing to listen to the truths of the gospel, even in a camp. On the Sabbath they heard him with profound attention. During the week they beheld him exerting himself as far as lay in his power to instruct them in morals and religion. Several of his discourses delivered to the whole army, owing partly to their intrinsic merit, and partly to the feelings of the times, gained him high reputation with the American public. He also wrote several patriotic songs, which were universally popular. They were favourite songs with the soldiers, and contributed not a little to kindle their enthusiasm in the cause of freedom. One of them, his 'Columbia,' will not soon be forgotten. It opened the eyes of his countrymen, on a prospect, new, brilliant, and delightful; and exhibited in distinct vision the rising glories of our infant empire. His connexion with the army enabled him to form an extensive acquaintance with many officers of distinction; and among them he had the satisfaction to rank the commander-in-chief. That great man honoured him with flattering attentions. Mr Dwight ever remembered his kindness with lively gratitude; and entertained for his character and services, military and civil, the highest respect and veneration.

He remained in the army a little more than a year; when the news of his father's death, which reached him near the close of October, 1778, rendered it necessary for him to resign his office, in order to console his mother under that severe affliction, and to assist her in the support and education of her numerous family. On leaving the army, he received from his brother officers, particularly from Generals Putnam and Parsons, as well as from the soldiers of the brigade, the most grateful testimonies of respect and kindness.

His father, in the midst of health and usefulness, had gone in the summer of 1776 to the Mississippi, for the purpose of providing a settlement in that country for two of his sons, by whom he was accompanied. Himself, with his brother-in-law, General Lyman, had grants from the crown of a large track of land, in the S. W. angle of what is now the state of Mississippi, comprising the present township of Natchez, and a considerable extent of adjacent country. Here he commenced a settlement under prosperous circumstances; but near the close of the following year fell a victim to the disease of the climate. He died at Natchez. His two sons, in company with the other adventurers, crossed the country through the wilderness in the dead of winter; and after innumerable dangers and hardships, reached the sea-coast of Georgia in safety. An account of this expedition will be found in the Travels of President Dwight. Rarely have we met with a more interesting or melancholy story. The original papers containing the grant were unhappily lost; and the family have never been able to substantiate their title to the land. Mr Dwight's personal grant was a considerable part of the township of Natchez. He left a widow and thirteen children; ten of whom were under twenty-one years of age. The subject of this memoir was the eldest; and on him devolved the care of the family, at a period when the situation and circumstances of the country rendered the task peculiarly difficult and laborious. From the time of his entering on the Bachelor's degree at college to his leaving the army, he had subjected his father to no expense for his own support.

The intelligence of his death, in consequence of the peculiar circumstances of the country, did not reach the family until nearly a twelvemonth after the event had happened. Upon receiving the information he, with as little delay as possible, removed his own family to Northampton, and undertook the performance of the new duties, which providentially had devolved upon him, with the greatest promptitude and cheerfulness. In this situation he passed five years of the most interesting period of his life; performing in an exemplary manner the offices of a son and a brother, and of a guardian to the younger children. Here, he was emphatically the staff and stay of the family. The government and education of the children, as well as the daily provision for their wants, depended almost exclusively on his exertions. The elder as well as the younger were committed to his care, and loved and obeyed him as their father. The filial affection and dutiful respect and obedience which he exhibited towards his mother, and the more than fraternal kindness with which he watched over the wellbeing of his brothers and sisters, deserve the most honourable remembrance. To accomplish this object he postpones his own establishment for life and a provision for his family. To accomplish it, though destitute of property, he relinquished in their favour his own proportion of the family estate; laboured constantly for five years with a diligence and alacrity rarely exampled; and continued his parental care, and exertions, and liberality, long after his removal from Northampton. Often have we heard his mother, who died only ten years since, acknowledge, in language of eloquent affection and gratitude, his kindness, and faithfulness, and honourable generosity to her and to her children. The respect which she felt and manifested towards him, though perhaps not his inferior in native powers of mind, resembled the affection of a dutiful child towards her father, rather than the feelings of a mother for her son. During this period, he laboured through the week upon the farm, and preached on the sabbath to different vacant congregations in the neighbouring towns. He also established a school at Northampton, for the instruction of youth of both sexes; which was almost immediately resorted to by such a number of pupils, that he was under the necessity of employing two assistants. At the same time, owing to the dispersed condition of the college at New Haven, and to his established character as an instructor, a part of one of the classes in that seminary repaired to Northampton, and placed themselves under his care as their preceptor. To them he devoted his own immediate attention, until they had completed their regular course of collegiate studies. The school was continued during his residence there, and uniformly maintained an extensive and distinguished reputation. At the same time, he preached almost without intermission upon the sabbath with increasing popularity. For about one year, commencing with the winter of 1778-1779, he supplied the vacant congregation of Westfield; the year following, that of Muddy-Brook, a parish of Deerfield; and a year after, that of South Hadley. He often mentioned it to the honour of the people of Muddy-Brook, that they paid him for preaching, not in the depreciated currency of the country, but in specie, or wheat at the specie price, at his election. The compensation which he received for preaching, as well as the profits of his school, were all expended in the support of the common family.

A strong disposition was manifested from time to time, by the inhabitants of Northampton, to employ him in civil life. In the county conventions of Hampshire he repeatedly represented the town; and, in connexion with a few individuals, met and resisted that spirit of disorganization and licentiousness which was then unhappily prevalent in many parts of the county, and which had too visible an influence in an assembly

often fluctuating and tumultuous. It was owing eminently to his exertions, and those of his colleague, the Hon. Joseph Hawley, in opposition to the current of popular feeling, and to no small weight of talents and influence, that the new constitution of Massachusetts was adopted by the convention of the most important county in the state. Twice he consented to serve the town as their representative in the state legislature. This was in the year 1781 and 1782, just before the close of the war of independence; when subjects of an interesting and perplexing nature, growing out of the great controversy in which the country had so long been engaged, extensively agitated the public mind, and engrossed legislative attention. Everything was then, in a sense, unsettled. That war had sundered not only the cords which fastened the colonies to the mother country, but those also which bound them to each other. The old foundations were, in a sense destroyed; and new ones were to be established. Many of the old laws and regulations were to be altered; and others, accommodated to the state of freedom and independence, were to be devised and instituted. A sense of subordination and obedience to law was also to be cherished, instead of a spirit of licentiousness then widely prevalent. In this situation, inexperienced as he was in the business of a politician or a legislator, he at once became one of the most industrious and influential members of that body, and was greatly admired and distinguished for his talents and eloquence. All his exertions were on the side of good order and good morals; and indicated a steady attachment to the principles of rational liberty, and decided hostility to licentiousness. On one occasion he was enabled to prove his devotion to the interests of learning. A petition for a grant in favour of Harvard College was before the legislature. At that time such grants were unpopular. That spirit of honourable liberality, which now happily characterizes the legislature and people of that commonwealth, was then far from being universally operative. During his occasional absence from the house, the petition had been called up; and, after finding but few, and those not very warm advocates, had been generally negatived. On taking his seat, Mr Dwight learning what had occurred, moved a reconsideration of the vote. In a speech of about one hour in length, fraught with wit, with argument, and with eloquence, and received with marked applause on the spot, from the members and the spectators, he effectually changed the feelings of the house, and procured a nearly unanimous vote in favour of the grant. It gave him high pleasure thus to confer an obligation on that respectable seminary: an obligation which was gratefully acknowledged by its principal officers, as well as by many others of its friends.

At this period, he was earnestly solicited by his friends to quit the profession in which he had engaged, and devote himself to public life. In the winter of 1782-1783, a committee from the delegation of Hampshire waited upon him with assurances from the delegation, that, if he would consent, their influence should be exerted to secure his election to the continental congress; a place in the gift of the legislature. The late Governor Phillips of Andover, who was his friend and fellow-lodger, though a man of distinguished piety, gave it as his own unqualified opinion, that he ought to listen to these proposals and remain in civil life; assuring him, also, with several of the most influential members of both houses, of their cordial support. But he had become so thoroughly weaned from his first intention of practising law, and was so much attached to the clerical profession, and so convinced of its superior usefulness, that nothing could change his resolution to devote his life to the latter. Having preached occasionally, while attending the legislature, in Boston and the neighbourhood, he received invitations, accompanied with flattering offers as it regarded compensation, to settle as a minister in Beverly and Charlestown; both of which, however, he declined. In the month of May, 1783, he was invited, by an unanimous vote of the church and congregation of Greenfield, a parish in the town of Fairfield, in Connecticut, to settle as their minister. This invitation he accepted on the 20th of July in the same year. On the 5th of November following, he was regularly ordained over that people; and for the succeeding twelve years remained their pastor.

The annual compensation which he received at Greenfield was a salary of five hundred dollars, the use of six acres of parochial land, and twenty cords of wood. They also gave him a settlement of one thousand dollars. From his extensive acquaintance with men of consideration in literature and politics throughout the country, and a native propensity to hospitality, it was very apparent that he could not expect to support a growing family, and the expenses incident to his standing in the community, upon such an income. To supply the deficiency, he immediately established an Academy at Greenfield, which he superintended himself; devoting six hours regularly every day to the instruction of his pupils. In a short time, youths in great numbers and of both sexes, not only from various parts of New England, but from the Middle and Southern States as well as from abroad, resorted to his school. This institution was commenced and carried on absolutely without funds, and depended solely on his own character and exertions. He supported it during the whole period of his residence there with unexampled reputation. We know of no similar institution in this country, thus dependent, which has flourished so long or to such a degree. During the twelve years of his residence there, he instructed upwards of one thousand pupils. Numbers of them were carried through the whole course of education customary at college. In his school he adopted to a considerable degree one part of the Lancasterian mode of instruction; making it extensively the duty of the older scholars, who were competent, to hear the recitations of the younger. Many of his pupils were regularly boarded in his family; so that its usual collective number was from twenty to twenty-five. It ought to be mentioned, that his female pupils were instructed in many of the higher branches of literature, which had not, here, previously been taught to their sex; and that under his auspices, on the delightful spot where he resided, began that superior system of female education, which is founded on the principle, that women are intelligent beings, capable of mental improvement, and which is at present extensively prevalent. Even to this day, however, in very few of the higher female schools are they carried through the same extensive and solid course of study which was pursued by his pupils. Probably to the exertions and influence of no one individual are the ladies of our country so extensively indebted. No man thought more highly of the sex; no man loved better the company of women of refinement and intelligence; and no man did more to exalt the female character.

Beside the instruction of his school he preached steadily twice every sabbath; and regularly visited his people. He also cultivated with his own hands a large kitchen, fruit, and flower garden. Living but a few rods from the public road, in a most delightful village, and having numerous family connexions, and very many friends and acquaintance, he saw and entertained an almost uninterrupted succession of company; greater, we are led to believe, than any individual whom we have known in the State. Among these were many strangers of respectability, from various and distant parts of the country. Greenfield was the resort of learning, of talents, of refinement, and of piety; and his own hospitable doors were ever open to welcome the stranger as well as the friend. We believe the in-

stances to be rare, in which a single individual has been the centre of such extensive attraction to men of superior character, or so entirely altered the aspect of society in the region around him.

When it is considered, that, from his leaving college as a tutor, his eyes were so weak, as not only to preclude him almost entirely from reading and writing, but to cause him very frequently extreme pain and distress; it will naturally be concluded, that he must have passed a very industrious and laborious life. Such, however, was his capacity for every kind of business in which he was engaged, that he was able to devote as much time as was necessary to the calls of company and friendship, as well as to perform the extra-parochial duties of a minister to his people. Previous to his settlement at Greenfield, his character as a preacher stood high in the public estimation. During the period of his residence there, he gained a reputation not often equalled in this country.

Having experienced the disadvantages of too abstemious, as well as too sedentary a life, when engaged as tutor in college, he became ever afterward extremely attentive to his health. For the purpose of guarding himself against the recurrence of his former sufferings in this respect, he used a great deal of bodily exercise. He not only walked and rode, but he worked steadily and vigorously in his garden, and on his land.

Being unable from the weakness of his eyes to write, he very early discovered that he must perform his stated duties as a preacher without notes, or abandon his profession. A very few experiments convinced him that he was able to adopt the former course; and he pursued it for many years almost exclusively. That course was to write the heads of his discourse and the leading thoughts of which it was to be composed, and to fill up the body of it at the time of delivery. What was committed to writing occupied him but a few minutes. Under all the disadvantages which he experienced from the weakness of his eyes, and notwithstanding the variety of his avocations and duties, he composed and preached while at Greenfield, about one thousand sermons; which, deducting the time he was absent during that period, will differ very little from two each week.

In the year 1785, he published the Conquest of Canaan. This work was begun, as has been remarked, when he was nineteen years of age, and finished in his twenty-third year. Proposals for printing it were issued in 1775, and upwards of three thousand subscribers procured; but the circumstances of the country, just then commencing the war of independence, which lasted till 1783, postponed its publication. A few additions were made to the poem between that time and its appearance in 1785, but the great body of it was published as it was written in 1773.

In 1787, Mr Dwight received the degree of Doctor of Divinity from the college at Princeton, New Jersey. He was then thirty-five years of age.

In 1791, he was appointed by the Governor of the State to preach the Election Sermon, before the legislature at Hartford.

In the year 1793, he published a sermon on the genuineness and authenticity of the New Testament; and in the following year, a poem in seven parts, called, after the place of his residence, 'Greenfield Hill.' The Conquest of Canaan and Greenfield Hill were both republished in England.

During his residence at Greenfield, he cultivated an extensive acquaintance and intercourse, not only with the Congregational clergy of New England, but with many in the Presbyterian church in New York, and the States farther south. This fact often enabled him to exert an auspicious influence in removing the prejudices which unhappily existed in many of both classes; as well as in various instances directly to promote the great interests of morals and religion. Among other subjects, which early engaged his attention, was that of a more intimate union of the Congregational and Presbyterian churches throughout the United States. On this subject he entered into an extensive correspondence with the more influential clergy, both in Connecticut and New York. A proposition for this object was made by him, early in the year 1790, in the particular Association of which he was a member. It was carried from that body to the General Association of Connecticut, which in June of that year met at his house. That venerable body proposed it in form to the General Assembly of the Presbyterian church and the General Convention of Massachusetts. The two former bodies appointed each a committee of three to form and establish articles of union. This committee, of whom Dr Dwight was one, met at New Haven in Sept. 1791, and most harmoniously and happily executed their commission. To the union then agreed on, the associated churches of Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Vermont have since acceded; an event that has been attended with very beneficial consequences to religion and the church.

In the year 1794, he was invited by the consistory of the reformed Dutch church in the city of Albany, to remove to that place, and settle as their minister. The application was unanimous, and the compensation which they offered was considered, at the time, as liberal; but it was not accepted, for reasons which were deemed by him satisfactory.

In May, 1795, the presidency of Yale College became vacant by the death of the Rev. Dr Stiles. In fixing on a successor, it may with propriety be said, that towards Dr Dwight the attention of the community was universally directed. The high reputation as an instructer, which he had gained whilst a tutor, and which he had maintained and enlarged since he left the college, was so universally known and acknowledged, that there was no difficulty in determining the question, which now devolved on the corporation. They had nothing to do but to pursue the course pointed out by public opinion, which in this case was clearly and distinctly marked. Accordingly, he was, with great unanimity, appointed to fill that important and respectable station; was inaugurated in September of that year, and presided at the public commencement; and, in December following, removed his family to New Haven. The people of his parish, with whom he had lived for twelve years in uninterrupted harmony, heard of his appointment with extreme regret. They loved their pastor; and they were proud of him; and they could not consent to give him up. Never have we known a parish part with their minister with more reluctance.

We are now entering upon a very interesting period in the life of Dr Dwight. Owing to a variety of causes, which it is not necessary to enumerate, the state of Yale College, at the time of his accession to the office of President, was in many respects unhappy. Destitute in a great degree of public or private patronage, its numbers were reduced, its discipline was relaxed, a looseness of moral and religious sentiment had become fashionable, and its reputation had been for some time on the decline through the community. One of the greatest evils under which it suffered was an extensive prevalence of infidelity amongst the students. This pernicious spirit had been derived from the circumstances of the country, at the close of the preceding war. As was natural, it found easy access to the minds of a collection of youths, who were fascinated with ideas of mental, as well as political independence, and who were easily induced to shake off what they considered the shackles of habit and superstition. The degree to which it prevailed may be conjectured from the following fact.—A considerable proportion of the class,

which he first taught, had assumed the names of the principal English and French infidels; and were more familiarly known by them than by their own. Under circumstances like these, he entered upon the duties of his office as PRESIDENT OF YALE COLLEGE.

The talents, which he possessed for the instruction and government of youth, were now called into full exercise. A thorough reformation in the system of discipline was early commenced, and accomplished with as much expedition as the nature of the case would admit. Infidelity was assailed by argument and vanquished; and vice was disgraced, and in a great measure banished from the college.

He took upon himself the instruction of the senior class, pursuing a system, which produced the most beneficial effects. 'The public,' says Professor Silliman, 'have been little aware of the extent and diversity of the labours of President Dwight, in this institution. He has, in fact, discharged the duties of four offices, either of which is, ordinarily, considered as sufficient to engross the time and talents of one man. He has been charged with the general superintendence and responsibility constituting the appropriate duties of the Presidency; like his predecessors, he instructed the senior class, in their peculiar studies, but on a much more enlarged plan; he voluntarily discharged to a great extent, the duties of a professor of Belles Lettres and Oratory; and he has been charged also with those of a professor of Theology.'*

His mode of instructing was peculiarly his own. His long experience in this employment, had made him thoroughly acquainted with the youthful character, and enabled him to teach as well as to govern young men with extraordinary success. 'The students,' says Professor Silliman, 'habitually expected the senior year with much interest, as one in which they looked for the most valuable instructions; nor were they disappointed. President Dwight delighted much in the peculiar studies which it was his duty to elucidate. Although these studies were prosecuted by the students in appropriate text-books, the order of which he observed in his recitations, he always thought for himself with much independence, but with a respectful deference to the opinions of men of eminence. Still the opinions of the authors in question he sometimes found reason to controvert, and while he candidly stated his own views, with the grounds of them, he enjoined upon his pupils the same independence of mind, and was willing that they too should differ from him and think for themselves. The recitations of the senior class, were, in fact, although not in name, a series of familiar lectures, and the driest parts of logic and metaphysics were rendered interesting by the ample illustrations of the President; enlivened by agreeable and apposite anecdote, and by sallies of sprightliness; which, while they took nothing from his dignity, greatly relieved the tedium of long discussions.

'Into his recitations and discussions, he also threw a vast fund of practical instruction, on almost every subject of life, manners, and human business; for few men have ever observed more carefully and extensively; few have conversed more largely, and been more in contact with the world, in all its innocently accessible points.

'His object was not only to instruct the younger men under his care in the particular sciences which came before him, but to fit them, by repeated counsels, and by information pressed upon them with parental solicitude, for the various scenes into which they were to pass in life.

'In discussing the various subjects which customarily came before the senior class, especially those connected with the decision of disputed questions, it was usual for the President to assume a considerable range of statement and argument; and all those, who have had the happiness to attend on his instructions, will remember, that, not on a few occasions, his mind was kindled with his subject; till, excited by the re-acting stimulus of his own thoughts and communications, he has spoken even more eloquently, and with a more finished touch of feeling, than was usual in his regular written Discourses.

'It was never any part of his plan merely to discharge his duty: he did it with his whole mind and heart; and thought nothing adequately done, till all was done that the case admitted of. Till the increase of professorships rendered it unnecessary, he heard the senior class recite twice as often as had been customary, and on most occasions his recitations were of double the length that would have been required.'

In the year 1795, when President Dwight entered upon the duties of his office in the College, the whole number of students was one hundred and ten. Almost immediately after his accession they began to increase, and in the course of his presidency amounted to three hundred and thirteen; an increase unexampled in any similar institution in this country.

It has been remarked, that at the time of his accession to the presidency, infidelity was fashionable and prevalent in the College. To extirpate a spirit so pernicious and fatal, he availed himself of an early and decisive opportunity. Forensic disputation was an important exercise of the senior class. For this purpose they were formed into a convenient number of divisions; two of which disputed before him every week, in the presence of the other members of the class, and of the resident graduates. It was the practice for each division to agree upon several questions, and then refer them to the President to select which he thought proper. Until this time, through a mistaken policy, the students had not been allowed to discuss any question which involved the Inspiration of the Scriptures; from an apprehension, that the examination of these points would expose them to the contagion of scepticism. As infidelity was extensively prevalent in the State and in the Country, the effect of this course on the minds of the students had been unhappy. It had led them to believe, that their instructers were afraid to meet the question fairly; and that Christianity was supported by authority and not by argument. One of the questions presented by the first division was this; "*Are the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments the Word of God?*" To their surprise, the President selected it for discussion; told them to write on which side they pleased, as he should not impute to them any sentiments which they advanced as their own; and requested those, who should write on the negative side of the question, to collect and bring forward all the facts and arguments which they could produce: enjoining it upon them, however, to treat the subject with becoming respect and reverence. Most if not all the members of the division came forward as the champions of infidelity. When they had finished discussion, he first examined the ground they had taken; triumphantly refuted their arguments; proved to them that their statements of facts was mistaken, or irrelevant; and, to their astonishment, convinced them, that their acquaintance with the subject was wholly superficial. After this he entered into a direct defence of the divine origin of Christianity in a strain of powerful argument, and animated eloquence, which nothing could resist. The effect upon the students was electrical. From that moment Infidelity was not only without a stronghold, but without a lurking place. To espouse her cause was now as unpopular, as before it had been to profess a belief in Christianity. Unable to endure the exposure of argument, she fled from the retreats of learning ashamed and disgraced.

His system of discipline was peculiarly his own; and

* Address, p. 15.

has, from its success, commanded universal approbation. The College Laws in force when he entered on the Presidency were the same which were generally in being before his admission to College as a student. They were compiled by President Clap from the statutes of the English Universities; were made for other times, and for a very different state of society. Without proposing in the outset any serious alterations in the written code of laws, he effectually changed the whole system of administration. The government of College became as really new, as if every statute had been altered. A single clause at the end of the Chapter on "Crimes and Misdemeanors," furnished him and his companions with authority to introduce and to justify this change, and became in a sense the only written law in force. The purport of this clause was, that, as the Laws of the College were few and general, the Faculty might proceed, in all cases not expressly provided for, *according to their best discretion.* The intercourse between the officers and students was placed on a new footing. The latter were addressed and treated as young gentlemen; and no other marks of respect were demanded of them, than those which gentlemen of course render to each other. The distinctions between the classes, so far as they were unnecessary, and odious, were prevented. That degrading servility to which, under the authority of long established usage, the freshman class had been subjected was abolished. The practice of inflicting fines for infraction of the laws was abrogated; and it is not known that resort was ever had to that species of punishment for absence from prayers or recitation, or for any other offence of a character not more heinous. Instead of pursuing a course which seemed only calculated to inflict a penalty on the parent, he wished to adopt one which should prevent the necessity of every kind of penalty by preventing offences. In the room of pecuniary exactions for neglect of study, and other violations of duty, he substituted private remonstrance. Appeals were made to the conscience of the delinquent, as well as to his hopes and fears: appeals founded on the guilt of his conduct, on his love of reputation, the happiness of his parents, and his prospects in life. These appeals were almost always successful. When they failed, early notice of this fact was given to the parent. If their united remonstrances were unavailing, the offender was privately informed, that his connexion with the College had ceased. This course was principally pursued during the freshman year; at the close of which, the class was regularly relieved of those who had manifested a settled disposition to be idle and vicious. It was his sincere endeavour to save the character of the young offender. If an offence was private, its punishment, if possible, was private; and this, whether the delinquent was permitted to remain a member of College or not. Many of his pupils can remember how kindly and honourably he conducted towards them when he had discovered their misconduct.

The system of *matriculation*, which he introduced, has proved highly efficacious and salutary. According to this system, those, who are found upon examination to possess the requisite literary attainments, do not at once become members of College. To be members in full standing, their names must be entered in the "*matriculation Book;*" and this cannot be done until they have established a fair character for correct moral deportment and application to study. Before this takes place, they are liable to be sent home at any moment. An important favour also was conferred on parents living at a distance, by requiring their children to have guardians to regulate their expenses.

He encouraged the students, especially those of the Senior Class, in all their difficulties and troubles to come to him for advice and assistance. In every such case, the instructor was forgotten in the friend and the father. He entered into their interests and feelings just as if they were his own; and while he yielded the necessary relief, he endeared himself to them permanently by his kindness. The members of the Senior Class, who wished to engage for a season after leaving College in the business of instruction, applied to him regularly to procure them eligible situations. So lively was the interest, which he took in their welfare, and so willing and active his exertions in their behalf, that few such applications failed of being successful. He remembered the feelings of a young man, just leaving College, without a profession, without property, and with no means of support but the blessing of God and his own exertions. Nothing gave him higher pleasure than to encourage the heart of every youth so situated, to save him from despondence, and to open to him the road to property, to usefulness, and to honour. The number of his students, whom he thus essentially befriended, if stated, would almost exceed belief. With others, who were in more affluent circumstances, he would enter into a free and confidential conversation on their plan of life; explain to them their peculiar dangers; and lead them to aim at eminence in their professions, and to form for themselves a high standard of moral excellence. The respect and the affection manifested towards him by his pupils after leaving College, whenever they visited New Haven, as well as when they met him abroad, was a sufficient reward for all his efforts to serve them; if he had not found a higher reward in doing good. We will only add, that his pupils familiarly spoke of him, with reference to this subject, by the most honourable appellation, "The Young Man's Friend."

There can be no higher evidence of his qualifications for the important place, which he filled, than is furnished by the effects of his Presidency. Yale College was founded by a number of pious clergymen, without property, who had little to bestow upon it but a few books on Theology. It has always struggled forward through great difficulties and embarrassments for the want of those funds, which are indispensably necessary to its highest prosperity. Those at a distance, who know nothing of the Institution but its extensive reputation, would indeed be astonished, were they told how small is the amount of benefactions which it has received. The men of wealth in the State where it is situated have not sufficiently realized its importance to bestow upon it their bounty. The State, also, though at times she has assisted it, has not yet rivalled the munificence of her neighbours on the North and West towards their seminaries of learning. In her public funds, she is, in proportion to her population, the richest state in the Union; yet the College emphatically her ornament and her glory, has but two sparingly enjoyed her patronage. We have already seen its situation, when Dr Dwight was inducted into the Presidency. Under all these disadvantages, in his hands, and by his unwearied assiduity and exertions, and those of his companions in office, it assumed a new appearance. Its numbers increased, its discipline was revived and invigorated, its morals were purified, and its relative character greatly elevated.

The period during which he presided over the College was attended with peculiar difficulties. A general sentiment of insubordination, growing out of the political situation of the civilized world, had seized the minds of the young as well as the old. High notions of freedom and personal independence prevailed among all ages. And the first impulse, to which, in many instances, the minds of youths, as well as of men, were disposed to yield, was *resistance to authority.* Many of our higher seminaries of learning have witnessed its effects in scenes of riot and insurrection; which have, for the time, subverted their authority and destroyed their usefulness. Yale College wholly escaped these evils. No general combination of the students to resist its government ever occurred during his Presidency. This fact is to be ascribed to the wisdom and firmness of the President and his

associates in office. He well knew, that the tranquillity of such an institution must depend on the respect and affection of the students, and the steady watchfulness of its officers. Deeply read in the human character, and emphatically so in the character of young men, he foresaw the approaches of the storm, which so extensively prevailed, and provided in season the means of defence and security. On every occasion of this kind, he derived the utmost benefit from one trait of his character, his *energy;* a trait which no man ever possessed in a more eminent degree. His decision and inflexibility to his purpose cannot be surpassed.

At the commencement of his Presidency the Professorship of Theology was vacant. The Corporation proposed to appoint him in form to the office. For the first ten years he would consent to none but an annual appointment. In 1805 it was made permanent. During the whole period he preached twice every sabbath; with almost no assistance from his brethren; and very rarely having an opportunity to exchange with the neighbouring clergy. Early in the year following his induction, he commenced the delivery of a Series of Lectures on the Evidences of Divine Revelation. This was no part of the duties of either office; but, owing to the extensive prevalence of infidelity in the country at that period, he viewed it as necessary to guard his pupils against the contagion. These lectures were not written out: the weak state of his eyes forbade his employing them for such a purpose. After collecting materials for about fifty, the same difficulty compelled him to desist and prevented him from delivering even the whole of that number. They were on a plan entirely new; and were listened to with great interest. Had not the battle with Infidelity been fought, and the victory won, we should regret, still more than we now do, that they were left unfinished. No one, not personally acquainted with the facts, can realize how great, at this period, were his sufferings from weakness of sight. For years it was with extreme difficulty that he could read or write even a sentence. He was greatly alarmed for a long period, with the symptoms of an approaching *gutta serena*. Repeatedly the pressure on the brain was so great as to produce momentary blindness, and obviously to threaten apoplexy. Occasionally, for weeks together, the anguish of his eyes was so intense, that it required powerful exertion to draw off his mind to any other object. And often after attempting in vain to sleep, he has risen from his bed; and, to promote a free perspiration, has walked for miles in the middle of the night.

In the prosecution of his duties as Professor of Divinity, he early began to deliver the Lectures in these Volumes. His practice was to preach one on the morning of each sabbath in term time. By this arrangement he finished the course once in four years. Thus each student, who completed his regular Collegiate period, had an opportunity to hear the whole series. He first conceived the plan of the work at Greenfield. While there, he completed it, in short notes, in about one hundred sermons; and delivered them twice to his people before his removal. At New Haven, he twice went through with them in the same state; frequently however adding to their number, and altering their arrangement.

In 1805, when he was permanently appointed Professor of Theology, the Corporation allowed him fifty pounds per annum to employ an amanuensis. Though the compensation was trifling, yet the place was coveted, and regularly applied for, a length of time before it became vacant. He began immediately to write out these Lectures; and wrote one a week during term time, or forty a year until they were completed. If not prevented, he commenced this task on Monday morning. His progress depended, with the exception of casual interruptions, on the rapidity of the amanuensis; which always fell short of the rapidity with which he dictated. Sometimes, though rarely, the sermon was finished in a single day; usually in the course of the second day. The remainder of the week was employed in writing his Travels, and Occasional Sermons. When interrupted by company, if propriety did not forbid, he would proceed with two trains of thoughts by the hour together; conversing with the company; and also dictating to his amanuensis.

By a standing rule of the College, the President annually delivers a valedictory Sermon, on the sabbath preceding the Commencement, to the Candidates for the Bachelor's Degree. Perhaps no part of his clerical labours excited more public attention, or were listened to with a livelier interest than the Sermons delivered on these occasions.

In the year 1797, he was applied to by the General Association of Connecticut to revise Dr Watts' Version of the Psalms; to versify such as he had omitted; and to make a selection of Hymns suited to the general purposes of public worship. The work was completed in 1800, and laid before a joint Committee of that body and of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church; by whom it was approved, and recommended to the use of the Congregational and Presbyterian Churches throughout the United States. In the performance of this difficult task, he made alterations, of more or less consequence, in a considerable number of Dr Watts' Psalms; and composed thirty-three entire psalms, containing about twelve hundred and fifty lines.

From the time he recovered his health, after the severe attack of colic already mentioned, he habituated himself to a steady course of vigorous bodily exercise. While at Greenfield, notwithstanding the multitude of his avocations, he walked, and rode on horseback, extensively; and constantly cultivated a large fruit and kitchen garden with his own hands. For this particular species of labour he had a high relish. His garden was distinguished for its beauty and its productiveness; for the excellence of its vegetables, the abundance and delicacy of its fruits, and the choice variety of its flowers.

Nor did the habit cease with him after his removal to New Haven. He there pursued the same course—making it his constant practice, through the whole season for gardening, to work at least an hour every morning before breakfast. In other parts of the year, he walked much and daily; rode frequently; and often, in the winter, when no other mode of exercise was convenient, he would cut his firewood. On this subject he exhibited the strictest uniformity and perseverance; and both by precept and example inculcated upon his pupils the necessity of a similar course. With reference, in a considerable degree, to the same object, in the year 1796, he commenced journeying on horseback, or in a sulky, during the College vacations, particularly in May and September. This practice he continued through the remainder of his life, except the last year, when he was severely attacked by the disease by which it was terminated. In these various journeys, it is computed, that he rode about twenty thousand miles. His excursions were chiefly confined to the New England States, and the State of New York. He experienced the highest gratification from the beauties of scenery; and scarcely a spot can be named within those limits, where those beauties are to be found in high perfection, which he did not visit and describe. For his own amusement, he took notes of the most material occurrences of his several journeys; and afterwards wrote them out for the gratification of his family. This suggested to him the idea of collecting materials from time to time for one or more volumes of travels; in which should be comprised, not only an account of the climate, soil, mountains, rivers, scenery, curiosities, and general face of the country over which he passed; but of the state of society, of manners, morals, literature, and religion; the institutions, civil, literary, and religious; and the character of the governments and laws, of the above-mentioned

States. To the performance of this task, he was greatly prompted by the very unfair, and illiberal accounts, which are given of us by foreigners, who have done little else than caricature both the country and its inhabitants. In his opinion also there was something peculiar in the circumstances of this country, which would render its history interesting to the philosopher, the statesman, and the christian. These circumstances arose from the singular character and romantic history of the aborigines; from the recent date of its settlement by civilized inhabitants; from the character, views, and history, of its first settlers; from the advancements it had made in wealth, science, the arts, the character of its government, laws, and institutions; and, in short, from its progress in all the great objects of a civilized and christian community, in the course of a hundred and eighty years.

On these journeys, he visited great numbers of the most intelligent and respectable inhabitants of those tracts of country over which he travelled; and derived, from his conversation with them, a great collection of facts relative to the general state of morals, manners, and religion. The information thus gained was arranged, reduced to writing, and prepared for publication: the whole forming materials for three octavo volumes. It is believed, by those who have opportunity to examine the manuscripts, that no work has appeared, which contains so much correct information concerning the subjects of which it treats, as this. It is also believed, that, should it ever be published, it will have the effect of redeeming our national character from the abuse and calumnies which have been heaped upon it by foreign travellers.

These journeys also enabled him to form an acquaintance with great numbers of the clergy, and many other persons of a religious character, in the States through which he travelled; and to ascertain the moral and religious condition of the people. This information was of the highest moment to him, both as it respected his feelings, and his pursuits. By these means, and by his extensive correspondence, he became possessed of more knowledge, general and local, of the religious state and interests of the country, than almost any other man; and by the aid of this knowledge, he was able to originate, and still oftener to aid, the execution of very numerous and extensive schemes of charity, and benevolence.

To enumerate the various literary, charitable, and pious institutions, which he was active in founding, or promoting, would be a laborious employment. Some of the principal ones may be mentioned. By his exertions and influence, aided by those of distinguished men around him, "The Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences" was established. This was done in the year 1799; and the association was incorporated by the legislature of that State in October of the same year. One of the great objects in view was, to procure a Statistical Account of Connecticut. This he had much at heart, and flattered himself he should be able to accomplish. For this purpose, the Academy printed and distributed a list of inquiries to men of intelligence, throughout the State, and to encourage and stimulate others to assist in the execution of the plan. Notwithstanding the weakness of his eyes, he wrote the account of New Haven at an early date, which the Academy afterwards published. Accounts of a few other towns were furnished by other gentlemen. But, as it proved less easy than he imagined to obtain the performance of a task attended with some labour and no profit, the business languished in hands far less occupied than his own, and the principal object was never accomplished.

He was a zealous promoter of the establishment, and the exertions, of the Missionary Society of Connecticut; —an Institution pre-eminent in this country for its zeal and success, in the great cause for the promotion of which it was founded. To its funds, also, he was a liberal contributor—having devoted to their increase the profits of his edition of the psalms and hymns sold in that State. The amount of moneys received from this source by the Society, exceeded one thousand dollars.

He was one of the projectors of the Society for Foreign Missions, established in the year 1809, at Boston, Massachusetts; and until his death was one of its active and influential officers.

Such was the fact, also, with regard to the Theological Seminary at Andover, in that State. From its commencement, he was one of the visitors of that school, and annually attended to the duties of his office with great engagedness and punctuality. For it, his labours, his counsels, and his prayers, were ever ready; and in its prosperity he was not less interested than in that of the College over which he presided.

From the time of the establishment of the most illustrious and sublime charity that has ever engaged the attention, or drawn forth the exertions and the wealth of the pious and benevolent—"The British and Foreign Bible Society," it was the ardent wish of President Dwight to see a similar institution established in the United States. Although a friend and promoter of smaller and more circumscribed institutions, he viewed the subject on a large scale, and was strongly impressed with the idea, that a National Society would be much more efficient, and far more extensively useful. Although he was prevented by sickness from being present at the establishment of "The American Bible Society," during the last year of his life; yet it was an object which not only met with his cordial approbation, but had the benefit of his warmest encouragement, and his earnest prayers; and it was a consoling consideration to him, that he lived to see it accomplished, and making rapid progress towards extensive usefulness and respectability.

In addition to the foregoing institutions, a long list of more confined, but active and operative societies, formed for the purposes of piety, and charity, had the benefit of his exertions, and the weight of his influence and patronage. According to his resources he contributed largely and cheerfully; his services he rendered to an extent rarely equalled in this country; and in his endeavours to promote their usefulness, and success, he was never weary.

Throughout his whole ministerial life, and especially while head of the College, he was resorted to by clergymen, from various parts of the country, for his advice and counsel on the subject of their professional concerns. Vacant parishes applied to him for his assistance in procuring ministers. In all associations of the clergy, local and general, of which he was a member, he was active and influential; able in devising, and firm in accomplishing measures for the advancement of religion, and for the good of the community. His services were extensively sought as a peacemaker, in removing difficulties between ministers and their people, and in restoring harmony in churches. Applications for private teachers and instructers of public schools, from almost all parts of the United States, were made to him, in immense numbers. The infant seminaries of our country often requested his assistance in the selection of their presidents, professors, and tutors. These various applications not only occupied much of his time, but subjected him to a laborious correspondence, and to no inconsiderable expense. Yet his ardent desire to do good, by improving the education of the young, by diffusing valuable knowledge, by advancing the literary character of the country, and by promoting the prosperity of the church of Christ, rendered these gratuitous services for others not irksome, but pleasant.

During the period of his Presidency, he was often called to preach at the ordination of ministers, at the funerals of distinguished individuals, and on other public

and extraordinary occasions. Many of these sermons were printed. The following is a catalogue of these productions, and of various others of a different character, published during that period.

In 1797, he published two Discourses on the nature and danger of Infidel Philosophy, addressed to the candidates for the Baccalaureate in Yale College. And a Sermon at the funeral of the Rev. Elizur Goodrich, D. D.

In 1798, a Sermon, entitled "The Duty of Americans at the present Crisis,' delivered at New Haven, on the 4th of July, in that year.

In 1800, a Discourse on the Character of Washington.

In 1801, a Discourse on some events of the last century.

In 1804, a Sermon on the death of Mr Ebenezer G. Marsh.

In 1805, a Sermon on Duelling.

In 1808, a Sermon on the opening of the Theological Institution in Andover, and the ordination of the Rev. Eliphalet Pearson, D. D.

In 1809, a Sermon occasioned by the death of Governor Trumbull.

In 1810, a Charity Sermon, preached at New Haven.

In 1812, The Dignity and Excellence of the Gospel: —a Discourse delivered at the ordination of the Rev. Nath. W. Taylor.

A Discourse, in two parts, on the Public Fast, in the same year.

A Discourse, in two parts, on the National Fast, in the same year.

In 1813, a Sermon before the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions.

Observations on Language, published in the Memoirs of the Connecticut Academy of Sciences, in 1816.

An Essay on Light, also published by that Institution, the same year.

In the years 1810, 1811, 1812, and 1816, he published several important articles in two religious periodical publications in New England.

In every situation in life, President Dwight was distinguished for hospitality. At New Haven he was still more liable to company than at Greenfield; and very few men, in any profession, or employment, in that State, ever entertained more, and no one with more absolute kindness and liberality. A great proportion of respectable strangers, almost all clergymen and persons of a religious character, visiting or passing through that town, were desirous of being introduced to him. It is believed, that very few, who enjoyed the opportunity, ever left him without being gratified with the interview. Notwithstanding the variety and importance of his avocations, he was never unprepared to entertain strangers, or to enjoy the conversation of his friends.

Twice during his Presidency, the Corporation thought it expedient to state the circumstances of the College to the Legislature; and to show that body the extreme inconvenience under which it laboured, for the want of buildings to accommodate the students. They had multiplied to such a degree, that about one-third of the whole number were obliged to take rooms in the town; and, of course, were placed out of the immediate inspection, and control of its officers:—a state of things almost necessarily productive of evil to the Institution. He was appointed one of the agents of the Board to present their statement. It will scarcely be believed, that these applications were unsuccessful. On both these occasions, his address to that honourable body was universally admired as a distinguished specimen of forensic eloquence. It drew, from all who heard it, the strongest expressions of applause.

But notwithstanding the failure of these applications, the reputation of the College was extended, and its numbers increased beyond all former example. Though in want of the requisite buildings, though chiefly destitute of funds and of patronage, it still flourished, and was considered, throughout the country, as inferior to no seminary of learning in the United States. Students from every part of the Union were to be found in it; and from some of the Southern States a great proportion of the whole number, who were educated in the North. The College thus derived, from the talents and exertions of its government, that reputation and advantage, for which it ought, in a far greater degree, to have been indebted to the liberality of the State.

By such long continued and unintermitted application to literary and scientifical pursuits, it would be natural to expect, that, at the age of sixty-three, his constitution would have begun to experience some marks of decay and infirmity. Such, however, was not the fact. The regularity of his habits, his temperate manner of living, and the uniform course of exercise which he pursued; all united to invigorate his constitution, and render him, at that age, more active and energetic than most men of forty. No apparent declension was discernible in the powers either of his body or of his mind. His understanding was as vigorous, his imagination as lively, and his industry and exertions as uniform and efficient, as they had been at any former period. In September, 1815, he undertook a journey into the western parts of the State of New York. When he reached Catskill, he made an excursion to the summit of the neighbouring mountains, with the same views, and for the same purposes, as he had visited so many similar objects in New England. After travelling westward as far as Hamilton College, he relinquished the idea of proceeding farther in his journey, in consequence of the state of the roads, which had been rendered extremely heavy and disagreeable by the extraordinary equinoctial storm of that year. As usual, he preached every Sabbath on that journey, and was thought by his friends never to have discovered more force of intellect, or higher powers of eloquence, than on these occasions. This was the last journey that he ever made. On the meeting of College, in October, he resumed his customary labours in the chapel, and in the recitation room, and performed them with his usual vigour, until the month of February; when he was seized with the first threatening attack of the disease to which he finally became a victim. The attack was severe and painful to a degree, of which those who did not witness it can have no conception. It made rapid and fearful ravages in a constitution which had increased in strength and firmness for more than sixty years, and which promised, to human expectation, to last to a "good old age." His patience, as well as his faith, were now brought to a most severe and heart-searching test. The pain, which he endured, and endured with unyielding fortitude, was beyond the powers of description. For several weeks, during the month of April, scarcely any hopes were entertained, either by himself, his friends, or his physicians, of his recovery. Amidst all his sufferings, not a murmur, not a repining expression, escaped from his lips. His mind was perfectly clear, and his reason unclouded. Patience under suffering, and resignation to the will of God, were exhibited by him in the most striking and exemplary manner, from day to day. His conversation was the conversation of a christian, not only free from complaint, but, at times, cheerful and animated; his prayers were fervent, but full of humility, submission, and hope.

At the end of twelve weeks, his disease assumed a more favourable appearance. By surgical aid, he gained a partial relief from his distress; and his constitutional energy, still unbroken, raised the hopes of his friends, that he might recover. He was unable to preach in the chapel until after the May vacation. On the 2d of June, he delivered to his pupils a sermon, composed for the occasion, during his sickness, from Psalm xciv. 17, 18, 19. "Unless the LORD had been my help, my soul had almost dwelt in silence. When I

said, My foot slippeth; thy mercy, O LORD, held me up. In the multitude of my thoughts within me, thy comforts delight my soul." After a pertinent and solemn introduction, and an allusion to his own sickness and sufferings, the dangerous situation in which he had recently been placed, and the little probability there was, for a time, that he should recover; he proceeded to make a practical use of the doctrine, and the subject. The scene was peculiarly impressive and affecting. In no instance, during his Presidency, until then, had he been kept from his pulpit by sickness, or any other cause. The change in his countenance and general appearance, was great and alarming. The plan of the discourse was new, the thoughts were deeply interesting, the language plain but forcible, the manner of delivery solemn and impressive. The mind can scarcely imagine a case in which an audience, comprised of youths, full of feeling, and ardent in the pursuit of reputation and happiness, would be more deeply affected than this must have been, when hearing from the lips of their revered pastor and teacher the following truths, on the true character of worldly good:—

"To him who stands on the brink of the grave, and the verge of eternity, who retains the full possession of his reason, and who, at the same time, is disposed to serious contemplation, all these things become mightily changed in their appearance. To the eye of such a man, their former alluring aspect vanishes, and they are seen in a new and far different light.

"Like others of our race, I have relished several of these things, with at least the common attachment. Particularly, I have coveted reputation, and influence, to a degree which I am unable to justify. Nor have I been insensible to other earthly gratifications; either to such, as, when enjoyed with moderation, are innocent; or, such as cannot be pursued without sin.

"But, in the circumstances to which I have referred, all these things were vanishing from my sight. Had they been really valuable in any supposable degree, their value was gone. They could not relieve me from pain; they could not restore me to health; they could not prolong my life; they could promise me no good in the life to come. What, then, were these things to me?

"A person, circumstanced in the manner which has been specified, must necessarily regard these objects, however harmless, or even useful, they may be supposed in their nature, as having been hostile to his peace, and pernicious to his well-being. In all his attachment to them, in all his pursuit of them, it is impossible for him to fail of perceiving, that he forgot the interests of his soul, and the commands of his Maker; became regardless of his duty, and his salvation, and hazarded, for dross and dirt, the future enjoyment of a glorious immortality. It is impossible not to perceive, that in the most unlimited possession of them, the soul would have been beggared, and undone; that the gold of the world would not have made him rich; nor its esteem honourable; nor its favour happy. For this end he will discover, that nothing will suffice but treasure laid up in heaven; the loving-kindness of God; and the blessings of life eternal.

"Let me exhort you, my young friends, now engaged in the ardent pursuit of worldly enjoyments, to believe, that you will one day see them in the very light in which they have been seen by me. The attachment to them, which you strongly feel, is unfounded, vain, full of danger, and fraught with ruin. You will one day view them from a dying bed. There, should you retain your reason, they will appear as they really are. They will then be seen to have two totally opposite faces. Of these you have hitherto seen but one. That, gay, beautiful, and alluring as it now appears, will then be hidden from your sight; and another, which you have not seen, deformed, odious, and dreadful, will stare you in the face, and fill you with amazement and bitterness. No longer pretended friends, and real flatterers; they will unmask themselves, and appear only as tempters, deceivers, and enemies, who stood between you and heaven; persuaded you to forsake your God; and cheated you out of eternal life.

"But no acts of obedience will then appear to you to have merited, in any sense, acceptance with God. In this view, those acts of my life, concerning which I entertained the best hopes, which I was permitted to entertain, those, which to me appeared the least exceptionable, were nothing, and less than nothing. The mercy of God, as exercised towards our lost race, through the all-sufficient and glorious righteousness of the Redeemer, yielded me the only foundation of hope for good beyond the grave. During the long continuance of my disease, as I was always, except when in paroxysms of suffering, in circumstances entirely fitted for solemn contemplation; I had ample opportunity to survey this most interesting of all subjects on every side. As the result of all my investigations, let me assure you, and that from the neighbourhood of the eternal world, Confidence in the Righteousness of CHRIST is the only foundation furnished by earth, or heaven, upon which, when you are about to leave this world, you can safely, or willingly, rest the everlasting life of your souls. To trust upon anything else, will be "to feed upon the wind, and sup up the east wind." You will then be at the door of eternity; will be hastening to the presence of your Judge; will be just ready to give up your account of the deeds done in the body; will be preparing to hear the final sentence of acquittal or condemnation; and will stand at the gate of heaven or of hell. In these amazing circumstances you will infinitely need; let me persuade you to believe, and to feel, that you will infinitely need, a firm foundation, on which you may stand, and from which you will never be removed. There is no other such foundation, but the Rock of Ages. Then you will believe, then you will feel, that there is no other. The world, stable as it now seems, will then be sliding away from under your feet. All earthly things, on which you have so confidentially reposed, will recede and vanish. To what will you then betake yourselves for safety?"

On the 17th of June, the same year, the General Association of Connecticut met at New Haven. It was a meeting of unusual interest; and he was able to be present during most of their deliberations. He rejoiced to see the actual establishment of the Domestic Missionary Society of that State for building up its waste churches; in forming the plan of which, he cheerfully lent his assistance. The year preceding was eminently distinguished for revivals of religion; and he listened with a heart overflowing with joy and gratitude to the account of this glorious work of God. After the recital, the eucharist was celebrated; and upwards of one thousand communicants, including about seventy clergymen, received the elements. He was invited by the Association to break the bread. Though pale and enfeebled by disease, and obviously exhausted by strong emotion, he consented. His prayer, on that occasion, was eminently humble, spiritual, and heavenly. It annihilated the distance between the church in heaven and the church around him; and, for the moment, they were together. The address, which blended the affecting considerations customarily growing out of the sacrament, with others derived from the triumphs of the cross to which they had just been listening, left an impression on the audience, which probably will not disappear but with life.

Although the disease with which President Dwight was afflicted, and by which his life had been seriously threatened, was not removed; yet the severity of it was so far relaxed, that he was able, through the summer, to preach steadily in the chapel, to hear the recitations of

the senior class, and to attend to a class of theological students, who were pursuing their studies under his direction. Still, he was not in a situation to pass a day, without resorting repeatedly to the surgical operation, by the aid of which he had in the first instance gained relief from his excruciating distress. But his mind was not idle during the intervals of his professional and official labours. In addition to the sermon which has been mentioned, he wrote, during this season, several Essays on the Evidences of Divine Revelation, derived from the writings of St Paul, and on other subjects; the whole forming matter for a considerable volume. The last of these Essays was finished three days before his death. He also wrote the latter half of a Poem of about fifteen hundred lines; a work of the imagination, the subject of which is, a contest between Genius and Common Sense, on their comparative merits: the question referred to and decided by Truth. He had projected a Series of Essays on moral and literary subjects, under the title of "*The Friend*," to be published, in the manner of the Spectator, once a week in a half sheet. Several numbers were written, as an exercise, for the purpose of satisfying himself, by the experiment, how many he could compose in a given space of time, without interfering with his other duties. He had also projected a periodical publication, to combine the common characteristics of a Review and Magazine, but upon a much more extensive plan than any single work of the kind that has appeared in this country, or even in Europe. A prospectus of this publication he had drawn up; and it was his determination, had his life been spared, and his health such as would admit of it, to have commenced it without delay; engaging himself to furnish one quarter of the original matter in every number. It was, however, apparent to his friends, and probably to himself, that unless he should succeed in gaining relief from the disease which hung about him, his constitution, strong and vigorous as it was, must in the end give way to such uninterrupted pain and suffering. His patience and fortitude, and even his cheerfulness, did not forsake him; but fearful inroads were daily making upon his strength. His mind did not lose its activity or its vigour; but his flesh and strength daily wasted so rapidly away, that it was not to be expected that he could survive many renewed attacks of the distress which his disease occasioned. He presided at the Commencement, in September, and performed the ordinary duties on that occasion.

In the six weeks' vacation, his health appeared to amend: and he was able usually to attend church, and to walk out occasionally during the week. On the 6th of October, he preached all day, and administered the sacrament in one of the churches in the town; and in the other, in the afternoon of the 13th before the Executive and the great part of the Legislature of the State, he bore his public solemn testimony, in the delivery of the CXXI. Sermon of the following Series, against the unhallowed law authorizing divorces.

On the 3rd of November, the second sabbath in the term, he preached in the morning, and administered the Sacrament. Those who heard him will long recollect that his text was Matt. v. 16. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in Heaven." It was his last Sermon; and the administration of the Lord's Supper, which followed it, his last public act as a minister of Christ.

"Although the paleness of his countenance filled every one with anxiety, it was observed," says Professor Silliman, "that he uttered himself with his usual force and animation; and in performing the Communion-service he appeared much softened and affected: nor was he sensible of uncommon fatigue in consequence of so long a service.

"He began as usual to hear the senior class, and persevered, although often with extreme inconvenience, in hearing them at intervals for three or four weeks. He often came into the recitation-room languid, and scarcely able to support himself, expressing his intention to ask only a few questions, and then retire; but insensibly kindling with his subject, his physical system seemed temporarily excited by the action of his mind, and he would discourse with his usual eloquence and interest, and even throw a charm of sprightliness and brilliancy over his communications. He met the senior class, for the last time, on Wednesday, Nov. 27th. He caught cold, was worse from the exertion, and did not go out again.

"He still continued to hear the theological class at his house. Their last recitation was only a week before his death; his sufferings were extreme; his debility scarcely permitted him to utter himself at all; but again his mind abstracted itself from its sympathy with an agonized frame; and in a discourse of one hour and a half on the doctrine of the Trinity, he reasoned and illustrated in the most cogent and interesting manner, and left an indelible impression on the minds of his pupils. It was his last effort in his delightful employment of Instruction."

During his confinement, however, he was not idle; his mind was as active as when he was in sound health. Probably there are very few periods of his life, of the same length, in which he wrote more than from June to December.

He continued in this state of labour and suffering, until Tuesday the 7th of January. He had been recently afflicted by the death of his friends; the Rev. Nathan Strong, D. D. of Hartford, who was also his class-mate; and the Rev. Azel Backus, D. D. President of Hamilton College, in the State of New York. Upon hearing of the death of Dr Strong, he remarked, that the lights of his class were nearly extinguished; alluding to the death of that gentleman and those of the Rev. Charles Backus of Somers, and the Rev. David Ely, D. D. of Huntingdon. With the latter gentleman, in addition to the friendship that had subsisted between them from their youth, he had been associated with the utmost harmony, throughout the whole period of his presidency, as a member of the corporation of the College. On Tuesday the symptoms of his disease appeared more favourable than they had done at any time previous, and his family and physicians were led to entertain very strong hopes that it had passed its crisis, and was experiencing a happy change. On the following morning, however, as he got out of bed, he was seized with a strong nervous affection, which shook his whole frame, and gave rise, in a short time, to the most alarming apprehensions. This paroxysm was succeeded by a high fever, and a constant propensity to drowsiness. When the physicians visited him at ten o'clock in the forenoon, they found it necessary to bleed him. He continued strongly affected by these various symptoms through the day. His pulse was quick, his face in some measure flushed, his brain in a considerable degree affected, and he felt a continued drowsiness, and, at times, severe turns of pain from his local disease. In the evening he became more wakeful, and the severity of his distress increased. In order to relieve him from the pain, a moderate quantity of laudanum was administered. He did not converse much on Wednesday; his excess of suffering, with the affection of the brain, put it out of his power.

He was restless a considerable part of the night, but gained an hour or two of sleep; owing probably to the opiate which he had taken. On Thursday morning he got out of his bed, was dressed, and sat in his chair through the day. He was not so much inclined to drowsiness as on the preceding day; but frequently groaned from extreme pain and distress, and did not enter much into conversation through the day. At the same time,

he answered all questions put to him, with clearness and promptitude; inquired particularly of his friends and neighbours, as they called to see him, concerning their health and that of their families; and showed the same affectionate interest in their welfare, that he had uniformly manifested through life. At evening he attempted to make his usual family prayer, and proceeded for a few minutes with clearness and propriety, but a paroxysm of pain rendered him incapable of utterance, and he desisted. This was the last attempt he made to pray in the family.

Through Thursday night, he became more disturbed and distressed, resting but little; and in the morning it was apparent, from his symptoms generally, and the change of his countenance and voice, that his end was rapidly approaching. From the great strength of his constitution, and the peculiar excitement of his nervous system, caused by his disease, and, perhaps, from the effect which it had produced upon his mind, it was apprehended by his family, that he was not aware of his approaching dissolution. The fact was, therefore, announced to him, accompanied with a suggestion, that if he had any wishes to express, or directions to give, with regard to his worldly concerns, it was to be feared that it was necessary to attend to the subject without delay. He received the intelligence with great calmness; and, as soon as his situation would permit, proceeded to express his wishes on the subject. Under the paroxysms of pain, his mind was more prone to wander, than it had been the two former days. It recurred, however, to a clear and unclouded state, when the paroxysm ceased. At short intervals through the day, when he was the most nearly free from pain, he conversed on various subjects in his usual manner. Subjects connected with the great objects of his labours, his desires, and his prayers through life: the outpouring of the Spirit of God, revivals of religion, the propagation of Christianity, and the dissemination of the Scriptures; were not only near his heart, but, when mentioned, kindled his feelings and awakened his devotion. A day or two previous to his being taken so unwell, he had received from the Rev. Dr Marshman, at Serampore, a very elegant printed specimen of a Chinese translation of the Scriptures. On this subject, he was peculiarly interested, and expressed himself feelingly and with force, on the progress of evangelical truth among the heathen.

In the course of Friday evening, at his request, the eighth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans was read to him. He listened to it with great attention; remarked upon a mistranslation in one or two places; spoke with much fervour of pious emotion on the subject of the chapter; and, at the close of it, exclaimed 'O what a glorious apostrophe!' He also made a number of remarks on the opinions and sentiments of some of the English divines, particularly Clark and Waterland on the doctrine of the Trinity.

The subject of his approaching dissolution was again introduced in the afternoon of that day. He said he was not aware that it was very near; that he had yet a great deal of strength; but still it might be so; as strong constitutions did sometimes suddenly give way. Upon being reminded, that his religious friends would be gratified to learn his views and feelings at the prospect of death, he began to make some remarks upon the great and precious promises of the gospel, when he was seized with a paroxysm of distress, which prevented him from proceeding. A few hours before his death, the subject was, for the last time, mentioned. He appeared to comprehend the object in view; and, though he spoke with difficulty, he answered with entire clearness: that in the extreme sickness with which he was visited in the spring, during some weeks of which he had no expectation of recovery, he had experienced more support and comfort from religion, and the promises of the gospel, than he had ever realized at any former period of his life. 'Had I died then,' said he, 'that fact would doubtless have been considered as affording strong evidence of the sincerity and reality of my faith: but, as I recovered, it probably made but little impression.' It was a sentiment often inculcated by him, that it was more safe to rely upon the tenor of a person's life, as evidence of the true state of his religious character, than upon declarations made upon a death-bed. In the above-mentioned remark, there is little reason to doubt that he alluded to that subject, and intended that it should apply to his former sentiments.

After this, he requested his brother to read to him the 17th of John. While listening to the latter verses of the chapter, he exclaimed, 'O, what triumphant truths!' Afterwards the 14th, 15th, and 16th chapters were read to him. He listened attentively and spoke with lively interest on various passages. His mind evidently wandered while the last chapter was reading, and it was not completed.

A few hours before his death, one of his friends observed to him, that he hoped he was able, in his present situation, to adopt the language of the Psalmist, 'Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me—Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.' He immediately replied, 'I hope so.' For several of his last hours, his organs of speech were so much affected, that it was with difficulty he could articulate distinctly. Many of his words could not be understood. There is, however, no doubt, that, during that period, his mind was unclouded, and his thoughts were fixed on death and heaven. He was occupied a great part of the time in speaking, sometimes in an audible voice, and sometimes in a whisper. Repeated instances occurred in which his expressions were clearly understood. In all of them, his language was that of prayer and adoration. The belief that he was engaged in that delightful Christian duty was confirmed by the peculiarly solemn and devotional expression of his countenance. His eyes appeared to be fixed on that celestial world, whose gates, it is humbly trusted, were just opening to receive his departing spirit into the mansions of everlasting rest, prepared for him in his Father's house. That he enjoyed the use of his reason, until a short time before his death, was satisfactorily manifested by his answer to one of his friends, who was sitting by him, and who asked him if he knew him? upon which, he immediately turned his eyes towards him, looked him full in the face, and said, 'Yes,' with so much distinctness, as to satisfy those who were present, that he perfectly understood the question, and the answer.

He did not appear, for several hours previous to his death, to suffer much pain; but continued to breathe shorter and shorter, until a few minutes before three o'clock, on Saturday morning, the 11th of January, when he expired without a struggle or a groan.

The death of President Dwight spread a deep and general sorrow, not only through the State, but through New England, and extensively through the Union. Beloved by relatives, esteemed by his friends, revered by his pupils, and highly honoured by his countrymen; his loss was universally considered as a great public, as well as private, calamity. In the city where he had so long resided, and where his worth was universally acknowledged, he was sincerely and feelingly lamented. His funeral was attended on Tuesday, the 14th of January, by a large concourse of people, from New Haven and the neighbouring towns, and a respectable number of the clergy from different parts of the State. As a mark of respect, the stores and shops in the city were shut, and business suspended. The scene was solemn and impressive. A deep gloom pervaded the whole assembly, and every one present felt himself a

mourner. The various religious services exhibited the fullest evidence of the affection and respect which the reverend gentlemen, who officiated, entertained for his private virtues, as well as their deep sense of the loss which the church, the college, and the community, had sustained in his death. In many places in different parts of the country, sermons were delivered on the occasion. In New York and Albany, meetings were held by the alumni of the college, resident in those cities, where various public manifestations of their sense of his virtues, their regret for his death, and their respect for his character, were exhibited. Indeed, we know of but one instance that has occurred in this country, in which such extensive public expressions of sorrow for the death of any individual, or respect for his memory, have appeared.

It cannot be expected, that the character of so great and good a man can be fully exhibited in a sketch like the present. A mere outline is all that its limits will admit.

The life of President Dwight, approaching within a few years to the duration allotted by Infinite Wisdom as the ordinary term of the life of man, was passed during one of the most important periods, which has occurred since the era of Christianity. The truth of this remark will be admitted, in whatever light the subject may be considered, whether literary or scientific, political or religious. In each particular he was called to act, and in most of them a very industrious and distinguished part. In order to ascertain his true character it may be well to view him as a man of genius and a scholar; as an instructor; as a preacher; and as a man.

For native powers of mind, he will doubtless be ranked among the first men in the history of our country. The proofs, in support of this remark, need not be sought from any individual source, or from his attainments in any single walk of literature or science. They may be found in every pursuit in which he was engaged, and be gathered in every stage of his progress from the cradle to the grave. In the acquisition of knowledge, we have seen, that the earliest efforts of his mind, even in infancy, were singular and extraordinary; and that his talents were so strongly marked at this early stage of his existence, as perhaps at any subsequent period of his life. At every school, in which he was placed, though commonly the youngest member, he was at the head of his class. In college, notwithstanding his extreme youth, and the many other embarrassments through which he had to struggle, he was surpassed by none of his companions. His acquisitions, during the eight succeeding years after he left college, although he was constantly occupied in the business of instruction, and a considerable part of the time was afflicted with disease and debility, and in a great measure deprived of the use of his eyes, were extensive and profound, not confined to a single science, or to one branch of literature; but comprehending the mathematics and logic, the languages and philology, as well as rhetoric and poetry.

The loss of the use of his eyes, at the early age of twenty-three, is not to be regarded merely as a calamity by which he was deprived of the capacity for reading and study; but in connexion with the fact, that it constantly subjected him to severe and almost uninterrupted suffering. With this insurmountable embarrassment he was obliged to struggle through life. During the great part of forty years, he was not able to read fifteen minutes in the twenty-four hours; and often, for days and weeks together, the pain which he endured in that part of the head immediately behind the eyes amounted to anguish. His life, it will be remembered, was devoted to a learned and laborious profession, and to literary and scientific pursuits. The knowledge, which he gained from books, after the period above-mentioned, was almost exclusively at second hand, by the aid of others: a process slow, tedious, and discouraging. Yet he has ever been esteemed one of the best informed men this country has produced. Industry was indeed one of his most striking characteristics; but it was the industry of a mind conscious of its powers, and delighting in their exercise. All his exertions were the effort of easy action. They cost no labour; and occasioned no fatigue. His perception was clear and rapid, his discernment acute, his invention rich, his taste correct and delicate, his imagination brilliant, his wit genuine, his judgment solid, his views comprehensive, and his reasoning faculties powerful and commanding. Never was a mind under better discipline. All his stores of thought were arranged in exact method, and every faculty was ready at the moment. This was true in conversation, in his lectures to his class, and in his public addresses. No emergency, however sudden or pressing, appeared to surprise him, or to find him unprepared. In repeated instances on the sabbath, when his notes were by accident left at home, and he did not discover it until a few moments before he was to use them; he has, in the instant, taken a new subject of discourse, and formed his plan so happily, and executed it so well, that none of the audience conjectured the fact, or suspected the want of preparation. His mind always rose with the occasion, and was always equal to it. It appeared to view every demand upon it as an obvious call of God. Trusting in Him, it marched directly to its purpose, without even observing those difficulties, which might have proved insurmountable to others.

In one particular, he excelled most men of any age: in the entire command of his thoughts. Having been driven by necessity to pursue his many avocations without the use of his eyes; his memory, naturally strong, acquired a power of retention unusual and surprising. It was not the power of recollecting words, or dates, or numbers of any kind. It was the power of remembering facts and thoughts: especially his own thoughts. When an event in history or biography, or a fact or principle in science, was once known, he appeared never to forget it. When a subject became once familiar to his mind, he rarely, if ever, lost its impression. In this respect, his mind resembled a well-arranged volume; in which every subject forms a separate section, and each view of that subject a separate page. He perfectly knew the order of the subjects; could turn to any page at will; and always found each impression as distinct and perfect as when first formed.

When engaged in the composition of sermons or any other literary performance; not only did the conversation of those around him not interrupt his course of thinking; but, while waiting for his amanuensis to finish the sentence which he had last dictated, he would spend the interval in conversing with his family or his friends, without the least embarrassment, delay, or confusion of thought. His mind took such firm hold of the subject, which principally occupied it, that no ordinary force could separate it from its grasp. He was always conscious of the exact progress which he had made in every subject. When company, or any other occurrence, compelled him to break off suddenly; it would sometimes happen, that he did not return to his employment until after the expiration of several days. On resuming his labours, all he required of his amanuensis was to read the last word, or clause, that had been written; and he instantly would proceed to dictate, as if no interruption had occurred. In several instances he was compelled to dictate a letter, at the same time that he was dictating a sermon. In one, a pressing necessity obliged him to dictate three letters at the same time. He did so. Each amanuensis was fully occupied; and the letters needed no correction but pointing.

A single fact will exhibit, in a striking light, the

comprehension of his mind, and the admirable method of its operations. The reader is requested to examine the 'Analysis,' at the close of this Memoir, and to observe how extensive, and yet how logical, is the plan of his Lectures. This Analysis was formed from the Lectures themselves, since his decease. He wrote no plan of them himself; but, in completing them, relied exclusively on the scheme of thought, which existed in his own mind. We have rarely seen any work, even of much less extent, unless some treatise on mathematical or physical science, in which the perfection of mathematical arrangement is so nearly attained. It ought to be added, that the following volumes * are published as they were dictated to the amanuensis; with almost no corrections except those which were owing to the mistakes of the penman, or the illegibility of his hand.

To conceive, to invent, to reason, was in such a sense instinctive, that neither employment appeared to fatigue or exhaust him. After severe and steady labour, his mind was as prepared for any species of exertion, as if it had done nothing: for the activity and sprightliness of conversation; for the closer confinement of investigation; or for the excursive range of poetry. Almost all his poetry, written subsequently to the age of twenty-three, was dictated to an amanuensis, after the unintermitted application of the day. Not unfrequently, in an autumnal or winter evening, would he compose from fifty to sixty lines in this manner. The first part of his 'Genius and Common Sense' is in the stanza of 'The Faery Queene,' the most difficult stanza in English poetry. Repeatedly has he been known to dictate four of these stanzas, or forty-four lines, in the course of such an evening; and chiefly without any subsequent corrections.

The earliest of his poetical productions, that has been preserved, though written at the age of fifteen, bears the characteristic marks, both in style and thought, of his later and more mature compositions. While he was connected with the college, either as a student or a tutor, he wrote and published several small poems on various subjects, which were very favourably received at the time, and are still admired for sweetness of versification, as well as for delicacy and purity of sentiment.

The early age at which he wrote the Conquest of Canaan is to be remembered in forming our estimate of the poem. It is not believed, that the history of English poetry contains the account of an equal effort, made at so early an age. The subject of the poem has been objected to, as not sufficiently interesting to render such a performance popular with the great body of readers. At the time of its publication, there was undoubtedly some ground for this remark. It was published a short time after the peace of 1783: a period unhappily characterised by an extensive prevalence of infidelity, as well as of loose sentiments with regard to morals. In this state of things, no poem, founded on a scriptural story, however meritorious in itself, however happy its plan, or brilliant its imagery, or interesting its incidents, or distinct its characters, or noble its sentiments; could fail to be in a degree unpopular; especially, if breathing the purest morality, and the most exalted piety. Had its appearance been postponed to a period within the last fifteen years, during which time, infidelity has given place to a reverence for the Bible, and a general regard for the doctrines which it contains; there is little reason to doubt, that its reception would have been still more flattering to the author, and more just to its own merit as a work of genius. The Conquest of Canaan contains abundant evidence of rich invention, of harmonious versification, of a brilliant fancy, of strong powers of description, of a sublime imagination, of vigorous thought, and of the most pure and virtuous sentiment.

* The work was originally published in 5 vols. 8vo.

In addition to his attainments in classical learning, and the sciences in general, President Dwight had acquired a vast fund of information, on almost all the concerns of human life. His acquaintance with books was extensive; comprising not only those appropriate to his profession as a minister, and his office as President of the College, but on all important and interesting subjects. He was thoroughly read in ancient and modern history, geography, biography, and travels. Few works of this description, especially those of the two last classes, escaped his attention. With the pursuits of agriculture, he was practically as well as theoretically conversant. In the cultivation of his garden he took peculiar pleasure, and displayed an uncommon degree of skill and science. Of his extensive knowledge on these subjects, his poem called 'Greenfield Hill' affords satisfactory evidence. One part of that work, entitled '*the Farmer's Advice to the Villagers*,' contains a body of information, and of sound advice, addressed to that valuable class of men, of the utmost practical utility. In truth, it is difficult to name a subject of any considerable importance, connected with the common pursuits of men in the business of life, which he had not made the subject of accurate observation and close thought; on which he had not collected many valuable facts; or about which he was not able to communicate much that was interesting and useful.

It has been seen, that a large proportion of President Dwight's life was devoted to the instruction of youth. From the age of seventeen to sixty-four, he was scarcely ever entirely disengaged from that employment; and there were not more than two years of that period, in which he did not pursue it as his constant business. His first effort afforded a sure promise of that high degree of excellence, in this interesting employment, to which he afterward attained. In the course of his life, he assisted in educating between two and three thousand persons.

In the great change produced in the college, during his tutorship, by his efforts and those of his associates, his own exertions were of primary importance. He continued much longer in the office of tutor than they did, and, of course, had a greater opportunity to execute the plans for improvement which they had jointly devised, and put in operation.

It was unquestionably a fortunate circumstance for him, when he entered upon the presidency, that the public had full confidence in his capacity to fulfill its duties. It is, however, to be remembered, that this confidence was not, in any measure, founded upon mere expectation, or calculation. It rested upon a thorough acquaintance with his experience and success in the arduous and difficult business of instruction. The possession of this confidence enabled him to commence his labours in the institution according to his own ideas of usefulness and practicability: and to adopt such a course of measures as the exigency of the case required. And to his independence and energy, his industry and devotion to his duty, is the college eminently indebted for the high character to which it was elevated, amidst all its difficulties and embarrassments, at the time of his accession, and during his continuance in the office.

One of his most important qualifications as the head of such an institution, was an intimate knowledge of the character and feelings of young men, which, by long observation, he had acquired. The possession of this knowledge, so indispensably necessary, and yet so rarely to be met with, enabled him to direct his efforts, in the administration of the government, and the application of discipline, in the most judicious and efficacious manner, to accomplish the objects in view. Those objects were, the peace and reputation of the college, and the character and highest interests of the students. Having adopted a system, which was, in its nature and

tendency, parental, he watched over the conduct and welfare of his academical children with affection and solicitude. So successful was he in the application of this system, that the youths, who were placed under his care, loved and revered him as an affectionate father. When admonition or censure, or even more severe measures, at any time, became necessary, his course of proceeding was in a high degree efficacious and salutary. These admonitions and censures were delivered in a manner, affectionate, indeed, but plain and searching; and rarely failed of producing their intended effect. Many a youth, whose conduct had subjected him to the discipline of the college, has found his stubborn temper subdued, his heart melted into contrition, and himself compelled to submission and obedience, by the private, solemn, but pathetic and eloquent remonstrances of his kind and affectionate teacher.

President Dwight's talents, as an instructor, were nowhere more conspicuous than in the recitation-room of the senior class.

The year commenced with the study of rhetoric, in which the Lectures of Blair were the text-book. The questions, naturally arising from the lesson, were first answered; and the principles of the author freely examined. This usually occupied not more than half an hour; and was succeeded by a familiar extemporaneous lecture on the subject, which filled up the residue of the two hours commonly devoted to his recitations. This lecture was often enlivened by anecdote and humour, and interspersed with striking illustrations. It frequently exhibited lively sallies of the imagination, and occasionally high specimens of eloquence. Yet it was in fact, though not in form, a regular dissertation, a connected chain of powerful reasoning, calculated to leave a distinct and permanent impression on the mind. When the course of rhetoric was completed, that of logic and metaphysics succeeded; in which the regular text-books were Duncan, and Locke's Essay on the Human Understanding. After this followed ethics; when Paley's Moral Philosophy was studied. In these recitations, also, a similar method was adopted. Those three courses occupied three days in the week through the year. On each of these days the class exhibited written compositions. Two more were devoted to forensic disputation. The discussions of the students were commonly written, but at times extemporaneous. When these discussions were finished, the President closed the debate, in an argument giving a comprehensive view of the question; and occupying, according to its importance, sometimes the space of half an hour, and sometimes that of several recitations. The series of questions thus discussed usually involved the more important disputable points in science, politics, morals, and theology. Many of his decisions, as specimens of reasoning and eloquence, were not surpassed by his happiest public efforts. On Saturday, Vincent's 'Exposition of the Shorter Catechism' was recited. The lesson terminated in a few minutes, and was followed by a theological lecture on the subject. At the close, he heard declamations. The students regularly looked forward to the senior year as peculiarly interesting and important; in which their minds were to be disciplined and furnished for action. No compulsion was necessary to secure their presence in the recitation-room. Even those, who had previously been indolent, attended of choice. In each of the four courses of rhetoric, logic and metaphysics, ethics, and theology as taught in Vincent, he spent more time in instructing his class than is customarily spent in the regular lectures of Professors in those sciences. In addition to this, he was the stated preacher twice on the sabbath; addressed the students at length in the theological chamber on Saturday evening; superintended the general administration of the college government; wrote by the assistance of his pupils or of a regular amanuensis almost all the works which he ever wrote; and attended with marked punctuality to all the calls of civility and friendship. It ought here to be remembered, that, for the first twenty years of his presidency, he was rarely able to read so much as a single chapter in the Bible in the twenty-four hours.

One important feature of his administration was the selection of his assistant officers of the faculty. The professorship of theology, it has been mentioned, was occupied by himself. The others were filled with much younger gentlemen than had been usual; the education of nearly all of whom he had superintended; and with whose talents and qualifications he was thoroughly acquainted. The advantages of this course were numerous; and the wisdom of it has been fully proved and acknowledged. The college faculty entertained perfect confidence in one another, and entire harmony of opinion as to the system of government. The welfare of the college was a common interest; to promote which, they lent their whole united influence. In its administration, they always moved as one man. The experience, judgment, and energy of the President, and the active and vigorous co-operation of his younger associates, had the happiest effects on its good order and regularity, even in times the most turbulent and threatening. The consequence was, that Yale College was tranquil at a period well remembered, when almost every other public seminary in the Union was shaken to its centre.

As a minister and preacher of the gospel, it is not easy to convey an adequate idea of his characteristic excellence. Having been compelled, from the weakness of his eyes, to adopt the plan of preaching without notes; his sermons, except those designed for extraordinary occasions, were for the first twenty years chiefly unwritten. Usually, he barely noted the general divisions, and some of the most important and leading ideas. There is no doubt, that this mode had its peculiar advantages; nor that his style and manner, as an extemporaneous preacher, were more popular and captivating than at a later period, when his discourses were written at length. When unconfined by notes, the whole field of thought was before him. Into that field he entered; conscious where his subject lay, and by what metes and bounds it was limited; and enjoying also that calm self-possession and confidence of success, which trial alone can give, and which every successive effort had only served to increase. Within these limits, his powers had full scope, his imagination was left to range at will, his feelings were kindled, and his mind became in the highest degree creative. Its conceptions were instantaneous; its thoughts were new and striking; its deductions clear and irresistible; and its images, exact representations of what his eye saw, living, speaking, and acting. When we add, that these were accompanied by the utmost fluency and force of language, a piercing eye, a countenance deeply marked with intellect, a strong emphasis, a voice singular for its compass and melody, an enunciation remarkably clear and distinct, a person dignified and commanding, and gestures graceful and happy; we need not inform the reader, that his pulpit efforts at this period possessed every characteristic of animated and powerful eloquence. Many instances of its effects upon large audiences are remembered, and might easily be mentioned, which were most striking proofs of its power over the feelings and the conscience.

In the formation of his Sermons he pursued a course in a great degree original. Texts familiar, by common use among preachers, to the mind of his audience, would form the subject of discourses, new, solemn, and impressive. The truth to be illustrated was often new, the arrangement and arguments were new, the images were always new, and the thoughts peculiarly his own. The very weakness of his eyes, which occasioned him

so much pain and self-denial, was in some respects advantageous. He could not himself read the sermons of others. Religious books of a different class were read aloud in his family on the sabbath. And most rarely indeed was he permitted to listen to the sermons of his brethren. Thus deriving no assistance from the efforts of others, he was compelled to depend exclusively on the resources of his own intellect. Happily these were rich and inexhaustible. It is probably owing to this fact that his Sermons bear the characteristic stamp of his own mind, and are throughout in the highest sense his own. In this respect; in a fair claim to originality of thought, of method, and of illustration; it is confidently believed, that the Sermons of President Dwight need not shrink from a comparison with those of any other writer.

In his extemporaneous efforts, though his fancy was ever visibly active, still it was controlled by judgment and taste. They were indeed more richly ornamented with imagery than most of his written sermons; yet figures were introduced not merely because they were beautiful; but for the purpose of illustration or impression. His own views of the duty of a minister of Christ in this respect are happily conveyed in several of the Discourses in this volume; and still more fully in some of his occasional sermons. He considered him bound to forget himself, and remember nothing but the purpose for which he was sent: the salvation of his hearers. Every attempt at display, every attempt to exhibit his own talents, or taste, or fancy, or learning, in a preacher, was in his view an obvious prostitution of his office to private and unhallowed purposes. His rules and his conduct were in this respect harmonious.

After his appointment to the office of Professor of Theology, in 1805, when he began steadily to employ an amanuensis, he turned his attention more to writing his sermons at length. The frequent calls upon him to preach at different places, on extraordinary occasions, and a disposition to render his systematic discourses to the students as nearly correct and perfect as possible, probably had influence with him in the adoption of this course. His systematic sermons had cost him much labour and research. They were favourite discourses with the public at large, and with his pupils; many of whom took notes of them every sabbath. He thought, if they possessed the merit ascribed to them, that they ought to be written out. Other considerations also had their weight. He observed an increasing attachment in some parts of the country to a florid and highly embellished style of composition: in his own view owing to a vitiated taste; involving a substitution of ornament for thought, and of sound for sense; and wholly subversive of the very end of preaching. This mode of writing was gaining popularity among his own pupils; and he felt desirous as far as possible to counteract it. Knowing the efficacy of a teacher's example on the conduct of those under his care; he determined carefully to avoid everything of this nature in his own discourses, and to subject his mind, naturally fond of imagery, to a severer discipline than it would submit to in the moment of extemporaneous effort.

The Discourses in this volume obviously required in this respect, as well as in others, peculiar care. Their primary object is to explain and prove the great truths of theology; and their second, to enforce them on the conscience, and show their practical influence on the heart and life. They are not merely Theological Lectures; but are, in the strictest sense, Sermons. Yet as the purpose in the body of each Discourse is the discovery of truth, the use of figurative language, except for illustration, would there have been improper. In the application, it might be admitted to enforce and enhance it. The reader will, we think, admire the good sense displayed in this particular. In the division of the subject he will never find figurative language introduced. The body of the Discourse, if, as is most commonly the case, the subject be merely argumentative, is almost equally destitute of it. If, however, it be a subject rather requiring description and enhancement than proof; as in the Discourses on Heaven, on the Holy Angels, on the creation of the Earth and of Man, on the Resurrection, the Last Judgment, and the Future Happiness of the Righteous; it will be seen that the author's mind rises with his subject. Having heard those Discourses, to which we have just now referred; we have ever viewed them as distinguished models of sacred eloquence.

The series of Theological Sermons was written out at the close of 1809. After completing it, he wrote out many of his Miscellaneous Sermons, both doctrinal and practical. These were intentionally less pruned than the former, but more so than his earlier efforts. There is little reason to doubt, that these, should they ever be published will prove more entertaining to the mass of readers, than the Discourses in this volume. They discover equal talent, present a great variety of subject and of manner, and usually require less mental exertion in the perusal. Among them are the sermons preached on the sabbath preceding the Commencement to the candidates for the Baccalaureate. They were addressed to his immediate pupils, when just about to leave the institution; to bid adieu to him as their instructor, and to each other as companions; and to engage in the busy scenes of life. Over their conduct he had long watched with unremitting care; and for their present and future welfare he felt the highest degree of solicitude. They contain an accurate development of the human character, and of the temptations, follies, and vices of the world; as well as the purest moral and religious sentiments, enforced with the feeling and fervency of parental affection, and accompanied by the parting counsels of a wise and experienced preceptor and friend.

Of the Miscellaneous Sermons at large, our limits forbid us to attempt a delineation. We will mention one of them, which appears to have been conceived in a peculiarly auspicious moment; and has been eminently followed with the blessing of God. His students will realize that we intend the Discourse on Jer. viii. 20, 'The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved.' In two instances, the delivery of it was obviously the commencement of a revival of religion among his pupils; in the first of which nearly half of them were united to the college church. Similar consequences have been ascribed to its delivery on two other occasions in different places. Never have we witnessed effects on mixed audiences equally solemn and powerful from any sermon as in several instances from this. Many beside his pupils ascribed to it their first impressions on religious subjects.

His sermons were uncommonly intelligible to all classes of people. His division of his subject was natural, neat, and easily remembered. His style, though at times highly ornamented and elevated, was still plain and perspicuous; and his delivery, though occasionally rapid, was clear and distinct. Owing to these qualities, the illiterate, and persons of ordinary capacity, were able to understand him without difficulty.

Another characteristic of his preaching was a constant regard to practical effect. Even the Sermons which compose this volume, the object of which was primarily to exhibit to his pupils a complete system of Christian doctrines, will be found in their application to have this discriminating character. It was impossible for him to enter the desk but as the herald of reconciliation. He could not fail to discover his affecting sense of the greatness of the Being who sent him, or of the infinite importance of the message which he brought. And his most obvious purpose was to accomplish the salvation of those to whom it was delivered.

It is believed, on the best evidence, that this purpose was to an unusual extent accomplished by his preaching. Immediately before the commencement of his presidency, the college church among the students was almost extinct; it came at last to consist of only two members, and soon after his accession, it dwindled to a single person. During the greater part of his continuance in office it embraced at least one fourth, in various instances one third, and in one upwards of half, of the students. Perhaps no object of contemplation afforded him higher pleasure, towards the close of his life, than the number of his pupils, who had become, or were intending to become, preachers; especially when he remembered how frequently the labours of the former had been crowned with success.

In the performance of the other exercises of public worship, he greatly excelled. His manner of reading the Scriptures, and sacred poetry, was peculiarly happy and impressive. In the appropriateness, variety, fluency, copiousness, fervency, and elevation of prayer, as regarded subjects, sentiment, and language, he was nearly without a rival. Entirely free from form, from tiresome repetition, and from lukewarmness; and under the influence of the deepest abasement and prostration of soul; his heart appeared to be melted, and 'his lips to be touched as with a live coal from off the altar,' when he was engaged in this sublime and delightful duty.

But his usefulness as a minister, was not confined to his labours in the pulpit. He was emphatically the friend, the counsellor, and the guide of his younger brethren in the sacred profession. In the language of one of his pupils, 'He was, indeed, a father to New England—her moral legislator. His life is an era in her history. To the churches of his persuasion in that country, he was a guardian, a friend, a counsellor. In the hour of trial, they found support in his firmness, assistance in his wisdom, and encouragement in his prayers. As a peacemaker, he was eminently blessed; for his advice was asked and given in the spirit of Christian humility and justice.' Great numbers of the clergy, had, first or last, been his pupils;—he had been their friend and adviser, as well as their instructor; and they felt the most implicit confidence in his disposition, and his capacity, to assist them in their embarrassments and difficulties. For this purpose they resorted to him with perfect freedom, and were received by him with the utmost kindness and respect. He entered at once into their interests and feelings; and the services, which he rendered them, were numerous and important. Having the advantage of long observation and experience, an extensive acquaintance with the state of the country, and the character, wants, and condition, of its inhabitants; and being the centre of application for the supply of instructors both literary and religious for a wide extent of country; he was able to adapt his opinions to the exigencies of the various cases in which he was consulted; and to furnish those, who sought it, with employment and support. Few imagine how many parishes in New England, New York, and elsewhere, have, through his agency, been furnished with clergymen.

In short, his character as a preacher may be summed up in the language of the writer last alluded to; 'While he shunned not to declare the whole counsel of God, he strengthened his arguments by illustrations from the history of nations, and the biography of individuals. His application of Scripture doctrines and texts to the ever-varying aspect of human life; his insight into the groundwork of character, and the motives to action; his admirable sketches, as it were, with the very pencil, and in the very colouring of the inspired writers, distinguished him from the mere commentator on texts, and the sentimental moralist. Of his eloquence, as with other great orators, few can judge correctly, but those who have heard him. They will never forget him, either in this world or the next. To simplicity, in manner and matter, he added dignity; to ease he added energy; to fervour he added humility. Preaching too often seems, with ministers, the work of a day or an hour; but with him it was the work of eternity. He preached as a sinner and dying man himself: he preached as in the presence of God, and of the spirits of just men made perfect; he preached as though he saw his crown of glory ever before him; as though he heard the Saviour saying, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." His sermons were not adorned with as many decorations of taste, and ornaments of imagination, as some other distinguished pulpit orators.' But in the primary qualities of real eloquence, his sermons were eminently rich: in powerful appeals to the heart, in vivid pictures of vice and virtue, sketched from the life; in awful denunciations; in solemn remonstrance; in fervent intercession.'

It remains only to view President Dwight as a man, in the various walks of private life, exhibiting the virtues which peculiarly adorn that interesting station. And, perhaps, no part of the task, which has been undertaken in this account, has been more difficult of execution. 'It is rare,' says Professor Silliman, who had been long and intimately acquainted with him, in private as well as in public life, 'that a man, so great and splendid in the public eye, is in private life so desirable; for, to his particular friends his society was delightful, and the only effect of long and intimate acquaintance with him was to exact towards him every sentiment of respect, admiration, and affection.' 'In the domestic and social circle,' says another of his pupils, 'Dr Dwight will ever be remembered with the tenderest affection, and the most sincere regret.' 'In private society,' says a third, 'Dr Dwight possessed uncommon powers to please and to instruct. With an inexhaustible stock of knowledge on almost every subject, and an ease of communication, to which a parallel can hardly be found, he easily accommodated his remarks to the character and means of improvement of those with whom he conversed; and seldom failed to excite the highest respect and admiration. From the weakness of his eyes, and his consequent inability to employ himself much in reading, except by the assistance of others, he was led to devote more of his time to the society of his friends, than, perhaps, in other circumstances he would have judged expedient. He ever considered the diversified conversation of a social circle, as affording the most rational, and, at the same time, the most entertaining of all amusements.' 'A disappointment,' says a fourth, 'is often felt, on our introduction to men who have attained eminence for talents and piety. By habits of seclusion and abstraction, they have, perhaps, lost the ability to mingle, with interest, in the concerns of the passing day. It was not so with President Dwight. In his manners he was, in the highest degree, dignified, affable, and polite. Like Johnson, he shone in no place with more distinguished splendour, than in the circle of the friends he loved; when the glow of animation lighted up his countenance, and a perpetual stream of knowledge and wisdom flowed from his lips. As his had been a life of observation and reflection rather than of secluded study, his acquisitions were all practical, they were all at hand, ready to enrich and adorn his conversation. In theology and ethics, in natural philosophy and geography, in history and statistics, in poetry and philology, in husbandry and domestic economy, his treasures were equally inexhaustible. Interesting narration, vivid description, and sallies of humour; anecdotes of the just, the good, the generous, the brave, the eccentric; these all were blended, in fine proportions, to form the bright and varied tissue of his discourse. Alive to all the

sympathies of friendship, faithful to its claims, and sedulous in performing its duties, he was beloved by many from early life, with whom he entered on the stage, and whom, as Shakspeare says, he "grappled to his soul with hooks of steel." It is no small proof of his amiableness, that all who gained the most intimate access to him, whether associates, or pupils, or amanuenses, admired, revered, and loved him most.'

These various testimonies, written by so many different persons, all having the best means of judging, while they evince his excellence in private life, also show how impossible it must be, in a sketch like the present, to give an adequate view of the character of a man so greatly distinguished in every public station which he was called to occupy, so justly admired in the circle of his friends, and so tenderly beloved in the bosom of his own family.

The purity of his sentiments and language was equally remarkable and exemplary. In conversation, he not only observed the strictest delicacy himself, in his remarks, and allusions, and anecdotes; but, by an influence, at once silent and perceptible, induced every one else to do the same. The same is true of his writings. It is believed, that in the whole of his voluminous works there cannot be found a single sentence which is not consistent with the most refined purity. Nor, after an intimate acquaintance of more than forty years, is the instance recollected in which he has been heard to utter an expression, or a thought, which would have excited the apprehensions of innocence, or wounded the ear of female sensibility.

He was, from infancy, distinguished for the most conscientious regard to truth. This was obvious in every day's conversation. He never allowed himself to exaggerate, nor in any degree to misrepresent. In no situation, whether surprised by strong temptation, or urged by the most pressing necessity, would he sanction the slightest deviation from absolute verity. Equally sincere was he in his professions. The kindness and services which he rendered, always exceeded the expectations which he had intentionally raised. He had too much self-respect to keep any man in the dark as to his opinions or principles. He entertained none which he was not willing to communicate to the world; and his declarations concerning them were mathematically true.

No less was he remarkable for the most scrupulous regard to decorum. His manners were those of the polished gentleman: characterised by ease, grace, and dignity. There was no distance, no reserve, no visible consciousness of superior intellect. His politeness was not a mere exterior. It was the great law of kindness, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself,' exemplified in his daily intercourse with those around him. It was, thus, universal; appearing in his countenance, his conversation, and his conduct; exhibited equally towards persons of every condition; and delicately regarding the characters, the circumstances, the feelings, and the prejudices, of those who were present. All men were easy and happy in his company. Amidst all his avocations and labours, he was ever ready to attend to the calls of hospitality, of civility, and of friendship; calls which were multiplied upon him to an unprecedented degree, but which were never suffered to pass by unheeded. The courteousness of his manners was exemplified in his intercourse with the poor and the humble, as well as with those in more elevated stations; by his treating them at all times with kindness, listening to their wants, and, as far as lay in his power, administering to their necessities.

His charities were unceasing, and, in proportion to his resources, rarely surpassed. The beggar at the door never went empty away. Those, who suffered in silence, he continually sought out, and sent them unsolicited relief. Those, whom the providence of God had suddenly impoverished, never applied to him for help in vain. To religious charities, to the education of young men of piety, to the distribution of Bibles, to the support of missions, to the assistance of destitute churches, he loved peculiarly to contribute. The only privilege of the affluent, which he coveted, was the good which they might do with their wealth, and the pleasure which they might enjoy in doing it.

No man ever loved his friends with more sincerity or constancy, or with warmer affection. His house, his hand, and his heart, were always open to welcome them. He never deserted them in distress; or because they were the objects of reproach and calumny. Instead of this, he chose rather to withdraw from those who attacked them, however numerous, or wealthy, or powerful. To their failings he was kind; never, by even a remote allusion, giving others reason to suppose that he observed them. Their excellencies he loved to acknowledge. The characteristics in his view, which ought especially to govern in the choice of intimate friends, were not talents, nor learning, nor wealth, nor influence, nor polish, nor fashion: they were sincere affection, tried personal worth, and refinement of the mind. In this respect few have been more happy. In his intercourse with his friends, and with others, all his purposes were kind, and generous, and honourable. He would not condescend to wear disguise, nor to associate with those before whom it was necessary.

Personal independence and decision of character were inwrought in the very texture of his mind. He was afraid of no man. The history of his life presented no vulnerable points; and he knew that reproach and slander could not do him injury. While he received intelligence and advice from every quarter, and would change his purpose, if a sufficient reason was given; yet without such a reason, no influence nor entreaties, no flattery nor threats, could induce him to change it. His purpose was his duty. Motives of a higher nature than any which present objects can afford, led him to embrace it; and no other motives could prompt him to relinquish it. For this, he was ready at all times, if it became necessary, to sacrifice the objects which are usually most valued;—the friendship of any friend, the civilities and courtesy of the rich, the fashionable, and the powerful, and the applause of the many. The formation of his opinions on religious subjects, he appeared ever to consider as a transaction exclusively between God and himself. Aiming to leave other things wholly out of view, he resorted to the Bible as the perfect standard of faith; and as absolutely obligatory on the conscience; believing that his own mind was darkened by many errors, and needed the illumination of the Spirit of light. Various opinions, ardently embraced when a youth, he afterward relinquished, from a conviction that they were unfounded. His sentiments on all important religious subjects will be found in this volume. What he believed to be true he would preach, in all the extent in which he received it, leaving the consequences with God. His views of Christian catholicism and of the importance of truth, will be found in several of the following sermons. His feelings, and conversation, and conduct towards those who differed from him, were evangelically liberal. Virtue, he described, as 'voluntary obedience to truth;' and vice, as 'voluntary obedience to error.' He held the Scriptures to be a plain, intelligible revelation of the will of God; and every man, who has them, to be equally responsible for his faith as for his practice. No considerations would induce him to be civil to error, as such; or to narrow the distinction between error and truth. While he treated those whom he believed to embrace errors, even fundamental ones, with kindness; on all proper occasions, he exposed their errors without hesitation and without fear. The value of their applause and their friendship was 'less than

nothing,' in comparison with the value of truth, and of a clear conscience before God.

All who have attempted to draw his character have mentioned him as eminently disinterested. Few men have originated more numerous, or more important institutions or measures. Yet it is believed, that in no instance whatever was he even suspected to connect a private selfish end; his own personal benefit, or the advancement of any member of his family; with that which was avowed and ostensible. The purposes which he professed were the only purposes he had in view. To accomplish them, he could not stoop to management and finesse. They were honourable purposes. He declared them with the sincerity of truth, and pursued them with the dignity of virtue. So perfectly known was his character in this respect, that the instance probably cannot be named, in which any man ventured to approach him for assistance, in a manner which was not direct and honourable.

The love of money appears to have had no influence over his mind. He viewed wealth not as a blessing in itself, but in the good which it enabled its possessor to do to himself, his family, and others. He had a right 'to eat and to drink, and to enjoy the good of his labour under the sun,' and to make adequate provision for his family. But the residue was vested in his hands to promote the well-being of his fellow men. These were his principles. Were the amount of property that he relinquished for the benefit of the Institution over which he presided to be stated; those who know how limited were his resources, would view the degree in which they were reduced by his liberality as literally romantic.

His temper was ardent and natively impetuous; but under the discipline of kindness and of principle it had been chiefly subdued. If its impetuosity was ever manifested, it was against conduct which was base and dishonourable. If at any time, through misinformation, he had been led to form incorrect views of men or of conduct; when convinced of it, no man more cheerfully retracted his error. His ardour was daily conspicuous in his friendships, his love of rectitude, and his zeal for doing good. Though ardent, he was amiable and affectionate, and possessed an almost childlike simplicity and tenderness of heart. Never have we known the individual, whose feelings were more uniformly or more powerfully excited by the recital of a tale of distress, of a kind and honourable action, or of an account of the triumphs of the cross.

The interest which he took in the great and splendid Christian charities, which characterize the present era, was extinguished only with the lamp of life. While able to converse, the establishment, labours, and success of Bible Societies and Missionary Societies maintained their hold upon his heart. Such was the excitement which, from time to time, during the few last days of his life, the accounts of their success produced upon his mind, that it was sufficient for the moment to control the influence of his disease; to bring back his thoughts, occasionally bewildered by the intenseness of his sufferings, to entire collectedness; and to enable him to give vent to his feelings in the lively and animated language of fervent and pious gratification.

In the nearest relations of private life, President Dwight was an example of almost all that is excellent and praiseworthy. As a son, he manifested towards his parents, on all occasions, the most dutiful and cheerful obedience, and the most reverential affection. So true is this remark, that his mother declared a short time before her death, that she did not know the instance in which he ever disobeyed a parental command, or failed in the performance of a filial duty.—As a husband and a father, his life was eminently lovely. It was a uniform display of conjugal affection and paternal tenderness: a daily exemplification of the great principle of benevolence—'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' His highest earthly enjoyment was found at the fireside, in the bosom of his family. Their happiness was his own; and to promote it, no exertions were too great.—As a brother, it has been seen he was affectionate and generous; supplying to his numerous brothers and sisters, as far as the nature of things would admit, the severe loss they had sustained in the morning of their lives in the death of an excellent father.—As a friend and neighbour, let the united testimony of the various communities, in which at different periods of his life he resided, give his character. Rarely indeed does an instance occur, in which the influence of individual example has been more beneficially experienced. It was not merely that he was kind to his neighbours, polite and hospitable to strangers, and charitable to the poor; and that, as far as in him lay, he followed peace with all men—there was a moral charm that uniformly surrounded him, which was felt in every circle, and spread its benign influence through the region in which he dwelt.

His sentiments with regard to personal religion are everywhere unfolded in the following work; but especially in the Sermon on the Nature of Faith; in those on Regeneration; and in those on the Two Great Commandments. We have met with no other account of these subjects which has appeared to us equally definite and satisfactory. Religion he viewed as having its seat only in the heart; and himself and all men by nature as entirely destitute of it; and remaining so voluntarily until renewed by God the Holy Ghost. Wherever it existed, he supposed it to be comprehended in love, and proved to exist only by the fruits of love visible in the life. His views of his own attainments as a Christian were unaffectedly humble. On this subject he was reluctant to converse; conceiving that real piety is unostentatious, and that mere professions are of little value. Rarely if ever has he been known to mention it when numbers were present; and not often before a single Christian friend. He never spoke of himself as a Christian. His humility in this respect was striking in his sermons and his prayers; when speaking of the Christians present, never including himself among them. His declarations on this subject, in health and in sickness, always were, that he did not know that he had any personal interest in the mediation of Christ; that the promises of the gospel were great and glorious; that he was usually free from distressing doubts and apprehensions; and that his hopes were often bright and supporting. He loved retirement for religious meditation, self-examination, and secret prayer; and spent, it is believed, a portion of every day in the discharge of these duties. His prayers in the family and in public exhibited, so far as the human mind can judge, unusual evidence of contrition, self-abasement, trust, resignation, gratitude, and love. We have not known the individual whose powers to instruct or to interest in conversation were superior to his; yet it was his highest pleasure to converse on religious subjects, and where propriety permitted it, on experimental religion. Such was the state of his thoughts and feelings at all times in company, that his mind seemed willing to enter on the contemplation of religion at every opportunity. It was not, however, mere speculation. It was a living exhibition of the various affections of piety and benevolence as they came warm from the heart.

His life was a steady course of cheerfulness, as well as of submission; and this under trials well culculatea to determine the character. Probably no man, without actual experience, can realize how great a trial of patience it is, to endure pain in the eyes every day for more than forty years, uninterrupted except by the hours of sleep, and often intense and agonizing; to be deprived by it for weeks together of a great part of his

necessary sleep; to be cut off absolutely from the pleasure of reading; and to be continually threatened by it with blindness, and occasionally with apoplexy. Not only, however, did he not murmur nor repine; he was resigned. He was more—he was universally cheerful and happy; and always ready to contribute to the happiness of those around him. He chose rather to remember his blessings than his afflictions; and felt that he had not deserved the least mercy. Nay, his very afflictions he viewed as among his greatest blessings.

Death often invaded his peace. He lost a father in the prime of life and usefulness, whom he ever mentioned with the highest reverence; three brothers at the age of manhood, whom he tenderly lamented; a mother endeared to him by every consideration which could affect the heart of filial piety; two sisters, for whom he felt no ordinary warmth of attachment; and a son, a youth of fine promise, at the age of nineteen, just after he had completed his education. The effect of these repeated strokes was obviously such as a Christian should desire. Their evident tendency was to soften the heart, to subdue the will, to loosen the attachment to terrestrial good, to enliven the conscience, and to assist the soul in its assumption of the heavenly character. This was peculiarly observable on the death of his son. It occurred before the termination of a remarkable revival of religion among the students of the seminary; during which he was believed to have become possessed of personal piety. Had he lived, he intended to have been a clergyman. He died at a distance from home; and his father did not arrive in season to be present at his funeral. Rarely have we witnessed parental sorrow equally intense and permanent. Rarely could he mention his son without a faltering voice, and cheeks suffused with tears.

Those who witnessed his sufferings during the two last years of his life, were not more struck with their severity, nor with the fortitude which he discovered under them, than with the marked effect of them upon his mind. Often, for months together, the pain which he endured was not only unintermitted, but, in its severest forms, spasmodical. During the continuance of these convulsions, which recurred frequently during the day, so intense was the anguish, that the sweat would roll down his forehead for many minutes together in continued streams. Yet such was his fortitude, that though compelled at times to groan from severity of distress, he never once forgot himself so far as to murmur or complain. But while these sufferings thus ravaged the body, and prepared it for dissolution, their effect upon the soul was obviously salutary. Accustomed for many years to the daily contemplation of death, he now witnessed its gradual approach with serenity and peace. In the midst of his sorrows, he found consolations 'that were neither few nor small.' He grew continually more and more humble, gentle, meek, and resigned; more and more disposed to give up every trust but in his Saviour. Though his intellect retained all its vigour, yet his temper became in an eminent degree that of a lowly child. His affections were exquisitely tender. Their native character seemed entirely gone, and they resembled the affections of heaven. His views, his hopes, his purposes, and his joys, were heavenly; and nothing terrestrial seemed to remain except his earthly tabernacle, which was just ready to be laid in the grave, there to rest in hope. When called to pass through the dark valley, his Shepherd appeared to be with him: his rod and his staff they comforted him. Though frequently bewildered through excess of pain, yet no distressing fear assailed him. He saw the presence of the grim destroyer with tranquillity and hope; yielded up his soul without a struggle, and, as we trust with undoubting confidence, found a glorious welcome into the 'house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.'

His life was eminently useful and lovely. His death was peaceful and happy to himself, but most widely and deeply lamented by his countrymen at large, as well as by his family, his many friends, and the church of Christ. His eternity, we trust, will pass among angels and the spirits of the just, in their immortal progress in knowledge, happiness, and virtue.

ANALYSIS OF THE WORK.

SYSTEM OF DOCTRINES.

				SER.
Doctrines of Natural Religion.	Existence of God.	Direct Proofs of it.	Mark xii. 32.	1
		Atheistical Objections and Schemes of Doctrine considered.	Psal. xiv. 1.	2
		Comparative Influence of Atheism and Christianity.	Psal. xiv. 1.	3
	Unity of God.		1 Cor. viii. 4.	4
	Attributes of God.	Eternity.	Psal. cii. 24—27.	5
		Immutability.		
		Omnipresence.	Psal. cxxxix. 1—12.	6
		Omniscience.		
		Omnipotence.	Gen. xvii. 1.	7
		Independence.		
		Benevolence: As proved by the Works of Creation and Providence.	1 John iv. 8.	8
		Benevolence: As exhibited by Revelation.	1 John iv. 8.	9
		Justice.	Deut. xxxii. 4.	10
		Truth.	Psal. cxvii. 2.	11
		Mercy.	Psal. ciii. 8.	12
		Wisdom.	1 Tim. i. 17.	13
	Decrees of God.		Job xxiii. 13.	14, 15
	Sovereignty of God		Jer. x. 23.	16
	Works of God. — Creation. — Heaven.	Air.		
		Starry Heaven.	Gen. i. 1.	17
		Supreme Heaven.		
		Holy Angels: Their Rank.		
		Holy Angels: Their Attributes.	Col. i. 16.	18, 19
		Holy Angels: Their Employments.		
		Fallen Angels.	Jude 6.	20
	Earth.	The Globe itself.	Gen. i. 1.	21
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		Soul: Its Nature.	Gen. i. 26, 27.	22
		Soul: Not Material.	Gen. ii. 7.	23
		Soul: Not a Chain of Ideas and Exercises.	Gen. ii. 7.	24
		Chief End of Man.	1 Cor. x. 31.	25
	Providence.	Probation of Man.	Gen. ii. 15—17.	26
		Temptation. Fall.	Gen. iii. 1—6.	27
		Sentence.	Gen. iii. 14—19.	28
		Depravity of Man: Its Universality: Proved from Revelation and from Facts.	Rom. v. 12.	29
		Depravity of Man: Its Universality: Proved from the Rejection of the Word of God.	Jer. viii. 9.	30
		Depravity of Man: Its Degree.	Eccles. viii. 2.	31
		Depravity of Man: Its Derivation; from Adam.	Rom. v. 20.	32
		Depravity of Man: Remarks upon it.	Rom. vi. 12.	33
		Man cannot be justified by the Law of God.	Rom. iii. 20.	34
Doctrines Peculiar to the Christian Religion; or the Mediatorial System.	The Character of Jesus Christ, the Mediator. — He is the true and perfect God. — He is spoken of as such in the Scriptures.	The Names of God are there given him.	Rom. viii. 3, 4.	35
		The Attributes and Actions of God are there ascribed to him.	Rom. viii. 3, 4.	36
		Divine Relations are there said to be sustained by him.	Rom. viii. 3, 4.	37
		Divine Worship is there required to be rendered, and is actually rendered to him.		
		The Deity of Christ is the only ground of Consistency in the Scheme of Redemption.	Rom. viii. 3, 4.	38
		The Jews otherwise are not chargeable with Guilt in putting him to Death.		
		The Prophets and Apostles cannot otherwise be vindicated from the Sin of leading Mankind into Idolatry.		
		Objections answered.	1 Cor. iii. 20.	39
		Objections to the Doctrines of the Unitarians.	1 Cor. iii. 20.	40
		Objections to their manner of Conducting the Controversy.	1 Cor. iii. 20.	41
	He is Man; or the Incarnation of Christ.		Rom. viii. 3.	42

					SER.
The Covenant, under which Christ acted: that of Redemption.				Isa. liii. 10.	43
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			The Things which he Taught.	John vii. 46.	45
			The Manner of his Preaching.	John vii. 46.	46
			The Consequences of his Preaching.	John vii. 46.	47
		His Preaching by his Apostles:	The Fact, that they Preached the Gospel of Christ.	Mark xvi. 15, 16, 20.	48
			The Necessity of their preaching it.	Mark xvi. 15, 16, 20.	49
			The Things which they Preached.		
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	His Priestly Office.	Origin, Office, and Character of a Priest.		Psalm cx. 4.	50
		Proofs of the Priesthood of Christ.		Psalm cx. 4.	ib.
		His Character as a Priest. His Holiness:	In what it was exemplified. In his Piety.	Heb. vii. 26.	51
			In his Performance of the Duties which he owed Mankind.		
			In his Self-Government.	Heb. vii. 26.	52
			Its Importance. To the Distinction of his Character.	Heb. vii. 26.	53
			To enable him to magnify the Law of God.		
			To give the necessary efficacy to his suffering for Mankind.		
			To his setting before Men an Example of Righteousness.	1 John ii. 5.	54
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			Its Reality. The Manner in which it was performed. Its Extent.	Rom. iii. 24—26.	56
			Objections answered.	Rom. iii. 24—26.	57
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Doctrines Peculiar to the Christian Religion; or the Mediatorial System.	The Miracles of Christ.			Acts ii. 22.	60
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			Nature of Faith.	Rom. iii. 28.	66
			Influence of Faith in our Justification.	Rom. iii. 28.	67
			Reconciliation of James and Paul on this subject. Influence of Works on our Justification.	James ii. 24.	68
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SYSTEM OF THEOLOGY.

SERMON I.

ON THE EXISTENCE OF GOD.

There is one God.—Mark xii. 32.

The existence of God is the basis of religion. This truth will be evident, if we remember, that the word Religion always denotes either a system of truths, of which God is the great subject; or a system of affections and conduct, of which He is the supreme object. If we can prove to ourselves the existence of a God, that is, of a Being, by whom we were created, and by whom the universe is governed; some such system of truths, affections, and conduct, must be also capable of being proved. To such a Being we and the universe must sustain important relations; and out of these relations must necessarily arise to intelligent beings a variety of duties, immediately, and always, owed to him. Were there no such Being, there could be no such relations nor duties. Were the existence of such a Being incapable of proof, the existence of the relations and duties would be equally incapable of being proved. Happily for us, and accordantly with his own wisdom, God has not, in this most interesting case, left himself without ample witness.

In the text the existence of God is declared in the plainest and most direct terms. I shall therefore proceed immediately to the examination of this subject.

The foundation of all reasoning concerning beings and events, and ultimately concerning attributes and relations also, is a supposed, or acknowledged, connexion between cause and effect. By cause, (it will be observed, that I am speaking of what is called the efficient cause,) I intend, that something, be it what it may, which produces, or is supposed to produce, existence, or any change of existence; and without which, the existence, or the change, would not have been. Between this something, styled cause, and the something, styled effect, all mankind, except a few sceptical or atheistical philosophers, have agreed, that there is an inseparable connexion. As this connexion has been denied by these philosophers, and as it is the foundation of all our reasonings on this and every other subject, a consideration of it, and of the evidence which attends it, will undoubtedly be a proper part of the present discourse.

In the first place: *It will be admitted by these philosophers, as well as all other men, that we have no knowledge of any existence, or any change, which has taken place without a cause.*

All beings, and all events, so far as our acquaintance with them has hitherto extended, have been produced by some agency, or influence, extraneous to themselves; and have never sprung up into existence casually, or without such agency or influence. There is, therefore, not the least reason furnished by experience, or by any thing which we know, why we should believe existence to be casual; or why we should doubt an inseparable connexion between cause and effect. On the contrary, all the experience, all the knowledge of man, lends its whole influence to the doctrine, that existence has been invariably caused. The supposition, therefore, that existence is uncaused, or that the connexion between cause and effect is not inseparable and invariable, is perfectly gratuitous, and without a shadow of support. How absurd and ridiculous it is, for a man, professing to be a reasoner and a philosopher, to found his opinions or his arguments, in any case, and especially in the most important case possible, on a mere supposition, I need not explain.

Secondly: *All mankind have acknowledged in the clearest manner, and in every way of which the subject was susceptible, the inseparable nature of this connexion.*

The language of every nation is formed only on this plan. In every language there are not only many words directly expressing ideas of this subject, such as cause, efficiency, effect, production, produce, effectuate, create, generate, &c. or words equivalent to these; but every verb in every language, except the intransitive impersonal verbs, and the verb substantive, involves, of course, causation or efficiency; and refers always to an agent, or cause, in such a manner, that without the operation of this cause or agent, the verb would have no meaning. In this manner have mankind declared, in the very structure of their languages, not only that they perceived and acknowledged this connexion, but that it formed so considerable and essential a part of their thoughts, as to necessitate them to think in this manner only. Thus to think, to speak, to sit, to run, to strike, to write, to love, to hate, all denote effects, and refer to an agent, or cause of those effects; and without such reference would not contain, nor express any meaning whatever.

I have observed above, that all mankind have agreed in the acknowledgment of this connexion, except a few atheistical and sceptical philosophers. These men have, indeed, denied this connexion in form; but they have

acknowledged it, as fully as all others, in their customary language. On every subject, except creation, or giving existence, they have spoken exactly as other men speak; and the connexion between cause and effect is as often declared in their conversation and writings, and as much relied on, as in those of other men. This fact is clear proof, that they admit this connexion in all cases, except those which respect the existence and government of God, in the same manner as the rest of mankind. In truth, language is so constructed, that it is impossible to write, or speak in a different manner.

Children, so soon as they begin to speak at all, inquire more anxiously, and more universally, concerning causation and efficiency, than concerning any other subject of investigation. Every one conversant with them must have observed, that they almost continually inquire, who did this, that, and the other thing; or produce the several changes of which they are witnesses? Who made themselves, and the various objects around them? In this manner they teach us, that this is, to man, the natural, and the only natural, mode of conceiving; for all children think, and speak, in this manner.

Nor are the views of mankind less forcibly evident, concerning this subject, in their actions. No man ever acted without regarding himself as a cause; and without expecting to produce some change in himself, or in the objects around him, by his efficiency; nor made use of any instrument, without expecting from it a degree of efficacy, which should produce some change or other, not to be looked for without it. Thus all men eat and drink, lie down, and act, universally, with a design to effectuate certain changes in themselves, or other objects; and atheists, as truly, and uniformly, as any other men. Thus, also, children act, from the beginning. Indeed, were men not to act in this manner, they would never act at all. No proof of absolute and universal conviction, concerning this or any other subject, can be more perfect.

Thirdly: *We learn this connexion from experience; and in two ways: by the testimony of our senses, and by the inspection of our minds.*

Causes operate without us, and within us; and produce their proper effects in both cases. Those which operate without us, produce their effects before our senses; and so far our knowledge of the connexion between cause and effect arises from sensitive testimony. Those which operate within us, produce their effects before the eye of the mind only; and so far our knowledge of this connexion is intuitive. I as clearly perceive, that I think, reflect, remember, choose, wish, love, and hate; that by a determination of my will I turn my thoughts from one subject to another, and transfer my affections and my conduct, voluntarily, from one object to another, and from one course to another, as that I exist. I also perceive this in the same manner, and with the same certainty: viz. with the bare inspection of the mental eye; commonly termed intuition, and acknowledged to be attended with the highest possible certainty. Mr Hume is, therefore, totally erroneous in his assertion, that the connexion between cause and effect exists, or rather is perceived, only in the names; and that, if we would call both by the name, Events, we should not suppose any connexion to exist between them.

This opinion is sufficiently refuted by the fact, that these names, and not that of events, have been given to them. Mankind never give names without ideas: nor form any names which do not express such ideas as they really have, nor suppose themselves to have ideas which they have not, or different ideas from those which they really have. Wherever names have been given, the very ideas, which they denote, have certainly existed in the minds of those by whom they were given.

The thing which we really perceive in this case is, however, merely the fact, that cause and effect are thus connected; and not the nature of the causation, or efficiency, on which the connexion is founded. That I, and not something else, think, and act, in such manners as have been recited, and that but for me the thought and action would not have existed, I perceive intuitively; but I do not perceive at all why, or by what power, I think and act. The nature of this subject lies, in every case, beyond the bounds of the human capacity. Yet this infers not in any degree any want of evidence attending the fact. The contrary opinion would be attended with this absurdity; that we cannot perceive one thing without perceiving at the same time another, totally diverse, and in the view of the mind entirely separated: an absurdity which cannot need to be exposed by me.

Fourthly: *The mind cannot realize the fact, that existence or change can take place without a cause.*

This is at least true with respect to my own mind. I have very often made the attempt, and with no small pains-taking; but have never been able to succeed at all. Supposing other minds to have the same general nature with my own, I conclude, that all others will find the same want of success. If nothing had originally existed, I cannot possibly realize, that any thing could ever have existed. Causes absolutely the same, must in the same circumstances produce absolutely the same effects. This is, I think, certainly self-evident, and admitted as such. An absolute want of cause involves an absolute sameness of an opposite kind; and must, with nearly the same evidence, continue for ever. The necessity of causes to all the changes of being is, so far as I know, universally admitted. Mr Hume, particularly, talks as commonly, or rather as uniformly, in this manner, as any Christian does; and not only argues from cause to effect, and from effect to cause, as much as other men; but discusses this subject abundantly, and gives directions and principles for this kind of argumentation. Indeed, without admitting it, neither he nor any other man, could argue at all. But, if no change can take place without a cause; how can it be supposed that existence can take place without a cause? Certainly less violence is done to our reason by supposing a being to be changed in some respect or circumstance without a cause, than to begin to exist without a cause.

Fifthly: *No absurdity can be greater than to argue with a man who denies this connexion.*

He himself, in speaking, exhibits himself as a cause of all the words uttered to him, and the opinions communicated; and, in the act of arguing, admits you to be a similar cause. If his body be not a cause, and your eyes another, you cannot see him. If his voice, and your ear, be not causes, you cannot hear him. If his mind and yours be not causes, you cannot understand him. In a word, without admitting the connexion between cause and effect, you can never know that he is arguing with you or you with him.

With these observations premised, which you will see to be inwoven with this and all other subjects of discussion, I observe in the first place, That the existence of things, universally, proves the being of God.

The argument which leads to this conclusion is, for substance, conducted by Mr Locke in the following manner. Every man knows, with absolute certainty, that he himself exists. He knows also that he did not always exist, but began to be. It is clearly certain to him, that his existence was caused, and not casual; and was produced by a cause, adequate to the production. By an adequate cause, is invariably intended, a cause possessing and exerting an efficacy sufficient to bring any effect to pass. In the present case, an adequate cause is one, possessing, and exerting, all the understanding necessary to contrive, and the power necessary to create, such a being as the man in question. This cause is what we are accustomed to call God. The understanding necessary to contrive, and the power necessary to create, a being compounded of the human soul and body, admit of no limits. He, who can contrive and create such a being, can contrive and create any thing. He, who actually contrived and created man, certainly contrived and created all things.

This argument is, in my view, perfectly conclusive: nor has it been, or will it ever be, answered, except with sophistry, or sneers. I will not insist, that every step of it is attended with what logicians call intuitive evidence: nor, that it amounts to what is, in the logical sense, an absolute demonstration. But it is, in every step, attended with such evidence as excludes all rational doubt, and approaches so near to the character of demonstration as to leave the mind completely satisfied. At the same time it is opposed by no counter evidence.

Secondly: *The state of existing things completely proves the being of God.*

The manner in which the argument, derived from this source, is conducted by Bishop Berkeley, is clearer, and more happy, than any other, within my knowledge; and is substantially the following:

We acknowledge the existence of each other to be unquestionable; and, when called upon for the evidence, on which this acknowledgment is founded, allege that of our senses; yet it can by no means be affirmed with truth, that our senses discern immediately any man. We see indeed a form, and the motions and actions of that form; and we hear a voice communicating to us the thoughts, emotions, and volitions of an intelligent being. Yet it is intuitively certain, that neither the form, the motions, the actions, the voice, the thoughts, nor the volitions, are that intelligent being; or the living, acting, thinking thing, which we call man. On the contrary, they are merely effects, of which that living, acting thing, denoted by the word man, is the cause. The existence of the cause, or, in other language, of the man, we conclude from the effects which he thus produces. In the same manner, and with the like certainty, we discover the existence of God. In the universe without us, and in the little world within us, we perceive a great variety of effects, produced by some cause, adequate to the production. Thus the motions of the heart, arteries, veins, and other vessels; of the blood and other juices; of the tongue, the hands, and other members; the perception of the senses, and the actions of the mind; the storm, the lightning, the volcano, and the earthquake; the reviviscence and growth of the vegetable world; the diffusion of light, and the motions of the planetary system; are all effects, and effects of a cause adequate to the production. This cause is God, or a being possessed of intelligence and power, sufficient to contrive and bring them to pass. He, with evidence from reason, equally clear with the testimony of the Scriptures, 'thundereth marvellously with his voice; holdeth the winds in his fists; sendeth lightnings with rain; looketh on the earth, and it trembleth; toucheth the hills, and they smoke; melteth the mountains like wax, at his presence; causeth the outgoings of the morning and the evening to rejoice; and making his sun to arise on the evil and the good.' Him also we are bound to praise, because we are 'fearfully and wonderfully made' by him; 'our substance was not hid from him when we were made in secret. His eyes saw our substance, yet being imperfect, and in his book all our members were written, which, in continuance, were fashioned by him, when as yet there were none of them. He also breathed into our nostrils the breath of life; and the inspiration of the Almighty hath given us understanding.'

Should it be said, that these things are the natural and necessary result of certain inherent powers of matter and mind, and therefore demand no extrinsic agency; I answer, that this objection affects the conclusion, only by removing it one step farther back in the course of reasoning. That matter should have possessed these powers eternally, without exerting them, is impossible; and that it should have exerted them from eternity is equally impossible. As I cannot enter into the consideration of these two positions at the present time; as I intend soon to resume it, and believe, that I shall be able to demonstrate both of them; I shall, for the present only, take them for granted. If they are true, it follows irresistibly, from both of them united, that the properties and the exertions of matter are derived from an extrinsic cause; and that that cause is possessed of intelligence and power, to which no bounds can be assigned.

The same argument, conducted in a more general and popular manner, may be thus exhibited. The agency of God is clearly and certainly seen in the preservation and government of all things. The existence of all the forms and states of being which we behold in the universe, is plainly derived; because it is a change in the former state of things, commencing, continuing, and terminating; and, as it is impossible that any being should commence its own existence, derived certainly from an extrinsic and adequate cause. This cause can be no other than God.

Thus the production, existence, and structure of vegetables and animals; their growth, perfection, and decay; their functions and operations, are all plainly effects of boundless intelligence and power. The universe, of which we are inhabitants, is plainly a system, made up of parts, fitted to each other, and arranged and proportioned so as to make one great and glorious whole. The parts also are, to say the least, in immense multitudes, subordinate, but wonderful systems.

To pass by the mineral kingdom, in which however there are inumerable proofs of design, art, and arrangement, fitting the parts of it by a happy subserviency to the accomplishment of many illustrious and valuable ends, but demanding more time than can be

allotted, at present, to the consideration of them; I observe, that every organized being, every vegetable and every animal, is a complete system within itself. Each has all the parts and faculties which are suited to the purposes of its existence, purposes obvious, useful, and wonderful; and yet regularly and completely accomplished. Thus grass is exactly fitted to adorn the earth with beauty, and to become food for the sustenance of an innumerable multitude of animals. Thus hortulane productions, fruits, grains, and various kinds of animals, are fitted to become food for mankind. Thus trees are fitted to yield their shade, and to become useful materials for furniture, fencing, and building. Thus the earth, the air, the rain, and the sunshine are suited to the production of vegetable life, of action, warmth, and comfort; together with innumerable other things, necessary to preserve and invigorate man. Thus the sun is fitted to shine; the planet to receive light from his beams; and the whole system to move on with regularity and harmony, and to accomplish all the great and glorious purposes for which it was contrived.

In every one of these things, even the least of them, there is a skill and power manifested, which, were any other skill and power employed in labouring to bring them to pass, infinitely transcend the efficiency of all beings except God. In every one of them, and in all parts of every one, He is seen in this efficiency, and is therefore present in all. In all, and throughout all, he acts. Every moment, in every place, and with respect to every being, he preserves, conducts, and manages all the parts of this stupendous machine, this vast universe, this immense kingdom, which he hath made for himself, and not for another. Power and skill, literally infinite, are every moment conspicuous in every being.

This mode of arguing is so natural to man, that we find it adopted by the most ignorant nations, as well as the most enlightened; by the child as well as the man of grey hairs. In every age, and in every country, it has struck the mind with a force so great, and in a manner so satisfactory, that it has probably precluded, in most minds, the apprehension of any necessity for farther investigation. Ask any plain man whom you meet, why he believes that there is a God; ask even the poor Indian, whose mind, in the language of the poet, is wholly 'untutored,' and he will tell you, that 'he sees him in the clouds, and hears him in the wind.' All men believe the things around them to be effects, or works; and all believe them to be the works of a God; of a being, whose power and understanding transcend all limits. Nor has any man ever doubted the soundness of this conclusion, but under the influence of a wish that it might not be true, nor without a laborious effort to convince himself that it was an error. So true is it, that 'the fool,' and the fool only, 'hath said in his heart, There is no God.'

The arguments which atheists have employed against this doctrine, so far as they are of sufficient importance to merit an answer, I propose to consider hereafter; and will conclude this Discourse with the following

REMARKS.

First: How great, awful, and glorious a being is God!

From the things which have been said, it is evident that there is, ever has been, and ever will be, a Being from whom all things derived their existence; on whom all depend for their continuance; and by whom all are conducted in the order and harmony visible in the universe. Of what character does this exhibition declare him to be possessed?

He is plainly Self-existent. All other beings are derived, and begin to be. He only is underived, and 'without beginning of days, or end of years; the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.' Of course, his manner of being is wholly unlike that of all creatures; totally superior, and utterly incomprehensible. Hence he says, and says truly, 'I am; and there is none beside me.' Hence he styles himself, I AM THAT I AM, JAH, and JEHOVAH; that is, EXISTENCE, to which there is nothing like, and nothing second.

Plainly, also, he is Almighty. The power which gave existence, is power which can know no limits. But to all beings, in heaven, and earth, and hell, he gave existence, and is therefore seen to possess power which transcends every bound. The power which upholds, moves, and rules the universe is also clearly illimitable. The power which is necessary to move a single world, transcends all finite understanding. No definite number of finite beings possess sufficient power to move a single world a hair's breadth; yet God moves the great world which we inhabit, sixty-eight thousand miles in an hour; two hundred and sixty times faster than the swiftest motion of a cannon ball. Nor does he move this world only, but the whole system, of which it is a part; and all the worlds which replenish the immense stellary system, formed of suns innumerable, and of the planets which surround them. All these he has also moved from the beginning to the present moment; and yet 'he fainteth not, neither is weary.'

Nor is this a full description of his amazing agency. He works every moment in every part of this vast whole; moves every atom, expands every leaf, finishes every blade of grass, erects every tree, conducts every particle of vapour, every drop of rain, and every flake of snow; guides every ray of light, breathes in every wind, thunders in every storm, wings the lightning, pours the streams and rivers, empties the volcano, heaves the ocean, and shakes the globe. In the universe of minds, he formed, he preserves, he animates, and he directs, all the mysterious and wonderful powers of knowledge, virtue, and moral action, which fill up the infinite extent of his immense and eternal empire. In his contrivance of these things, their attributes, and their operations, is seen a stupendous display of his immeasurable knowledge and wisdom. All these existed in the immense, eternal mind, as in a vast storehouse of glorious ideas and designs, and existing from everlasting. In them the endless diversified character of uncreated wisdom, beauty, and greatness, has begun to be manifested, and will continue to be manifested with increasing splendour for ever.

What, we cannot but ask, must be the Knowledge of him, from whom all created minds have derived both their power of knowing, and the innumerable objects of their knowledge? What must be the Wisdom of him, from whom all beings derive their wisdom; from whom the emmet, the bee, and the stork, receive the skill to provide, without an error, their food, habitation, and safety; and the prophet and the seraph imbibe their exalted views of the innumerable, vast, and sublime

wonders of creation, and of creating glory and greatness? What must be the Excellence of him, who gives birth to all other excellence; and will improve, refine, and exalt that excellence in every virtuous mind, throughout ages which will begin for ever?

Secondly: How plainly are all beings absolutely dependent on God for their existence, their attributes, and their operations?

All beings are just what he pleases, and can do what he pleases and permits, and nothing more. Should he 'command the clouds, that they should not rain;' how soon would the vegetable and animal worlds perish, and man accompany his kindred worms to the dust? Should he withhold any power, it must cease to be exercised; and we could neither speak, think, nor move. The human race would be changed into statues, and the world would be a dreary waste; a desert of solitude, silence, and despair.

How vain, then, must be all resistance to God? The very power to resist, the will, the wish, cannot rise into being, unless supplied and supported by him. The universe of men and angels, the worlds above and beneath, united, could not contend against him for a moment. All are 'nothing, and less than nothing,' in his sight. With a word he called the whole into being. With infinite ease he could, with a word, return the whole to its original nothing; and, with another word, could raise up a second universe in its stead.

Thirdly: Of this universe God must, of necessity be the sole and absolute Proprietor.

No property is so perfect as that which arises from creation. Whatever we make, or fashion, is our property in the highest degree, in which any thing can be ours. God, it is to be remembered, not only made, but created; not only made the work, but the materials. Hence his property is plainly superior and paramount to all others; and he is a proprietor in a higher sense than any other being can be. His property also extends to all beings, animate and inanimate, rational and irrational, to atoms, vegetables, animals, men and angels, in the same absolute manner.

Hence it is evident, that he has an absolute right to dispose of all beings as he pleases; and particularly to require, on the most reasonable grounds, that all rational beings voluntarily devote themselves to his service with such affections, in such a manner, and with such conduct, as are conformed to his will. This right is complete and supreme, and cannot be denied, nor questioned, without sin, without plain and palpable injustice. All disobedience to his pleasure is evidently unjust, in the same manner as when we withhold the property of our fellow-men, and in a degree incalculably greater; while obedience, on the other hand, is nothing more than barely 'rendering to God the things which are God's.'

Fourthly: Of the same universe, He is of course, the only Ruler.

The nature of this vast work, and the wisdom and power displayed in it, prove, beyond debate, that it was made for some end suited to the greatness and number of the means which are employed. This end is such, and so important, that it was proper for him to create, and uphold, a universe, for its accomplishment. This end, originally so valuable as to induce him to commence, and continue this mighty work, must ever be equally valuable in his view. But it can never be accomplished, except by his own government of all things. No other being can govern them at all. All created power, wisdom, and goodness, are infinitely unequal to such a task, even for one day, or one moment. But He can rule the work for ever, and with infinite ease; and can and will, thus accomplish the end which he proposed from everlasting.

For this end every thing was created, the least as truly as the greatest; the atom as the world, the worm as the angel. His providence therefore extends, with absolute evidence, to all. Each, however minute, however momentary, is really necessary in its place, and for its time. Each, therefore, needs to be conducted, throughout its existence, to the purpose for which it was made. His care extends, therefore, and must extend, to minims, ephemera, and atoms as truly and as exactly, as to the concerns of cherubs and seraphs in the heavens.

Accordingly, we actually behold him, alike animating the blade, the stem, and the leaf, in the vegetable kingdom; living in the mite and the insect, the bird and the beast; thundering marvellously with his voice, sending lightnings with rain; rolling the billows of the ocean, making the earth to quake at his presence; shining in the stars, glowing in the sun, and moving with his hand the various worlds which compose the universe. At the same time, his presence and agency are more sublimely visible in the universe of minds, in all the amazing powers of thought, affection, and moral action, in the knowledge, virtue, and the enjoyment of the myriads which form the peculiar kingdom of Jehovah.

Fifthly: It is equally evident, that this end must be Himself.

Before God made the universe, there was nothing beside him. Whatever motive prompted him to this great work must of course have been found in himself; because, beside him, there was nothing. It must also have been found in himself, because, when other beings existed, all were nothing in comparison with him; and therefore, in the same comparison, undeserving of his regard. But this end could not respect any change in himself; any increase, diminution, or alteration of his greatness, power, and glory. It was, therefore, the manifestation of himself alone which could be the end of this mighty work. Himself is the sum of excellence; of all that is great, or wise, or good. The manifestation of himself is, therefore, only the manifestation of boundless excellence to the creatures which he has made. The manifestation of all attributes, though capable of being made in declarations, is principally discerned in actions. Excellence therefore is discovered chiefly by doing what is great and wise and good. All this is so evident as to need no illustration.

God, when he intended to disclose his perfections to the universe, intended therefore to exhibit them, chiefly, by an endless course of action, in which wisdom, greatness, and goodness should be supremely and most clearly discovered. The highest blessedness, he has told us, and therefore the greatest glory, is found in communicating good, and not in gaining it; in giving, and not in receiving. To this decision reason necessarily subjoins her own Amen. The great design of God in all things is, therefore, to do good boundlessly and for ever, and in this conduct, to disclose himself as the boundless and eternal good.

It must of necessary consequence be supremely pleasing to him, that his intelligent creatures voluntarily

unite with him in loving and promoting this divine purpose, while all opposition to it must be supremely displeasing. How important then must it be to us, that we cheerfully coincide with his perfect pleasure in this great end, and devote to the advancement of it all our faculties? Should we resist his designs, so excellent, so dear to him; how unworthy in itself, and how provoking to him, must be the conduct. What terrible consequences must spring from the exertion of such power and knowledge, exerted to manifest his anger against those who thus disobey his will, and oppose his designs! What must they not feel! What ought they not to fear!

On the contrary, what a universe of good, immense and endless, may he be expected to provide for those who voluntarily unite with him in this glorious design, and cheerfully perform his pleasure. Such good he can make, and give, and repeat for ever, with a wish and with a word. To make and give it is his delight and glory. It will therefore be done. In this wonderful work how divinely great and good does God appear! How deserving of all admiration, love, homage, obedience, and praise. How amazing the wonders which he has done. How much more amazing the transcendent purpose for which they were done! Who would not fear, who would not bless, who would not adore, 'that glorious and fearful name,' Jehovah our God; the Being self-existent, eternal, and immense; and without beginning, limits, or end; united with eternal and immeasurable wisdom and power; from whom are derived all worlds, and all their inhabitants; on whom all depend; and by whom all are preserved, governed, and blessed, and conducted with supreme wisdom and goodness to an end immortal and divine. 'Blessing and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.'

SERMON II.

ATHEISTICAL OBJECTIONS AND SCHEMES OF DOCTRINE CONSIDERED.

The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.—Psal. xiv. 1.

In the preceding Discourse, I endeavoured to prove the existence of God, by arguments which have appeared to men of great distinction for learning and wisdom, to be not only satisfactory but unanswerable. Plain men also, though comprehending them imperfectly, have admitted both the force of the arguments themselves, and the point which they are intended to establish, without a question, and almost without an exception. Yet it cannot be denied that there have been atheists, speculative as well as practical. A few of them may have existed in the uneducated classes of mankind, but almost all have been found among those, who, professedly at least, have been more or less learned.

But to whatever class these persons may belong, and whatever pretensions they may make to knowledge and wisdom, they are in the text universally characterized by folly. 'The fool,' says David, 'hath said, There is no God.' In other words, every man, who says this, is a fool; and the assertion is the result of his folly only.

It is remarkable, that this assertion is declared to be made in the heart of the fool; that is, to flow from his wishes, and not from his understanding. For the words, *there is*, in the translation, there is nothing in the original. Hence it has been supposed by some commentators, that the passage ought to be rendered, Let there be no God. Whether this rendering be admitted or not, there can be no doubt, that the chief reason why the assertion is adopted at all, is the indisposition of the heart to acknowledge the existence of the Creator.

That we easily believe, what we wish to believe, is a truth so obvious as to have passed into a proverb. He who hates the control, disrelishes the character, and dreads the inspection, judgment, and retribution of his Maker, and intends to persevere in a course of sin, will find no refuge from anxiety and alarm, and no source of quiet in sinning so comfortable, or in his view so safe, as the belief that there is no God. It is not strange, therefore, that this belief has been cherished by such beings as mankind are; and particularly, by such beings as atheists have universally been.

Still, this conduct cannot be denied to be folly of a very gross kind. As our belief can make no difference in the fact; as if God exists, he will continue to exist; as our danger from his anger against our sins is exactly the same whether we believe it or not; as our quiet in sin will in this case only cheat us into ruin; and as the little consolation which we find in the indulgence of this belief, will only enhance our wretchedness by adding to it the anguish of disappointment; no sober man will hesitate to pronounce this conduct foolish in the extreme. To him who walks over the edge of a precipice, what benefit can it be to shut his eyes? What greater stupidity can there be, than to shut our eyes, when this conduct will prove the certain means of conveying us to this scene of absolute destruction?

Atheists have however determined to encounter this hazard, and boldly resolved that there is no God. Against the doctrine of the Divine existence they have raised up several objections, which they declare to be satisfactory, at least to themselves. These they have also formed into a scheme, and presented it to the public with a face of bold assurance. Even this has not satisfied them. They have triumphed in the most open manner, in the supposed ingenuity of their efforts; and in the boasted strength of their arguments, have ridiculed the arguments of their antagonists; and have

treated the doctrines not only of Christianity, but even of Theism, with contempt. It is the design of this Discourse to examine the objections of these men, and the principal doctrines with which they have been connected.

The first of these objections which I shall mention, is, *that Creation is so great a work, as to make it seem impossible, even for God to accomplish it.*

This was the great difficulty in the mind of Aristotle. This singular man, in the early parts of his life, found his thoughts so much perplexed with this consideration, that he for a time gave up the doctrine of creation, and determined that the universe, as to its substance at least, had existed from eternity. I cannot help remarking here the difference between him and the modern opposers of the divinity of Christ. Arians and Socinians have very generally insisted, that creation is so easy a work, as to afford no proof of divine agency; and declared, that, even if Christ did in fact create all things, this fact does not infer his divinity. To Aristotle it appeared too difficult a work, even for God himself to perform.

To this objection we are furnished with a conclusive answer. God does actually, and daily, create the human soul, in innumerable instances; and the creation of the soul evidently demands all the power necessary to the creation of matter. He who can give existence to the soul, can plainly give existence to any thing. As I propose, in the progress of these Discourses, to discuss at large the immateriality of the soul, I shall at present take it for granted.

This objection is also completely overthrown by the fact, that God upholds, moves, and governs the universe. Had Aristotle known the doctrines of the Copernican Astronomy, and beheld God moving, with entire and unabated ease, the systems of worlds which compose the universe, his capacious mind would, I think, have been irresistibly led to admit, that the hand which moves them, could with the same ease have created them. Indeed this great man appears, in the later parts of his life, not to have placed any serious reliance on this objection.

Secondly: *It is objected, that the state of the world is such as to forbid the belief, that it is the work of a God.*

'The world,' say the objectors, 'is full of imperfection, and of suffering. The course of nature is such as to entail upon all its animated inhabitants, pain, disease, and death. Nor is the moral state of things materially different from the natural. Depravity, in all its odious forms, appears to have existed from the beginning; and has ever constituted, to say the least, no small part of the character of mankind. God, on the part of all enlightened men, who believe in the existence of such a being, and particularly on that of Christians, is declared to be possessed of infinite perfection. Can a being of such perfection be supposed to be the author of so imperfect, incongruous, and deformed a work? Is it not plain, that God either did not make the world, or that he has forgotten it, and left it wholly to the control of chance?'

To this objection, which is attended with a degree of speciousness, and fitted to awaken fretfulness, where it will not produce conviction, I answer,

1. That all the real weight of it lies in the existence of moral evil; a subject which I shall here occasion to examine, when I come to discourse on the benevolence of God, and on the apostasy of man.

2. The whole force of this objection lies in the inexplicableness of certain things which it alleges; and amounts to no more than this, that there are several things in the world, the nature, use, and end of which we cannot understand. The argument contained in it, if resolved into a general principle, will stand thus: Nothing, the nature, use, and end of which we cannot understand, can be the work of God. This argument needs only to be proposed, to be exploded; for it is absolutely certain, that God can do very few things, whose nature, use, or end, can be comprehended by us. It is equally certain, that, according to this rule of concluding, the same thing may, at the same time, be proved to be, and not to be, the work of God. One man may distinctly comprehend the nature of a thing, and discern in it certain proofs of divine workmanship. Another man may, at the same time, be wholly ignorant of the nature of the same thing; and his ignorance will, according to this rule, be decisive proof, that it is not a divine work. The man also may, according to this rule, in the different periods of childhood and manhood, be able to prove a thing to be, and not to be, wrought by the hand of God. The evidence of the divine agency, and the want of it, are here placed, not in the nature of the work, but in the nature of the optics, by which it is perceived: an absurdity too palpable to need any farther discussion. The real proof in this and every other case must, if it be found at all, be found in something which we know, and not in our ignorance. But it has not been, and cannot be shown, that in the existing world there is any thing inconsistent with the doctrine, that it was created, and is governed by God. It is readily acknowledged, that in the system, of which we are a little part, mystery and inexplicableness are found everywhere, and in every thing, in the view of such minds as ours. At the same time it is also certain, that nothing else can be rationally looked for in the works of Him, 'whose ways are higher than our ways, as the heavens are higher than the earth.' The mysteries alleged, instead of being an objection against the doctrine, that the world was made by God, are a strong presumptive argument in its favour.

3. The direct proof of the divine agency in the formation and government of this very world, found in innumerable things which itself contains, is hitherto unanswered, and is plainly unanswerable. This, having its foundation in what we know, can never be affected in any manner by what we do not know; or in other words, by the mere inexplicableness of the objects around us.

Universally, until we know thoroughly the nature, use, and end of the things, on which the objection is founded, it must be a mere and miserable presumption, that they have not such a nature, use, and end, as are worthy of God.

The doctrines which atheists have connected with these objections, and which are deserving of any serious attention, are the following:

I. *That things have existed in an eternal series:*

II. *That their existence is casual:* and,

III. *That all distinct or separate bodies owe their existence to the powers and operations of matter.*

These I shall consider in the order specified.

I. It is asserted by atheists, *that there has been an eternal series of things.*

The absurdity of this assertion may be shown in many ways.

1. Each individual in a series is a unit. But every collection of units, however great, is, with intuitive certainty, numerable; and therefore, cannot be infinite.

2. Every individual in the series (take, for example, a series of men) had a beginning. But a collection of beings, each of which had a beginning, must, however long the series, have also had a beginning.

This, likewise is intuitively evident. Should it be said, that the first in each series had not a beginning, but was from everlasting; which is the only possible method of evading the answer already given; I reply, that according to this supposition, the first in each series was uncaused and self-existent; and, containing in itself the principles of eternal existence, could never have ceased to be. At the same time, an endless multitude of finite self-existent beings must be admitted on this supposition, possessed in all instances of few and feeble active powers, and in most instances of none but such as are merely passive. Thus, for example, there must have been an eternal man, an eternal lion, an eternal eagle, an eternal oak, an eternal rose, eternal grass, and in a word, as many eternal self-existent beings, as there are kinds and sorts of existences in the world: for no being of one kind can possibly produce, or bring into existence, a being of any other kind. Of course, there must have been one, eternal and self-existent, at the head of every existing series; and at the head of every series of animated beings an eternal self-existent pair. From these also, the whole series must have sprung without any contrivance, and in most instances, without any consciousness. All this, with a train of absurdities following it, literally endless, must be admitted on this supposition. For what purpose must all this be admitted? Truly, to relieve us from the difficulty of admitting the existence of One self-existent Being. At the same time, the existence of such a finite self-existent being is a mere hypothesis, without a shadow of support.

Beyond this, all such beings must have lived, as we do, through a succession of years, and their whole existence must be made up of parts, or divisions, succeeding each other. These parts are a collection of units; and are therefore numerable.

Should it be said, that saints and angels in heaven are immortal, and will therefore exist through an infinite duration; that this duration will also be made up of successive parts; and that, of course, there may be an infinite duration made up of successive parts: I answer, that there is a total difference between these cases. In the former, the supposed infinite duration is completed: in the latter, it will never be completed. It is true that saints and angels will never cease to be: but it will never be true, that they have lived infinitely, or through an infinite duration. An endless addition of parts may be supposed; but an infinite sum of parts, which have actually had existence, is a self-contradiction.

3. It is justly observed by the learned and acute Dr Bentley, 'that, in the supposed infinite series, as the number of individual men is alleged to be infinite; the number of their eyes must be twice, the number of their fingers ten times, and the number of the hairs on their heads many thousand times as great as the number of men.'

What then must be the number of the hairs on the bodies of animals; of leaves on the trees, and of blades of grass on the earth? According to this supposition then, there is an almost endless multitude of numbers, greater, and many of them incalculably, than an infinite number. To such palpable absurdities are we reduced by supposing an infinite succession.

4. It is also observed by the same excellent writer, 'that all these generations of men were once present.' One of the individuals, viz. the first, existed at an infinite distance from us. His son, who may be supposed to have been forty years younger, was either at an infinite, or at a finite distance from us. If at an infinite, then the infinite distance of his father was forty years longer than the infinite distance of the son. If the son was at a finite distance from us, then forty years, added to a finite distance, will make it infinite.

It is unnecessary that I should dwell any longer on this complication of folly.

The same arguments are, with the same force, applicable to all possible successions. Every succession is in its nature made up of parts, each of which has a beginning.

The only subject on which rests even a seeming obscurity in this respect, is what is called 'continued motion.' Some persons have considered motion of this kind, such for example as that of the planets, as not being successive; because, when viewed in the gross, the successive parts were not separable by the human mind. Divide the circuit, as a wheel is divided by its cogs, or teeth; or fix upon a number of stars, by which the planet shall successively pass; and the delusion, occasioned by the continuity of the parts, will vanish in a moment. It will be seen of course, and with perfect distinctness, that motion, in all its forms, is as truly a succession of changes, as successive thought, or successive being.

II. *Atheists assert, that the existence of things is equal.*

In this assertion, the connexion between cause and effect, and the very existence of causation, are denied, so far as the production of being are concerned. All beings are supposed not to have been produced, or caused, but to have happened: their existence being supposed to be a mere contingency. Some, perhaps most of those, who have adopted this system, have however at the same time believed matter to be eternal. On this scheme of existence, I observe,

1. That it is a mere hypothesis, unsupported by any evidence whatever.—The doctrine of casual, or contingent existence, precludes all reasoning by its very nature. The very demand of a reason from him who adopts it, is itself an absurdity; because he declares to you in the very nature of the doctrine, that neither the existence nor the doctrine, admits of the application of any reason. Of course, the fact, that existence has happened in any case, is in its own nature capable of being evidenced only by testimony, and of this evidence it is in fact incapable, because no witness was ever present at such a contingency. The doctrine, therefore, stands on exactly the same ground with that of all other mere assumptions; such as, that the soul of man is blue, or triangular; that the inhabitants of Jupiter

walk with their heads downward; or that the sun is a body of melted glass.

2. The abettors of this doctrine have, in their endeavours to form a system, founded on it, been driven, unavoidably, into a continued succession of absurdities.

Epicurus, the principal vender of this system, supposed, that innumerable solid atoms existed from eternity in infinite space; that they were of different sizes and figures, and were all separated from each other; and that they were originally quiescent, or motionless. When it was objected, that they must then have remained for ever motionless; he invented for them a *conatus ad motum;* an endeavour, or tendency, towards motion; which he declares to have been inherent in them eternally. When it was objected, that unless they were moved eternally by this *conatus*, they could never have moved at all; he avoided this difficulty by determining, that they had moved from eternity in parallel directions. It was objected again, that with this motion they would never have approached any nearer to each other. To escape this difficulty, he gave them a motion in a small degree oblique. The cause of their motion he declares to be their weight; and their direction to be downward: not knowing, that there is no weight where there is no attracting body; and that every direction towards the centre of the earth is downward. I will not pursue this mass of absurdities any farther; and will only observe, that those who have followed him, have not rendered the system a whit better than they found it.

3. The actual state of things is a complete refutation of this doctrine.

Regularity is a direct and perfect proof of the absence of casualty in the formation of that in which the regularity exists; and the whole system of things is, in its parts, and their union in a whole, one immense and multiform system of regularity.

The twenty-four letters of the alphabet, small as the number is, are proved arithmetically to be capable of more than six hundred thousand millions of billions of different horizontal arrangements. Were they to be thrown up into the air, and to fall in any supposed order, the chances against their falling, a second time, in the same order, are at least as great a number as that which has been specified; and just so many chances exist against their falling in any given position.

In the human frame there are probably more than a million of parts, greater and smaller; all of which we behold united in a perfect and most regular system. The relative horizontal positions only, of which these are capable, must be expressed by more than a million of arithmetical figures; their vertical and oblique positions must be expressed by several millions more; and all these combined, must be expressed by the multiplication of these immense sums with each other. The chances, therefore, against such a union of the parts of the human body, as actually exists, even after we suppose the several parts actually formed, would be such as would be expressed by this aggregate of figures: a number which all the human race, who have existed since the Mosaic date of the creation, would not have been able to count, had they busied themselves in no other employment during their lives. In addition to this, the number of chances against the original formation of these parts is immensely greater, than against the fact of their coming together. Nor are we yet at the end of the climax: for we perfectly well know, that if all the parts were actually and perfectly formed, they could neither put themselves together, nor be united by any human skill or labour, however long employed. Beyond all this, if they were all formed, and all perfectly united, so as to constitute exactly, both within and without, a human frame, it would still be a mere corpse, without life or motion. Were we to admit still farther, that the frame thus formed, might become possessed of life, it would yet be destitute of a soul, and therefore infinitely distant from the intelligent being, whom we call Man.

All these difficulties must be surmounted, a second time, in order to the existence of mankind; one of each sex being originally and absolutely necessary to the existence of succeeding generations. In the same manner, the same process must be repeated, in order to the production of every kind of animals; and in most cases in order to the production of the kinds of trees, shrubs, and plants.

He who can believe this system, can believe any thing; and his faith must undoubtedly be the nearest approximation to casualty, which has been hitherto recorded in the history of man.

The body of man is a system made up of parts, wonderfully numerous and diversified, and still more wonderfully united and arranged. Every one of them is regularly found in all the bodies of men, in its own place; and that the best place possible. The hair of the head, which for aught that appears, might as naturally have grown on the face, grows only where it is needed to cover the *cerebrum*, and *cerebellum*, so tender and vital, from the injuries of both heat and cold; and to become, at the same time, a beautiful ornament. The eyes are placed where only they are needed, or could be materially useful, to direct the hands and the feet; the teeth, where alone they could serve their great purpose of mastication; the throat, immediately behind and beneath them, where alone it could answer its own purpose of receiving the food, after it has been chewed, mixed with the saliva, and thus prepared for digestion; the stomach, beneath the throat, or more properly beneath the *œsophagus*, to receive through it the food, thus prepared, and render it useful to the preservation of life by digestion. In the same manner, the heart is situated in exactly that position, with respect to the lungs and the greater arteries and veins, in which it communicates to them, and through them to the whole body, in the most advantageous manner, the blood, which is the great instrument of sustaining life. The lungs also are in the same happy manner connected with the throat by the *trachea* so as to receive, and decompose the air, on which we live, after it is admitted into the nostrils. The great bone of the neck and back, commonly called the spine, is so formed and placed, as to sustain the body in an erect posture; as to defend, in a manner indispensably necessary, the spinal marrow, so essential to life; and as, through orifices in the vertebræ, of which it is composed, to permit the nerves to pass, and give sensation to every part of the body; and as, at the same time, to enable us to bend into every useful position. The tongue is so constructed and posited, as to answer exactly its various important purposes, particularly tasting and speaking; the hands, where alone they could be employed, in their innumerable uses; and the feet, where alone they could enable us to stand or walk.

This course of illustration might be pursued through a volume, or rather through many volumes; and the more minutely and extensively it was pursued, the more clearly would it evince, at every step, a design most wonderful in itself, originally and exactly formed, and perfectly executed; every part of which is with the greatest felicity fitted to the important ends of human existence.

Let us now for a moment consider, what would be the consequences of mere casualty with regard to this subject. Suppose the eyes only placed (where they might as easily have fallen by chance, as in their proper place) in any one of those innumerable positions, furnished by the body; for example, on the top of the head, or on the soles of the feet: what would have become of the man? Suppose the mouth, the throat, the trachea, the lungs, the stomach, or the heart, to have been removed even a very little distance from their present places. How soon must life, if we suppose life at first to exist, be extinguished? Or rather, how impossible must it have been for life to exist at all? Were the hands and feet to interchange positions; were the thumb to grow from the back of the hand; or the joints of the fingers to be turned outwards, nearly every purpose which man is fitted to accomplish, must be entirely prevented. The truth is, all the parts of the human body are of high importance to our well-being, both as to their structure and to their position, and very many of them are in both respects absolutely indispensable. A very small change in any one of these, would be equally fatal to comfort and to life.

Whence then has it come to pass, that in so many millions of the human race, all the parts of the human body are exactly formed, and exactly placed, in their proper and relative position; that the blood has flowed in its thousand channels, and regularly returned to the fountains, in all its various courses; that the food has ever been digested; the processes of secretion carried on with exactness; the juices separated without mixture; and the nutriment of the whole body conveyed to every part, however minute, and however distant? That the organs of sensation have ever been formed; and the bones, muscles, and sinews, furnished with strength, and the nerves with sensitive perception; and that thus the body has become a frame, a tenement, suited to the inhabitation of an intelligent mind?

Let me farther ask, has mere casualty been the source of contrivance, of thought, of volition, of virtue? Has an immaterial existence, possessed of these wonderful powers, started into being by a mere contingency? That the soul is immaterial, I shall, as I have before observed, attempt to prove in another Discourse, and shall therefore take it here for granted. Will it be held, that souls are also progenitors, and propagate each other, after chance has given birth to the first in the series?

The first proofs of design, viz. the provision of means adapted evidently to the accomplishment of ends, are also found in every animal body; in every organized structure; in the mineral kingdom, to a vast extent; and universally in the figure, positions, motions, and appurtenances, of the worlds composing the planetary system. Their magnitudes, their distances from the sun, the position of their axes, their diurnal and annual revolutions, their furniture of moons; the central station, size, and splendour, of the vast luminous world around which they roll; the regularity and harmony of all their motions; are overwhelming proofs of design and wisdom, such as can be attributed only to a boundless and uncreated mind.

III. *Atheists assert, that the several beings found in the universe, owe their existence to the operations of matter.*

In opposing this scheme we return again to arguments, derived from the connexions between cause and effect: for here a cause is not only supposed, but directly alleged by the atheist, and is regarded by him as being adequate to the production of all beings. It will be my business to prove from the inadequacy, and the consequent inefficacy of the alleged causes, that it was not the real source of existence to the beings, visible in the world around us. For the accomplishment of this purpose, I observe,

1. That matter is acknowledged by the atheist, with whom I am now arguing, to be destitute of intelligence; it being the great object of his scheme to prove, that his own existence, and that of other beings, was not derived from an intelligent cause.

2. The eternal existence of matter is a merely gratuitous supposition, unsupported by any evidence whatever.

3. If we admit, that matter existed from eternity, its properties and operations must all have been also eternal. As the properties of matter are inherent in it, they must, in the case supposed, have been eternally inherent. Of course, whatever powers matter possessed, it possessed them eternally; there being no cause, intrinsic or extrinsic, to increase, lessen, or alter them. Hence it is certain, that they must have operated from eternity, in every way in which they could operate at all. All the beings therefore, and all the changes which its operations could produce, it must have produced from eternity. Hence it is plain, that there must have been an eternal and infinite series of men, of animals, of vegetables, of motions, and of changes of every other kind, in the universe. But this has been demonstrated to be a self-contradiction. The premises whence it is derived are therefore false. That matter should have possessed these powers from eternity, without exerting them, and that it should have exerted them from eternity, are thus proved to be, as I asserted in the former Discourse, plain impossibilities. It follows then undeniably, that if matter existed eternally in one uniform state, that state was entirely quiescent; and that no change, however small, could ever have taken place in it, but from an extrinsic cause. Thus the supposition of the eternal existence of matter is so far from accounting for the existence of the beings and the changes in the universe, that it will not account for any thing, not even for the least change in the position or circumstances of an atom.

4. There is no fact which gives even the appearance of plausibility to this scheme. The only facts, which, so far as I know, have ever been seriously alleged to this purpose, are the production of insects and plants by what is called equivocal generation; according to which, by the mere fermentation of various kinds of matter, the insect is supposed to be produced without a parent, and the plant without a seed.

To this I answer,

(1.) That this is at best a mere supposition, no evidence having been ever furnished of the fact which it alleges.

(2.) Francisco de Redi, and Malpighi, two eminent

Italian philosophers, have, by a long train of ingenious and accurate experiments, unanswerably proved, that equivocal generation is a groundless hypothesis; and that no matter in any process of fermentation will produce an insect without a parent, or a plant without a seed. As therefore all the powers and operations of matter must, if eternal, be eternally the same; and as matter now produces no such beings as are alleged; it follows unanswerably, that matter was never the cause of any such production.

5. Innumerable facts directly refute this scheme.

(1.) That this world in its present form, was not eternal is certain; because its surface is continually changing, and approximating towards a level. If we suppose one particle only to have descended from the higher towards the lower parts of the surface in an age, or in a million of ages; the whole, unless counteracted by opposing causes, (and in most places there is no trace of such causes,) must have become an entire level, at a period too distant to be conceived by any mind, or expressed by any numbers. Yet millions of tons annually descend towards the centre. The date of the earth, in its present state, must therefore have begun at a time not far distant.

(2.) If, contrary to truth, we admit gravitation to be an inherent property of matter, it could not possibly have caused the revolution of the planets. Let the planets be placed at any supposable place and distance, within the reach of the sun's attraction; the only direction in which they could possibly move, would be a straight or right line towards the sun; because this is the only direction in which his gravitation and theirs can possibly act. It is easily and mathematically proved, that to the circular motion of the planets round the sun, a projectile force or impulse, acting in the direction of a tangent to the planetary orbit, was originally indispensable. So far therefore would the planets have been from moving in their proper orbits round the sun by the mere power of gravitation, that they could only have fallen directly to the sun. Should it be said, that the planets have moved eternally in their present orbits; and that the earth, for example, has performed an infinite series of revolutions; it must also be said, that the moon in her circuit round the earth has performed a series thirteen times, and the earth in its rotation round its axis, a series three hundred and sixty-five times as great as that infinite series.

(3.) The diurnal motions of the planets, the positions of their axes, and the attendance of their satellites, which accord with no regularity, or proportion to their magnitudes, or their distances from the sun, and cannot be explained in any consistency with mere material principles, prove themselves, unquestionably, to have been derived from an extrinsic and intelligent cause.

6. From a sufficiently regular course of observations, employed on the eclipses of the sun and moon, and a series of correct calculations concerning them, it is proved by Ferguson, that the ancient eclipses, noted in history, took place at times, differing sensibly from those which the calculations require; that these differences of time regularly diminish, as the times approach nearer to us; and that the orbit of the moon was therefore more distant from the earth formerly, than it is now. Hence it is certain, that the moon's motion round the earth, instead of having been eternal, has existed only during a little period.

In the last place, for I will not dwell on this atheistical dream any longer, if all these impossibilities were removed, and all these proofs given up, another would still remain, which completely refutes this scheme; viz. that matter cannot be the cause of intelligence. *Quod non habet, non dare potest;* what a cause does not contain or possess, it cannot communicate, is a maxim, or self-evident proposition. That matter, therefore, which cannot think, will, or originate motion, should communicate thought, volition, and motivity, is plainly impossible.

Thus have I considered the only atheistical schemes of existence, which merit any serious attention. Were I disposed to exhibit the abettors of these schemes in a ridiculous and contemptible light; the efforts of Anaximander, Epicurus, the Egyptian philosophers, the Count de Buffon, and many others, both ancient and modern, to explain the origin and progress of things, would furnish me with ample materials. But such an exhibition would ill become this sacred place. I shall only add, the existence of the very matter to which so much is attributed, and on which such reliance is placed, by atheistical philosophers, can never be evinced. I myself believe indeed that it exists, but I also know that its existence cannot be proved.

REMARKS.

From these observations it is evident,

1. That atheism in all its forms is a specimen of the most absolute credulity. The three great atheistical schemes of existence here recited, and undoubtedly the best which have been formed, are founded on mere assumptions, or gratuitous hypotheses, unsupported by a particle of argument or evidence. But to adopt a mere assumption, especially in a case of infinite importance, is credulity in the extreme, and folly which cannot plead even a pretence. More than this, each of these schemes is refuted by direct demonstration. Beyond even this, they are unanswerably proved, not only to be false, but to be impossible. Still the atheist goes on quietly with his faith in these hypotheses, and resolves to believe, in defiance of demonstration and impossibility.

2. There are still men, in considerable numbers, and of no small ingenuity, who profess themselves atheists; and who thus prove, that atheism has its seat in the heart, and not in the understanding. Nothing can be more evident, than that these doctrines can never have been embraced from argument or conviction, or by an unbiassed understanding. They were therefore certainly adopted under the influence of the heart; and believed, only because they were loved, or because God was dreaded and hated. Thus the heart is the true source of the belief that there is no God; and he is a fool who, governed by its wishes, thus believes against all reason and evidence.

3. As such men have thus believed under such an influence, so, if we indulge such wishes, we may be given up by God to these or any other fatal doctrines, and of course to destruction. The great danger lies in the heart, and in its hostility to God and his character. What we wish, we easily believe; and what we dread or hate, we easily disbelieve. As we dread the anger of God against sin, and against ourselves particularly as sinners, and all his designs to punish it; as we hate to renounce it, and its pleasures; we contrive easily, and naturally, to disbelieve his designs, character, and existence. Especially is this the case, when God, provoked by our

rebellion and opposition, gives us up to a reprobate mind.

How greatly ought we then to fear this mass of guilt, danger, and ruin! How earnestly ought we to watch, and strive, and pray that we fall not into this train of temptations and miseries! Let us resolve to 'receive the truth,' at all events, however humbling or painful, 'in the love of it.' And may God grant that it may make us 'free from the bondage of corruption, and translate us into the glorious liberty of his children.' Amen.

SERMON III.

COMPARATIVE INFLUENCE OF ATHEISM AND CHRISTIANITY.

The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt; they have done abominable works: there is none that doeth good.—Psal. xiv. 1.

In my last Discourse, I considered the objections of atheists against the being and government of God; and those doctrines concerning the origin and existence of things, which they have substituted for the doctrines of Theism and the Scriptures, on this most important subject. The objections I endeavoured to prove unsound and nugatory, and the doctrines to be mere hypotheses, demonstrably false, and plainly impossible. Hence I concluded them to be the doctrines of the heart, and not of the intellect. Hence also I concluded, that he who embraces them, is, according to the language of the text, 'a fool.' There is no more absolute folly than to believe doctrines because we love them, and to reject doctrines because we hate them; or in other words, to suffer our inclinations to govern our understanding.

The consequences of these doctrines, or of atheism generally, are in the text declared in these words, 'They are corrupt; they have done abominable works: there is none that doeth good.' In other words, atheists are corrupt; they do abominable works; there is none of them that doeth good. This character of atheists, seen by the psalmist and declared by the Spirit of God three thousand years ago, has not changed for the better at any period down to the present day. They have ever been corrupt, they have ever done abominable works; there has never been among them a single good or virtuous man.

It cannot but be a useful employment to examine this interesting subject, and to learn from such an examination, the manner in which these false principles, dictated and embraced by a bad heart, contribute in their turn, as powerful causes, to render that heart still more corrupt; to fill the life with abominable actions; and to prevent every one who embraces these doctrines, from assuming the character of virtue.

Before I enter upon the direct discussion of this subject, it will be proper to observe, that, Virtue is nothing but voluntary obedience to truth; and Sin, nothing but voluntary obedience to falsehood. Or more generally, virtue and sin consist in a disposition or preparation of the heart, flowing out into acts of obedience, in the respective manners which I have mentioned. From these definitions, which it is presumed cannot be successfully denied, it is evident that every false doctrine which is relished by the heart, will, of course, govern its affections and volitions; and will therefore control the conduct. Nor is it less evident, that in the present case, the doctrines in question, being embraced only because they are loved, will eminently influence the heart which has dictated them, and eminently affect all the moral conduct.

It will also be clear to all persons accustomed to the investigation of moral subjects, that the character of a man must, at least in a great measure, be formed by his views of the several subjects with which he is acquainted. As these are expanded, magnificent and sublime; or narrow, ordinary, grovelling; the taste, the character, and the conduct, will be refined and noble, or gross and contemptible. A man accustomed to an exalted sphere of life, and to a regular intercourse with great objects, will assume, of course, a dignity and greatness of mind, and a splendour of personal character, which cannot be assumed by him whose views have ever been limited to few and small objects, and whose life has been passed in actions of no significance. There is something princely, of course, in men even of moderate endowments, when properly educated for the inheritance of a throne. There is every thing diminutive, of necessity, in him who is trained only to be a camp-boy or a shoe-black.

When men are educated to contemplation and science, it may not unnaturally be imagined, that their minds, allowing for the difference of their endowments, will, from the similarity of their pursuits, be formed into a similarity of character. This, however, is to a great extent, a mistaken opinion. The very objects with which such men are equally conversant, may, from their respective modes of viewing them, become totally unlike, and even contradictory, in their apprehension. It will not be questioned that the mind of a heathen, studying, with the views of a heathen, the polytheism of Greece and Rome, would be affected very differently from the mind of a Christian, investigating the same subject. The manner in which we regard any object of inquiry, may differ from some other manner almost as much as any two objects of inquisition may differ from each other. The views of him who regards the firmament as a great blue canopy, and the stars as little sparks of light, differ from the views of the astronomer, who considers the firmament as a boundless expansion, and the stars as an innumerable multitude of suns, almost as widely as the two objects of contemplation differ. The manner, therefore, in which human contemplations are directed may be very various, although

the objects are the same. In truth, it is not the grandeur or diminutiveness of the objects, but the greatness or littleness of the views entertained of them, which affect and form the character.

The taste or relish of the mind, particularly, will in a great measure, if not wholly, be formed by this cause. The mind, by an early habit accustomed to little views, will soon learn to relish no other. Accustomed from the beginning to a connexion with grovelling objects only, it soon ceases to be pleased with any other objects. Accustomed to form diminutive and debased schemes of action, it becomes easily and finally disgusted with every thing of an enlarged and superior nature.

As these things are true of all the views entertained by man, so they are especially true of those which may be called original and fundamental; which involve all subordinate ones, which direct every future course of thought, and to which the mind thinks it necessary to reconcile every succeeding purpose, relish, and opinion. If the stem here be a mere twig, the branches must be poor and diminutive indeed. Thus he, the basis of whose religion was an idol, must form a system of theology and ethics dismally lean and contemptible.

All the motives to human conduct are found, either in the objects with which we converse, or in the views with which we regard them. If the objects or the views be low and debased, low and debased motives only will arise out of them. But motives originate all our conduct, regulate its progress, and determine its nature. If they be low and debased, the conduct will partake of the same characteristics, and will, of course, be grovelling, unworthy, and odious.

Thus the objects with which we are conversant, and the views which we form of them, will determine both the internal and external character of man.

It will be remarked, that I have considered this subject independently of the peculiar doctrines of Christianity; and for this reason, that I am arguing with those who deny a divine revelation.

These things being premised, I assert, in accordance with the text, that the proper, natural, and necessary influence of atheism is to contract, and render grovelling, the views, to corrupt the character, and to deform the life of man. The truth of this assertion I shall attempt to illustrate under the following heads.

I. *The views which the atheist forms of the natural world:*

II. *His views of the moral world:*

III. *His views of the future world.*

All these I shall also, from time to time, compare with the views which the Christian entertains of the same subjects.

I. *I shall consider the views which the atheist forms of the natural world.*

In this consideration, I am disposed to allow the atheist all the advantages which he can derive from endowments or acquisitions. He may, with my consent, be, what I well know he can be, a chemist, a botanist, a mineralogist, or an anatomist. He shall, if he pleases, be a mathematician, a natural philosopher, an astronomer, a metaphysician, or a poet. I mean that he may be any or all of these, so far as one man of his opinions can be reasonably supposed to sustain the several characters specified. I will not even avail myself of the celebrated remark of Lord Bacon, 'that a little philosophy will make a man an atheist, but a great deal will make him a Christian;' although I entertain not a doubt of its truth. My business is not to dwell on minute things, but to show the nature of those which are of higher importance.

The atheist then may, with enlarged understanding and skill, contemplate the structure of the heavenly bodies. He may, with the eye of a naturalist, explore the organization of the vegetable kingdom; may analyse the chemical principles and combinations of plants and minerals; and may trace, to use his own language, the hidden walks of nature, in her mysterious progress through the system. Or with the imagination of the poet, and the science of the astronomer, he may be fascinated with the beauty, splendour, and sublimity of the landscape, or delighted with the distances, magnitudes, motions, harmony, and magnificence of the planetary and stellary systems; still his views of all these, and all other natural objects, although in his mind the most illustrious objects which exist, will be poor and pitiable.

All of them, in his opinion, owe their being to fate, accident, or the blind action of stupid matter. They exist for no end, and accomplish none. They spring from no wisdom, and display none. They are therefore what they would have been, had they been made and moved by an intelligent cause, without any purpose or design in their creation, a vast apparatus of splendour and magnificence assembled together for nothing; an immense show, in which nothing was intended, and from which nothing can be gained. The mind, in surveying them, asks instinctively and irresistibly, How came this train of wonders into being? and is answered with nothing but perplexity and folly, but doubt and despair. In the same manner it inquires, Of what use will this mighty assemblage of worlds and their furniture prove? The only reply is, Of none. All, with all their motions, furniture, and inhabitants, are the result, and under the control, of that iron-handed necessity which exists in the blind operations of unconscious matter; that gloomy fate of the heathens, to which they sullenly submitted because they deemed it inevitable; and which, while it showered calamities in abundance, cut off every hope and every effort for the attainment of deliverance. To the wretch whose mind is effectually imbued with this scheme of things, the universe is changed into a vast prison, where himself and his companions are confined by bolts and bars, forged by the hand of blind, immoveable, and irresistible destiny; where no heart is found to pity their sufferings, and no hand to lend relief; where no eye looks with sympathy, and no ear listens with tenderness; where the walls reach to heaven, and are hung with clouds and midnight; and where every effort to escape, conducts the miserable tenants only to the sullen cavern of despair.

Should the atheist, sick with the forlorn and hopeless contemplation, turn his eyes from this scheme of things to his only alternative, the doctrine of Chance, he will find himself equally distant from refreshment and from hope. Here, himself and all other beings in earth, sea, and sky, with all their properties and operations, are mere accidents, involved and perplexed in their movements, like the particles of dust in a whirlwind. In his view, if he understand his system, and will think consistently with himself, his thoughts, volitions, and efforts, the continuance of his own being, and that of all other things, are mere casualties, produced

by no cause, upheld by no support, directed by no wisdom, and existing to no purpose. Mere abortions, precarious in the extreme, possessed only of a doubtful and fluctuating existence, they tremble and flutter in a dreadful state of suspense, over the gloomy abyss of annihilation. All here is doubt and discouragement. Not a plan can be rationally formed, not a hope consistently indulged. Where every thing is to happen, if it exist at all; or where the result of the casualty is, with the same probability, seen to be any thing or nothing; it is plain that nothing can be expected. Against every expectation, the chances are millions of millions to one; for every supposable thing is as likely to exist as any other.

Should it be said, that the atheist refutes these declarations by his conduct, because he lives and acts like other men, and is no more influenced than others by a regard either to fate or chance, I answer, that the objection is erroneous. The atheist, instead of refuting these observations, refutes himself. He denies his own principles, and avails himself of the principles which he opposes. If he understands his own scheme, he cannot but know that the necessity of existence, which he professes to believe, is irreconcilable with all freedom of mind, with all voluntariness, with all contrivance. He knows that connection cannot spring from chance, that order cannot arise out of accident; that whatever exists fortuitously, exists independently of all things else, and can never be connected with any other thing, by any moral or useful relation. If therefore he would think and act rationally, he would neither contrive, expect, fear, nor hope; neither build nor plant, neither reap nor gather; but would yield himself up to the control of irresistible destiny, or to the capricious disposal of contingence.

The works of God are in their own nature beautiful, magnificent, sublime, and wonderful; and by every eye which sees them, their *nature* must in some degree be discerned. It is readily admitted, therefore, that the atheist himself, if he be not a sot, must in some degree perceive the sublimity and splendour, which are inherent in the earth and the heavens. But from these illustrious attributes he subtracts immensely, when he denies that they owe their origin to an intelligent and eternal mind; when he denies that they are moved and ruled by infinite perfection; and that by the same perfection they are conducted to a divine and glorious end, a purpose infinitely excellent and desirable. Without this consideration, all their lustre becomes feeble and fading; a dim taper, gradually declining on the sight towards a final extinction. At the same time, by attributing their existence to fate, chance, or matter, he contracts their greatness, and lowers their elevation, to a measure equally humble and painful, and covers even the bright lights of heaven with a shroud of gloom and obscurity.

When the Christian beholds the earth and the heavens, how different are his views of the same illustrious objects? To him the vast congregation of worlds is the immense and eternal empire of the Self-existent and Omnipresent Jehovah, contrived by his boundless wisdom, chosen by his boundless goodness, and executed by his boundless power. This single thought, like the rising of the sun upon this benighted world, imparts to the universe, in a moment, a diffusive and illimitable splendour, investing, explaining, and adorning, all the beings of which it is composed. On all, the sublime impression of design is instamped as a living image, glowing in living colours. The universe becomes a vast assemblage of means, directed to an immortal purpose; arranged in perfect order, adjusted with exact symmetry, and operating with complete harmony: and all, from the glory of that purpose, and the perfection of their arrangement, symmetry, and operations, derive an elevation and grandeur, of which they are otherwise utterly incapable.

God, before whom all things are as nothing, is invested by his perfections with a greatness and sublimity, in comparison with which, all other magnificence, separately considered, becomes 'less than nothing and vanity.' Eternal, omnipresent, and immutable power, wisdom, and goodness, are objects so high, so vast, that all the worlds and suns which they have created, diminish when compared with them, to 'the drop of the bucket, and the small dust of the balance.' But in the view of the Christian, these worlds, and every thing which they contain, derive a glorious lustre from being an immediate exhibition of these attributes, and of the incomprehensible Being in whom they reside. Wherever the Christian casts his eyes, he sees all things full of God. The omnipresent, all-creating, and all-ruling Jehovah, lives, and moves, and acts, in every thing which meets his view. In the spring, he comes forth in his beauty and beneficence, clothes the naked world in the richest attire, and awakens universal life and joy. In the summer, and the autumn, 'he openeth his bountiful hand, and satisfieth the wants of every living thing.' In the winter, 'he hath his way in the whirlwind, and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet.' The heavens recall to the mind of the Christian the day when God said, 'Let there be a firmament, and there was a firmament:' In the sun still resounds that voice which commanded, 'Let there be light, and there was light.'

In the meantime, all things borne on, in the view of the atheist, in a blind and relentless career by irresistible necessity, or dancing in fortuitous and endless mazes, like the imaginary atoms supposed by him to have produced them, and therefore dark, cheerless, and hopeless, are, in that of the Christian, directed by the wisdom, power, and goodness of the Creator; and are therefore to him, full of expectation, hope, and comfort. Wherever he is, there God is. His ear is always open to his prayers; his eye, to his dangers, sorrows, and fears; his hand, extended to supply, to relieve, to comfort, and to save, An Almighty Friend is every where found by him, in the crowd and in solitude, by night and by day; never absent, never forgetful, never unkind, never encumbered, by any concerns which will prevent his wants from being regarded, nor surrounded by any difficulties which can hinder them from being supplied. Between this friend and him, time and place can never intervene; he is every where, and is every where to him a God.

In this vast particular, the difference between the views of the atheist and those of the Christian, I need hardly observe, is incalculable and immense. The efficacy of these views on the mind must, it is obvious, be proportioned to their nature.

II. *I will now examine the view which the atheist forms of the moral world.*

The moral world is the world of minds, or of intelligent beings. The importance of this world will in some

good measure be conceived from these considerations; that the individuals who compose it are the only beings by whom good can be contrived or done, and the only beings by whom it can to any extent be enjoyed. Of this world, the conceptions of the atheist are, in a far greater degree, inferior to those of the Christian.

The only object which the atheist knows in the moral world is man, and man lowered to the humblest possible level of intellectual existence. His origin, in the view of the atheist, is the same with that of a mushroom; and his character that of a mere animal. He is the subject of no moral government, insusceptible of moral obligation; incapable, therefore, of virtue, excellence, and loveliness; possessing attributes, which, like himself, are the offspring, and under the control, of necessity or chance; united to his fellow-men by nothing but time and place; insulated in all his interests, and those the interests of a swine only; without the knowledge of the existence of law or government, merit or reward; and born merely to breathe, to eat, to drink, to sleep, to propagate his kind, to decay, and to die. How obvious is it, that on these views of man, there can be erected no personal worth, enjoyment, or hope; no common good, no sense of rectitude, and no efforts for the promotion of general happiness.

Personal worth is all dependant on the existence of laws and government, formed by one who has a right to enact the former and administer the latter; a right founded on the relations which he sustains to those who are under his government. To these relations also must the laws and the government be conformed in such a manner, as that that, and that only, shall be enacted, which requires the conduct suited to these relations, and promotive of general and individual happiness. In the same manner must be directed the rewards, punishments, aud administrations. But on the scheme of the atheist, there is no such ruler, and no such right to rule; there are no such relations, and no such duties. Rectitude, the sum of personal worth, consists in rendering voluntarily, that which others have a right to claim. But on his scheme no claim can be founded, and none exists. There is therefore nothing due; of course, no duty can be performed, and no rectitude experienced. Hence that high, unceasing, and refined enjoyment, which attends the sense of rectitude, can never be found by the atheist.

As the atheist is without rectitude or moral principle, and destitute of the sense and enjoyment of it; so it is plain, that his whole conduct must be directed by a regard to mere convenience; or rather by a regard to what his passions, unrestrained, rendered intense by habitual indulgence, and fastening their view only on the present object, may deem convenient. In other words, his conduct must be dictated merely by the existing passion and appetite; and must therefore be that very conduct, which has produced almost all the miseries and complaints of mankind.

If this scheme be true, all men ought undoubtedly to be governed by it. What would become of such a world, and of the atheist himself in the midst of such a world? No man, it is evident, could exercise confidence towards any other man. The loss of the enjoyment, furnished by this single delightful emotion, an enjoyment absolutely indispensable even to comfort and to safety, would infinitely overbalance every good which atheists ever found. Without confidence, no society can be happy. Without confidence, no society, no friendship, no union, no connexion, between intelligent beings can exist. Even thieves and robbers, as has ever been proverbially acknowledged, cannot, without confidence, form even their dreadful state of society. The world, dispossessed of it, would become an image of hell; and distrust, jealousy, wrath, revenge, murder, war, and devastation, overspread the earth. In the midst of millions, the atheist would find himself in a desert. His situation would be that of a hermit, his character that of a fiend. By day, he would hide himself in his den; by night, he would prowl as a wolf, for the prey on which he was to live.

To such a world it is obvious, 'hope, which,' in the language of the poet, 'comes to all,' could 'never come.' On hope, even as the world now is, men in a great measure live. The prospect of something better tomorrow, brightens all the comforts of man, and tinges with light the clouds of melancholy and affliction, to day. Were all the enjoyments of human life to be fairly reckoned up, it is not improbable that those which hope brings in her train, would be the greatest mass, both in number and value. But in these, the atheist could not share, because from fate or chance nothing can be rationally expected; and because, from his fellow-men, governed by his doctrines, there could arise nothing but danger, distrust, and fear.

Should it be said, that this situation of things would be so absolutely intolerable, that mankind, unable to exist in it, would be compelled to unite in society, and establish government: I admit the conclusion, and perfectly accord with the premises from which it is drawn. But what would be the nature of this government, and on what basis would it be founded? Its basis would plainly be dire necessity, existing in the impossibility of living without it, and its operations would be only those of force. The rulers would feel no sense of rectitude, possess no virtue, and realize no moral obligation. To all these things their fundamental principles would be hostile, and would render the very thought of them ridiculous. God is the only acknowledged source of moral obligation; but to them there would be no God, and therefore no such obligation. Comformity to his laws is the only rectitude; but to these men there would be no such laws, and therefore no rectitude. Convenience, of course, or, in better words, passion and appetite, would dictate all the conduct of these rulers. The nature of a government directed by passion and appetite we know, imperfectly, by the histories of Caligula, Nero, and Heliogabalus; and more thoroughly, though still imperfectly, in those of Danton, Marat, Robespierre, and their associates. Who would be willing to see such a tissue of madness, cruelty, misery, and horror, woven again?

The subjects of such a government would at the same time be, in the same manner, under the influence of the same doctrine. Their conduct would accordingly be an exact counterpart to that of their rulers. Appetite would change every man into a swine, and passion into a tiger. Right would neither be acknowledged, nor be felt, nor exist. Whatever was coveted would be sought and obtained, if it could be done with safety. Whatever was hated would, so far as safety would permit, be hunted and destroyed. To deceive, to defraud, to betray, to maim, to torture, and to butcher, would be the common employment, and the common sport. The

dearest and most venerable relations would be violated by incestuous pollution; and children, such of them I mean as were not cast under a hedge, thrown into the sea, or dashed against the stones, would grow up without a home, without a parent, without a friend. The world would become one vast den, one immeasurable sty, and the swine and the wolf would be degraded by a comparison with its inhabitants.

Should it be doubted whether even atheism would terminate in such doctrines, and such practices, the means of removing the doubt are at hand. Hobbes, Shaftesbury, and other English infidel writers, some of whom have disclaimed the character of atheists, and wished at least to be considered as embracing theism, have directly declared that there is no right except that which the leviathan, or civil magistrate, pronounces to be such; and that rectitude, instead of being founded in the nature of things, or in the will of God, is the result of human institutions, and arbitrary decisions merely. Little consideration is necessary to enable us to discern, that this single principle involves all the consequences which I have attributed to atheism, dissolves at once all obligations to duty, annihilates virtue, and crumbles the bands which hold society together. Accordingly, Hobbes declares it to be lawful to do, and to get whatever we can with safety; and multitudes of his coadjutors and followers have taught, that pollution in almost every form is lawful and desirable, and that animal enjoyment is the only real good. The infidels of the French school, who have not found it necessary, like the English, to regard any appearances, have openly denied and ridiculed all the fundamental principles of morality, as well as of piety. I have been informed, by what I esteem good authority, that a numerous assembly of French literati, being asked in turn, at one of their meetings, by their president, whether there was any such thing as moral obligation, answered in every instance, that there was not. This happened a little before the French revolution. Since the commencement of that stupendous event, as well as in very many instances before, the body of French infidels have not only denied all the obligations which bind us to truth, justice, and kindness, but pitied and despised, as a contemptible wretch, bewildered by ignorance and folly, the man who believes in its existence.

The only instance in which infidels of any description have possessed the supreme power and government of a country, and have attempted to dispose of human happiness according to their own doctrines and wishes, is that of France, since the beginning of the revolution. If we consider this government as established over a nation, educated for ages to the belief and obedience of many doctrines of Christianity, and retaining, as to a great majority of the people, the habits formed by that education, the state of that nation will evince, beyond a question, that all which I have said is true without exaggeration. France during this period, has been a theatre of crimes, which, after all the preceding perpetrations, have excited in the mind of every spectator, amazement and horror. The miseries suffered by that single nation, have changed all the histories of the preceding sufferings of mankind into idle tales, and have been enhanced and multiplied, without a precedent, without number, and without a name. The kingdom appeared to be changed into one great prison, the inhabitants converted into felons, and the common doom of man commuted for the violence of the sword and the bayonet, the sucking boat, and the guillotine. To contemplative men it seemed for a season, as if the knell of the whole nation was tolled, and the world summoned to its execution and its funeral. Within the short time of ten years, not less than three millions of human beings are supposed to have perished in that single country, by the influence of atheism. Were the world to adopt and be governed by the doctrines of France, what crimes would not mankind perpetrate; what agonies would they not suffer?

Let us now turn our view from this prospect of guilt and desolation, this dark and final abyss of sin and ruin, where no solitary virtue gleams, where no ray of hope or comfort trembles through the profound midnight; and refresh the weary sight by casting a momentary glance over the moral world of the christian. Here, at the head of the vast chain of moral being, reaching like Jacob's ladder from earth to heaven, sits on the throne of infinite dominion the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob; the God of all, who like them believe, worship, and obey their Creator. In him, the self-existent and infinite mind, the Christian beholds unceasingly, an object of boundless sublimity, grandeur, beauty, and loveliness; commanding by the disclosure of his character, and exhausting all finite admiration, complacency, love, and praise; expanding every view, refining every affection, and ennobling every attribute. From the immediate contemplation of this glorious Being, raised to a superiority and distinction, of which he could otherwise have never conceived, he casts his eyes abroad into the universe, which that Being has created. There he beholds an endless train of intelligent minds, reflecting, with no unhappy lustre, the beauty and glory of their Maker. From the preeminent dignity of the archangel, through the glowing zeal of the seraph, and the milder wisdom of the cherub; through the high endowments of Moses, Isaiah, and Paul; down to the humble but virtuous inhabitant of a cottage, one spirit lives, and breathes, and actuates, in all; and that spirit is divine. Each wears and exhibits in his own manner, and that manner a delightful and useful one, the image and beauty of Jehovah. All, though of different magnitudes, diffuse a real light; all are stars, though 'one star differeth from another star in glory.' All are the subjects of virtuous affections; all are fitted to admire and adore, to glorify and enjoy their Creator; all are formed and disposed voluntarily to fill up their existence with doing good, with promoting individual enjoyment, and increasing universal happiness: all are bound together, as children of one God, and brethren of each other, by 'love, the bond of perfection.' Every one, therefore, is lovely in the sight of his Maker.

To this universe of minds, the Christian believes, that the Creator, who is of course the rightful lawgiver, has given laws for the direction of its members, which require perfect conduct, and ensure to it perfect happiness. These laws extend to all the thoughts, words, and actions alike, and regulate each with unerring propriety. Their obligation is, and is acknowledged to be, divine: nothing can sunder, nothing can lessen it. This, instead of being a source of regret to him, is his delight; for what these laws require is better than any thing else, and more fraught with self-approbation, worth, and enjoyment. Of course, in all the relations and situations in life, as a parent or a child, a neighbour or a friend, magistrate or a subject, he feels

himself, on the one hand, irresistibly obliged, and on the other, entirely delighted, to obey their dictates. As these dictates reach every moral being in every situation, and with respect to every action, they provide of course, and universally, for that conduct in every being, which is commendable and desirable.

Here an immovable foundation is laid for peace within, for dignity of mind, for real and enduring enjoyment, in the recesses of solitude; and for the endless train of duties and blessings, necessary to the happiness of society. A ruler formed in this manner, will govern only to bless. Subjects of the same character will obey, because rectitude demands their obedience, and because their obedience will ensure the happiness both of themselves and their rulers.

III. *I will now examine the views which the atheist forms of the future world.*

On this subject, a few observations only will be necessary. The whole of the atheist's creed, with respect to the other world, is comprised in the following summary: That his body, begun by chance or necessity, is continued without design, and perishes without hope; and that his soul is a mere attribute of his body, useless and worthless while he lives, and destined at his death to rottenness and corruption: 'Death an eternal sleep,' he engraves on the gate-posts of every churchyard, and consigns by his mandate the numerous inhabitants to the dark and desolate regions of annihilation.

By this sweeping sentence, which he passes on all the human race, he takes away from himself, and his fellow men, every motive, furnished by the fear of future punishment, or the hope of future rewards, to virtuous, upright, and amiable conduct.

From these three sources, expressed by the several heads of discourse, arise all motives and all tendencies to virtuous conduct; to truth, justice, and kindness between man and man. From the two former, we have already seen, the atheist derives neither motives nor tendencies to this conduct. The source, under consideration, is to him, if possible, still more barren of both. There is therefore nothing in his scheme which will prevent him from doing evil, or induce him to do good. How deplorable then is his system, if it may be called a system, of doctrines!

On the other hand, how glorious are the Christian's views of the future world! From the promise of his Creator he learns, that his body, sown here in corruption, weakness, and dishonour, shall be raised beyond the grave, in incorruption, power, and glory, with so many attributes of mind, or spirit, as to be denominated by him who made it, 'a spiritual body.' Ever young, active, and undecaying, it shall be reunited to the immortal mind, purified from every stain and every error. This perfect man shall be admitted, 'with an open and abundant entrance,' into the heaven of heavens, the peculiar residence of infinite majesty, and the chosen seat of infinite dominion. In this noblest of all habitations, this mansion of everlasting joy, he shall be united with an innumerable multitude of companions like himself, sanctified, immortal, and happy. Enrolled among the noblest and best beings in the universe, a child, a priest, a king, in the house of his heavenly father, his endless and only destination will be to know, love, serve, and enjoy God: to interchange the best affections and the best offices with his glorious companions, and to advance in wisdom, virtue, and happiness for ever.

In the future world of the Christian, therefore, motives, endless in their number, and infinite in their power, excite him unceasingly to the conduct which can make him useful and lovely, which can promote the happiness of his fellow creatures, or secure the approbation of his God.

Thus have I taken a summary comparative view of these two schemes of existence. In that of the Christian, an intelligent mind, possessed of boundless power, wisdom, and goodness, existed from everlasting; commanded into being the universe of matter, and the universe of minds; is present in every place; sees, with an intuitive survey, every thing; controls all things with an almighty and unerring hand; and directs all to the accomplishment of the divine and eternal purpose, for which all were made. Over the universe of minds, destined to an immortal existence, he exercises a moral and eternal government; and prescribes laws which require the best conduct, and ensure the greatest happiness. To obedience he promises an endless reward, to disobedience he threatens an endless punishment. From this great source the Christian sees himself derived, to this glorious end believes himself destined; and in this sublime scheme is presented with all motives to do him good, and with all means to make him happy.

The atheist, on the contrary, supposes all things derived from chance or necessity; originated without design, existing to no purpose, and terminating, whenever they do terminate, by the coercion of fate, or the sport of accident, as they began. Himself he regards as a lump of organized matter, without a mind, without law or government, except that of fate or force; without moral action, incapable of obligation or rectitude, united to his fellow men only by time and place, formed only to animal enjoyment, and destined to perish with his kindred brutes. By this scheme, all that is glorious, divine, and lovely, in that of the Christian, is annihilated, and all which in the natural world, cannot be annihilated, and which possesses an inherent greatness and sublimity, is miserably contracted and degraded. Nothing is left to expand his views, refine his affections, or ennoble his conduct. Motives to virtue, dignity, and usefulness, he obliterates from the creation. In the future world he finds no such motives, for to him the future world is nothing. His evil passions, in the mean time, (for such passions, whencesoever derived, he possesses,) are let loose without restraint, to rage and riot without control. Of all motives to do evil his scheme is prolific, of motives to do good it is absolutely barren. At the same time it is founded on mere hypotheses, sustained by no evidence, and believed against demonstration and impossibility.

Thus it is, I think, unanswerably evident, that he who hath said, 'There is no God,' is a fool: that his atheism is a scheme dictated only by an evil heart; that it corrupts, of course, the whole moral character: that it is productive of all abominable works, and that it completely precludes the performance of any thing that is good.

SERMON IV.

ON THE UNITY OF GOD.

There is none other God but one.—1 Cor. viii. 4.

In the three preceding Sermons I have attempted to prove the existence of God; to refute the objections, and expose the systems of atheists; and by an examination of the necessary influence of these systems on the intellect, heart, and life, compared with that of the Christian system, to show the malignant efficacy of the former, and the desirable consequences of the latter.

The text is a direct declaration of the unity of God, the next subject of discourse in the order which I have proposed.

That there is but one God, is a doctrine acknowledged in this country by every man. No attempt, therefore, to prove the soundness of this doctrine by arguments, can be necessary, in order to produce conviction of its truth. My design in choosing it for the subject of the present discourse is, to exhibit the manner in which we become possessed of it, and the evidence with which it is attended. In pursuing this design, I shall inquire,

I. *What arguments are presented to us by the works of creation and providence, in support of this doctrine:*

II. *What views men have entertained concerning it, under the direction of reason:*

III. *What has been the influence of revelation on the reception and continuance of this doctrine.*

I. I shall inquire, *what arguments are presented to us by the works of creation and providence, in support of this doctrine.*

In answer to this inquiry, I observe, that the works of creation and providence furnish to reason, unaided by revelation, the following considerations:—

1. The human mind, whenever it has admitted the being of one infinite God, has plainly found a difficulty in admitting the existence of more.

This argument I have chosen to express in these general terms, because I am aware that different men have thought differently concerning this subject. This indeed is not at all to be wondered at, when we remember the peculiarly abstruse nature of those doctrines which respect infinity. The only conception which the human mind is capable of forming concerning infinity is, that it exists. This fact we distinctly understand, and from it we can argue with success; but the nature of the thing, which is infinite, or, in more proper language, the nature of infinity itself, we cannot understand, nor can we argue from it at all. As the idea cannot enter our minds, so it is plain, we can never compare it with any other idea; for it is self-evident, that an idea which we have not, can never by us be compared with another idea. Of course, no proposition can be formed by us in this case, and no argument founded or conducted, with any knowledge or evidence. In every such case, when men think that they conceive, argue, conclude, and demonstrate, they deceive themselves; and will, if they examine, find that they have formed propositions without ideas, or mere collections of signs without any thing signified; so far at least as they are concerned.

Multitudes of mankind have considered it as obviously impossible, that two infinite beings should exist. As an infinite being and finite beings can, however, coexist in time and place, I see no decisive evidence, that two infinite beings cannot coexist. In truth, there is no perceptible difficulty arising from the nature of the case, in supposing, that spirits or immaterial beings, can occupy the same place at the same time. The contrary opinion seems at least to attribute to spirits a property, or mode of being, substantially the same with what is called solidity, or impenetrability, in matter.

Others, and so far as I know, all who have acknowledged one infinite God, have regarded the acknowledgment of more as an absurdity. In this sentiment have concurred the Patriarchs, Jews, Christians, Mahommedans, and all those modern infidels, who have not denied the existence of such a God. These classes of men have with one voice renounced the idea of more than one such God. Such a general accordance in men, differing in other respects so widely, clearly indicates, that the admission of one infinite God brings with it to the human mind, serious difficulties against the admission of more; and plainly implies, that more cannot be admitted by the mind without violence done to the understanding.

Some degree of force is lent to this argument by polytheism. Wherever more gods than one have been acknowledged, it is remarkable, that none of them have been considered as infinite.

The ideas of polytheistical nations concerning their gods have, I confess, been confused and contradictory. But it appears to me evident, that no such nation, and no individual holding a plurality of gods, has ever introduced an infinitely perfect being into a religious creed. From this fact it would seem, that the idea of infinite perfection was, in the view of the human mind, incompatible with polytheism.

Several ancient nations, as well as individuals, particularly the Persians, Egyptians, Chaldeans, and Greeks, according to Plutarch, agreed in the acknowledgment of two gods. Plutarch himself also, and according to his testimony Plato, in his old age, together with the Pythagoreans, acknowledged two gods; the one the author of good, the other the author of evil. From the account given of this subject, taken in all its parts, it would seem, however, that the evil god, or δημιουργος, was inferior to the αγαθουργος, or good god. Two equal original causes seem not to have been received into any scheme of theology, much less two infinite original causes. That such was generally the fact, if not universally, will I presume be acknowledged without a question.

From all these facts taken together, it may I think be fairly concluded, that the sense of the human mind

has every where been against the admission of more than one infinite God.

2. Although the proofs of the existence of God are complete, yet there is no proof of the existence of more than one God.

The argument for the being of God, which I mentioned as exhibited in the happiest manner by Mr Locke, proves unanswerably the being of one eternal self-existent cause, possessed of sufficient intelligence to contrive, and sufficient power to create the universe of worlds, and all which it contains. The existence of one such cause completely removes from the mind every difficulty, and satisfactorily accounts for every thing. But this argument proves nothing concerning the existence of a second cause; nor does it possess the smallest influence to persuade us that a second exists.

The argument, which I mentioned as managed with peculiar felicity by Bishop Berkeley, exhibits in a different manner, but with conclusive evidence, one universally present and universally acting power, animating, directing, and controlling all things; but it furnishes not a single trace of evidence that there is a second.

From the existence of evil, a considerable number of men have, I acknowledge, imagined, that there was reason to suppose the existence of a second original cause; they appear to have argued in this manner: 'The good and perfect cause cannot be the source of evil. Particularly, he cannot in any sense be concerned, or connected, with the existence of moral evil. Such evil however exists, and has therefore been produced. Of course, there must have been some other cause beside the good and perfect one.'

This argument is specious, but plainly unsound. For, should it be admitted, as perhaps it safely may be, that evil cannot proceed immediately from the perfect God; yet no argument can be alleged to prove that he cannot, with entire propriety, create such moral beings as, left to themselves, may yield to temptations, necessarily existing in the nature of things, and thus fall into sin. In any supposable world, pleasure may of course attend transgression; because good may, and must, exist, (if good exist at all,) which cannot be lawfully enjoyed. The good which lawfully belongs only to others, may be seen, coveted, and seized; and thus, for the time, enjoyed. Finite beings may therefore be induced by the present prospect of this pleasure to transgress, or, in other words, to sin. It has not hitherto been shown (as I presume it cannot be shown), that God is, by his perfections, obliged to prevent the existence of moral evil, originated in this manner, nor of natural evil, as its proper punishment.

Should it be said, that the perfection of God cannot fail to operate in such a manner as to produce the greatest good; I acknowledge it. Still it cannot be proved, nor be rendered in any degree probable, that the greatest possible good will not be found in a system into which evil has admission. That, in such a system great good may exist, is unquestionable. The scriptural scheme of redemption proves unanswerably, to all who believe the Bible, that good will, and to those who do not believe it, that good may spring, in a world where evil is found, greater than any other which can be imagined by the human mind. This argument is therefore wholly lame, with respect to the purpose for which it is introduced, and furnishes not the least reason for supposing such a second cause.

3. If there were more gods than one, it is incredible that no proof should be furnished of their existence.

As no intelligent being can act at all without an end in view, for which he acts; so, as has been heretofore observed,* the end proposed by the Creator of all things, must have been found in himself, and could have been no other than the manifestation of his own glory. The end of the creation of man must of course have been, that he should coincide with this great design in the exercise of all his faculties; that he should discern it with his understanding, relish it in his affections, and promote it with his active powers. But if more gods than one were concerned in the creation of man, and of the universe, it is evident that this, the only supposable end of their acting at all, cannot, as far as respects man, be possibly accomplished. That man may either discern or relish the excellence, or in the exercise of his active powers promote the designs, of his Creator, it is absolutely necessary that he should be furnished with some knowledge and therefore with some proof of his existence.

To his Creator, man is indebted for existence, and is therefore his property. Of course, man is absolutely his subject, rightfully governed by his will, rightfully subjected to his law, rightfully disposed of at his pleasure, and therefore wholly bound to coincide, voluntarily, with all his designs. From the Creator, also, man derives all his blessings; and is therefore under the highest obligations to exercise towards Him unceasing gratitude, and to perform all the actions which gratitude can dictate or inspire. Finally, the Creator of man, must be, of course, a Being infinitely great and glorious; and in this character claims from him, as an intelligent creature, his highest adoration, love, complacency, and praise. In these several methods, and in these only, is man capable of glorifying his Creator. In these therefore is found the whole, and the only end which his Maker could propose in creating man.

But to man's performance of all or any of these services, it is absolutely necessary that he should know the Being who created him, and become acquainted, in some degree at least, with his character; and to this knowledge the previous knowledge of his existence is indispensable. To an unknown being man cannot be conscious of indebtedness or obligation. By an unknown being he cannot be voluntarily governed. To the laws of an unknown being he cannot be voluntarily subject. To an unknown being he cannot be thankful. The character of an unknown being he can neither adore, admire, love, nor praise. If then his Creator be unknown, and necessarily unknown, man cannot possibly, however virtuously he may be disposed, fulfill the only purpose for which he was made. Of course his Creator has, in the case supposed, made man for a single end; and has yet so ordered the state of things, as to preclude him from any possibility of answering this end. In other words, he has created man solely to accomplish a certain purpose; and has at the same time, on his own part, prevented that purpose from any possibility of accomplishment.

What I have here said of one Creator, or one God, is with exactly the same force, applicable to two or three or more creators. If two or more gods sustaining the same character of infinite perfection, have been con-

* See Sermon I.

cerned in the creation and providence of this world; it is unquestionable, that they made the world, and man upon it, for some end, and that this end must have terminated, as I have already in substance remarked, in themselves; or in other words, must have been the manifestation of their own glory. In the same degree it is evident, that man must have been alike indebted to them all, for his being and his blessings; must be subject to their laws and government, must be bound voluntarily to coincide with their designs, and must owe them equal adoration, wonder, love, and praise. In order to the possibility of his fulfilling this end, and performing these duties, it is absolutely necessary that he should know his obligations to them; and to this knowledge it is absolutely necessary that he should know their existence. Whence, then, if two or more such beings exist to whom man is equally indebted for his being and his blessings, has it come to pass that he is precluded, by a natural impossibility, from discovering the existence of any more than one? Whence is it, that all his sense of obligation for these high benefits; whence is it that his gratitude, his voluntary subjection to divine government, his voluntary coincidence with the divine designs, his love, his reverence, his complacency, and his obedience, due alike to all his glorious authors and benefactors; are, by absolute necessity and without a possibility of its being otherwise, confined to one? Whence is it, that man is so situated as to make the very attempt, the very design, to render any part of this service to any other, besides one God, a crime, an act of impiety, ingratitude, and rebellion? Whence is it that his other creators, who formed him only that he might render to them these solemn acts of regard, have furnished him with no trace of their agency, with no proof even of their existence; and have thus put it out of his power to render them any regard whatever.

As this state of things must, if it exist, have been produced by the voluntary act of these supposed gods, it will, I think, be conceded, that these questions, taken in their connexion with the preceding observations, can admit of no answer. If this opinion be just, it will also be conceded, that this argument from reason, for the Unity of God, is not far from being conclusive.

4. The unity of design and agency, in creation and providence, furnishes another argument in proof of the existence of but one God.

So far as we are able to understand the works of creation and providence, we discern a general simplicity and harmony, in the nature and operation of all things. Amid the immense complication which surrounds us, we perceive one set of laws, in accordance with which all things proceed in their course. The same causes produce, uniformly, the same effects in every place and period. Vegetables spring from the same seed, germinate by the same means, assume the same form, sustain the same qualities, exist through the same duration, and come to the same end. Animals also are born in one manner, and exhibit the same life, powers, and tendencies. Man has one origin, form, life, system of faculties, character, and termination. All things in this world, are, in one regular manner, made subservient to his use and happiness; and are plainly fitted by one design, and conducted by one agency, to this end. Day and night uniformly return by a single power, and with exact regularity. With the same regularity and simplicity, the seasons pursue their circuit. The sun shines, illuminates, warms, and moves the planets by a single law, and with exact uniformity. By one law, the planets keep their orbits, and perform their revolutions. The face of the heavens is but one: and the oldest sphere which is known, presents to our view the same constellations which we now behold in the nightly firmament.

Thus all things, so far as our knowledge extends, present to our view a single design, regularly executed by a single agency. But unity of design is a proof of one designer; and unity of agency, of one agent.

This argument has ever struck the minds of thinking men with no small force. Were we able to comprehend the universe, and to discern perfectly the manner in which all the parts of it are conducted, it is not improbable that this argument would be complete. In the present state of our knowledge, it must be confessed that its influence is less satisfactory than is here supposed. Where there is ignorance, there may, and naturally will, be doubt: and where there is doubt, there will not be complete satisfaction. Its whole force however is lent to the doctrine, that there is but one God. Against the existence of two infinite beings of opposite characters and designs, it is, I think, unanswerable. Should it be alleged, that it is no proof against the existence of two or more infinite beings, of the same character and designs, I admit the allegation; but observe, that the beings alleged, having, according to the supposition, exactly the same knowledge, disposition, and power, must of course exercise exactly the same agency, and would therefore constitute but one Supreme Agent, or one God.

I will not assert that these arguments amount to a demonstration, yet it cannot be denied that they are attended with high probability. The third of them, in my view, cannot be shaken. United, they reasonably require our belief of one God only: and at the same time evince, that the existence of more gods than one is a mere hypothesis, the admission of which is, of course, a contemptible absurdity. I shall now inquire,

II. *What views men have entertained of this doctrine, under the direction of reason.*

In answer to this inquiry, it may be observed,

1. That all the ancient nations, of whose religious opinions we have a distinct account, appear, in the early periods of their existence, to have acknowledged one God.

Among the nations, may be mentioned the Persians, Hindoos, Chinese, Tartars, Chaldeans, Phenicians, Canaanites, Arabians, Egyptians, and Romans. Thus Abimelech, Pharaoh, Job, his three friends, Elihu, Melchizedec, Nahor, and Laban; Zerdusht or Zoroaster, Lao Kiun, Confucius, the ancient Brahmans, the author of the Orphic Hymns, and Numa Pompilius; all appear to have believed in one original and perfect cause of all things. The people of the Thebaid, or Upper Egypt, for a long time worshipped this God alone. From these facts, connected with many others, which cannot now be mentioned, particularly from the fact, that Noah lived three hundred and fifty years after the flood, and that Shem lived five hundred and twelve years (according to the chronology which I choose to adopt), it may be assumed as a certainty, that all ancient nations acknowledged one God.

2. All these nations, and all others with them except the Jews, some sooner and some later, fell into the gross idolatry of polytheism.

By the labours of Sir William Jones and Mr Bryant, it appears to me evident, that the polytheistical system was originally one and the same. From the united accounts of other writers concerning this subject, I am equally satisfied that it continued to be one; not however without many modifications and varieties introduced into it by superstition, ignorance, accident, caprice, and several other causes.

This system I consider as originated by that body of men, who followed Nimrod into the plains of Shinar, and built the tower of Babel; and who, being principally descendants of Cush, were called Cushites, through many succeeding generations. Indeed, a part of their descendants, inhabiting the mountains of Habesh, on the south-western borders of the Red Sea, call themselves by that name at the present time. These people, in consequence of their dispersion by means of the confusion of their language, and of several subsequent attacks made upon them by the descendants of Shem and Japheth, in two successive instances, under the command of Chedorlaomer, and afterwards by the Egyptians, were dispersed ultimately into Persia, Hindostan, and the countries eastward of it; into Canaan, Egypt, the Lesser Asia, Thrace, and all the countries bordering on the Mediterranean. Wherever they went, they spread their polytheistical idolatry, which in this manner ultimately filled the world. The confusion of tongues I place four hundred and eleven years after the deluge.

From these two facts compared, I deduce this important doctrine; that the knowledge of one God was, among all ancient nations, derived in fact from traditionary instruction; and that the only result of such investigations, as the reason of man entered into concerning this subject, was either polytheism or atheism. While this traditionary instruction was conveyed and received without mixture, mankind acknowledged and worshipped Jehovah, the living and true God. But so soon as the tradition became corrupted, the knowledge and worship of the true God became corrupted also, and by degrees vanished. Traces of both indeed remained for periods, differing in different nations; but their perfection was lost and forgotten.

The nearer we approach to Noah, the nearer we invariably come to the pure and perfect character, the unperplexed knowledge, and the unblemished worship, of Jehovah. The farther we recede from this patriarch, the deeper we find ourselves regularly sinking into the abyss of polytheism. Were the unity and perfection of God inferred by reason from the works of creation and providence, this progress would, of course, be inverted. The traditionary state would be the state of obscurity, imperfection, and error; because then, men reasoned less, and believed upon authority more. As philosophy advanced, and investigations multiplied; as the subject was more frequently taken up in form, and professedly examined and discussed; the proofs of the unity and perfection of God would be accumulated, and the knowledge of this great subject rendered, progressively, more clear, certain, and unobjectionable. The fact, however, has been uniformly contrary to this representation. As tradition has declined, this knowledge has declined with it. As it has been corrupted, the knowledge has been corrupted; where it has been lost, the knowledge has been also lost.

The origin of polytheism is found in human reasonings only. In Asia and in Europe alike, philosophy has devised, extended, and established this miserable system; and as philosophy has been advanced, the errors of polytheism have been enhanced and multiplied, or have terminated in atheism. In the most flourishing state of philosophy in Greece, Rome, Egypt, Persia, and Hindostan, polytheism has been the most absurd, its errors the most numerous, and its worship the most abominable. The doctrines of the American savages concerning God, religion, and duty, are far less perplexed, censurable, and ridiculous, than those of these learned countries. Nor were their own doctrines in any measure deserving of such severe condemnation before, as at and after the prevalence of their philosophy. Atheism appears to have been the offspring of philosophy alone. If we except the Bos-jesmans, the lowest and most persecuted people of Caffraria, and more unable and unlikely to preserve traditionary knowledge than any other nation in the world (and concerning even these there is a doubt), and if we add to them the other Caffres, there is no solid reason to believe, that atheism was ever adopted by plain and unlearned men, or admitted by the exercise of common sense. Nor, if we allow this people to be ignorant of a God, is it true that they have adopted atheism. Their ancestors may have lost the knowledge of God, and they may not have recovered it. But atheism is a thing totally diverse from the mere want of the knowledge of a God. It is the disbelief and rejection of God, after the idea and the character of God have been presented to the mind, and proofs furnished of his existence. Atheism, in this, its proper sense, has probably never been adopted by plain unlettered men. But in this sense it has been originated, defended, and gloried in, by many sects of philosophers, in many ages and in many countries.

To the account which I have here given of the result of human reasonings on the subject of this Discourse, it may perhaps be objected, that Pythagoras, Thales, Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, held and taught the doctrine of one God. I admit the assertion with some qualifications, but deny that it is any objection to what I have said. It is well known that Pythagoras and Thales, the founders of the Ionic and Italic sects of philosophy, were the parents of all the philosophy of the Greeks. It is equally well known that these two men founded their doctrines concerning subjects of this nature, chiefly on traditions, which they collected from different nations, with intense assiduity. Pythagoras, particularly, travelled in quest of information in theology and morals into Egypt, Judea, Babylon, Persia, and Hindostan. Of this we are directly informed by Jamblichus, Diogenes Laertius, and Porphyry; and also by Hindoo records now in being. Porphyry particularly declares, that he resided seven years on Mount Carmel. Thales also, whose mother was a Phenician woman, travelled into Syria, Phenicia, and probably into Judea. Some of the followers of these distinguished men adhered more, some less, and others not at all, to the system of doctrines and the scheme of philosophizing which they pursued. Those who adhered most to their doctrines, and the traditions on which they were founded, entertained the most correct and defensible opinions concerning God. Those who wandered farthest from them, entertained the most erroneous opinions. Plato and Socrates were of the former class, and Aristotle of the latter. Plato resided twelve years

in Egypt, where he conversed extensively with both Egyptians and Jews. In different parts of his writings he has abundantly taught us, that his best doctrines were derived from traditions, holden by barbarians, or foreigners; of whom he declares in one place, that they were more ancient than the Greeks, and lived nearer to the gods. But even he, and his master Socrates, when they left their traditionary knowledge, began to wander from truth, and taught a collection of idle dreams which they dignified with the names of philosophy. The correctness of some of their doctrines, therefore, furnishes not the least objection against the observations which I have made.

It may be farther objected, that in asserting the results of reason on this subject to be what I have said, I lower the importance and usefulness of reason to a degree beneath what candour and justice will warrant; and in a manner discordant with the very account which I have given concerning this subject, in the former part of the present Discourse.

In answer to this objection it is to be observed, that the account which I have here given, is a mere recital of a matter of fact; namely, of what reason has actually done relative to this doctrine, and not an explication of what reason is able to do. With this subject, I have at present no concern. Still I cannot but observe, that when we appeal to reason as a guide in subjects of theology, its true character, as such a guide, can be estimated only by the decisions which it has actually made. A man reasoning, as he actually is, under the real influence of his passions, prejudices, and biases, and not as he might be, divested of them, exhibits his true character as a reasoning being, and the actual extent and power of his reason. This observation is equally true of all men. We are therefore to look only at what reason has actually done, to learn what it can be expected to do.

Whether I have exhibited reason in a more disadvantageous light than is just, I will leave my audience to judge, after I have recited a very few, out of the endless multitude of absurdities taught by philosophy. The three* great arguments of Ocellus, Lucanus, Aristotle, and the modern Platonists, against the creation of the world, are these:

(1.) It is inconceivable, that things should ever have been in any other state than that in which they are.

(2.) There is no other way of production but generation.

(3.) God is not a free agent, but produced the world by a necessity of nature.

The first of these arguments is a falsehood; and if it were true, would be ridiculously alleged; because it cannot in the remotest manner affect the point in question.

The second is a mere assumption, taken gratuitously from the birth and progress of vegetables and animals; and might with the same propriety be employed to prove, that men could never exist, unless they had been originally planted in the ground, and sprung up under the nutritive influence of the earth, rain, and sunshine. Yet Ocellus was so satisfied of it, that he believed the earth to have been thus generated: to have grown from an infantine to an adult size; and to be destined to decline, and dissolve, like an animal body; and all this in direct contradiction to his main principle, the eternity of the world. Aristotle, who derived his doctrines on this subject from Ocellus, supposes, that if the first matter were not created, it must have been generated by some preceding matter; and so on, *ad infinitum;* not perceiving, that he was here teaching a self-contradiction for sound philosophy. Plato taught, that ὑλη, or the chaos, was the source of moral evil; and in this opinion was followed by a multitude of others. These doctrines, taught by philosophers of the first rank, will I presume, exonerate me from this charge, but I could fill a volume with specimens of a similar nature. I will only add to them that memorable declaration of Cicero; 'Nihil tam absurdum, quod non dixerit aliquis philosophorum.'† With respect to that part of the objection, that my own observations are discordant, I answer, that under the first head of discourse, I have alleged such arguments as we, possessed of all the advantages derived from revelation, are enabled to gain from the works of creation and providence. We already know the existence and character of God. These were the very points in question with the philosophers whom I have named. The revelation to which we are indebted for this knowledge, has also enabled us to reason on these subjects in a manner which was impossible to them, great as their abilities were. The arguments which I have alleged, therefore, except perhaps the last, were probably never thought of by these men. Indeed, I do not know that the third of them is found in any book whatever.

3. No nation which has lost the knowledge of one God, derived from tradition, has been ever known to regain it, unless by the aid of revelation. The ancients plainly derived this knowledge from Noah; and when they had lost it, fell universally into hopeless polytheism. Nor is there a single exception to the remark, that whenever revelation has not revived this knowledge, mankind remain polytheists to the present hour.

It is scarcely necessary for me to observe, that Jews, Christians, Mohammedans, and Infidels, have derived this knowledge wholly from the Scriptures.

4. No account exists of any individual who, by the mere exercise of his reason, discovered the existence of one God. Immense multitudes of great and learned men have, in different ages, employed themselves laboriously in speculations of a theological nature. Had any one of them made the discovery in question, an event so important, so new, so singular, so honourable, could not have been unnoticed or unrecorded, amid thousands of discoveries of infinitely less consequence and distinction, carefully treasured up in the volumes of history. In truth, the idea of one perfect God is neither so obvious nor so pleasing to such minds as ours, as, when once lost, to be with any probability ever recovered again by the mere efforts of reason. When known and admitted by the early descendants of Noah, it was soon lost; and, without the direct aid of succeeding revelation, would have been lost for ever. In the same manner the Israelites wandered, notwithstanding the presence of the Shechinah, and the awful denunciations of their prophets continually fulfilled before them, notwithstanding the wonderful miracles which they beheld, and the terrible punishments which they suffered almost yearly, into polytheism and idolatry. Such a God as, when known by us, we are unwilling to acknowledge and to worship—a God whom 'we do not like to retain in our

* Stillingfleet's Origines Sacræ.

† Cicero De Nat. Deorum.

knowledge'—we cannot be supposed, with any probability, to seek after, when unknown, nor to search with earnestness for arguments to prove his being or perfections.

III. *I shall now inquire, what has been the influence of revelation on the reception and continuance of this doctrine.*

1. That God revealed himself to Adam, and to the succeeding patriarchs, down to the time of Moses.

2. In the written revelation, begun by Moses, and completed by the succeeding prophets and apostles, the existence of the one perfect God is declared by himself, in every manner, from the beginning to the end; and made the foundation of all the doctrines, precepts, and ordinances, contained in the sacred volume.

3. This doctrine is directly attested by a great variety of miracles, wrought either immediately or ultimately, as testimonies to this truth.

4. All the declarations of this import are proved by the character of the testifier, as unfolded in the works of creation and providence.

5. The same declarations are evinced to be true by the character of the testifier, as unfolded in the Scriptures.

On this character I shall have occasion to dwell particularly hereafter. At the present time, I can only observe summarily, that it is evinced by the perfect accordance of his declarations with facts:

Of his promises, with his performance of them;

Of his predictions, with their fulfilment;

Of his precepts, with absolute rectitude; and

Of his doctrines, so far as they can be examined by us, with truth.

It is also illustrated, in a glorious manner, by the perfect holiness of the scheme of worship prescribed, and of the system of providence recorded.

In all these several ways, one eternal, self-existent, immutable, and perfect Jehovah, is directly and abundantly declared on the one hand; and, on the other, all gods beside him, are proved with the same evidence to be false and imaginary. The character given of this great and awful being is such, as to banish from the mind the remotest suspicion of a second, even if a second were not directly denied. All perfections are ascribed to him, and all things declared to proceed from him and to be under his absolute control. The universe is exhibited as nothing in comparison with him—as holden in existence and harmony by his hand, and as formed to be the instrument of his glory.

This evidence furnished by revelation of the unity of God is such, that it preserved this doctrine among the patriarchs; and, in spite of all their tendencies to idolatry, continued it among the Jews till the Babylonish captivity: and after that event, established it beyond a question. Since the completion of the Christian canon, there has been among those who have acknowledged its divine origin, scarcely a debate on the subject: Christians, with the exception of a few gross heretics, who never deserved the name of Christians, having with a single voice acknowledged and worshipped the one Jehovah, the only living and true God. They have not probably regarded these arguments as amounting to a logical demonstration; but they have justly regarded them, as removing every rational doubt, and as furnishing them, when coming to God, with an immovable foundation for believing, with full assurance, 'that he is, and that he is the rewarder of all them that diligently seek him.'

Two REMARKS shall conclude this Discourse.

1. This doctrine of the unity of God strongly exhibits the wickedness of mankind.

The one perfect God was anciently and fully known to all nations, and has been since often declared to a great part of the habitable world. Yet singular, solemn, and interesting as this great object is, and impossible as it seems, that it should be lost by any man who has once possessed it, it has still been wantonly forgotten or wilfully rejected by the great mass of mankind. In the place of Jehovah have been substituted gods innumerable, sinful, stupid, blind, deaf, and dead; and these have been zealously worshipped in preference to the glorious Creator of all things. Man has made his gods, and then prostrated himself before them.

The true and only reason of this conduct is, that men 'loved not to retain God in their knowledge.' No higher proof of corruption can be given than this. God is infinitely excellent and lovely. A good mind naturally regards him as infinitely more desirable than all other objects: and delights to contemplate, love, and obey him, in entire preference to all other enjoyments. A gross and guilty mind, therefore, is the sole cause of this apostasy and rebellion. The degree of this guilt is strongly seen in the completeness of the apostasy. God has been totally banished: and creatures, totally opposite to him in every attribute, have been worshipped in his stead. Thus the mind has loved to recede as far as possible from its Maker; and not only refused its proper love and homage to him, but rendered them to the vilest and most unworthy of his creatures.

2. From the observations made in this discourse, appears in the strongest light the necessity of revelation.

Revelation, as I have shown, originally began, and has always continued, the knowledge of the true and living God in the world. This is infinitely the most important of all knowledge, and the most absolutely indispensable to the well-being of man. From God all the good which will ever be enjoyed must be derived. But no permanent or solid good can be expected from him, unless he be pleased. To be pleased, he must be obeyed, and to be obeyed, he must be known. But without revelation he has never been known in this world. Thus to the attainment of permanent and solid good, revelation is indispensably necessary, and infinitely important.

The love of God also, is wholly built on the knowledge of his existence and character. But the love of God is the best of all characteristics, the foundation of all other good, and in itself the best good. Thus, in order to our moral and natural good, to our holiness and happiness alike, revelation is supremely necessary to man.*

* See these subjects farther pursued in the Sermon on the Second Commandment.

SERMON V.

ATTRIBUTES OF GOD.—ETERNITY AND IMMUTABILITY OF GOD.

I said, O my God, take me not away in the midst of my days; thy years are throughout all generations. Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the work of thy hands. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure; yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment, and as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end.—Psalm cii. 24—27.

In the preceding Discourses I have evinced, by such arguments as appear to me conclusive, the existence of God; considered the objections and schemes of atheism, and the influence of those schemes on the understanding, heart, and life of man, compared with that of the Christian system; and examined the manner in which the unity of God is presented to us by reason, and by revelation. I shall now proceed to consider such attributes of this great and glorious Being as demand a particular discussion. Those which naturally claim our first attention, are his eternity and immutability; subjects so intimately connected, as to be most advantageously considered together in the manner in which we find them in the text.

After a series of discouraging and distressing thoughts on his own troubles, and repeated supplications to God for deliverance; and after various hopes and predictions of the kindness of God to himself and to the church, recited in the context; the psalmist takes up his final consolation in the perfections, particularly in the power wisdom, goodness, eternity, and immutability, of his Creator. In the text, these are exhibited as certain proof, that the children of God shall endure for ever, and their seed be established before him. In the sublime language of this divine writer, the foundation of the earth, and the formation of the heavens are presented to us as the handiwork of Jehovah, who is considered as building the universe as a man erects his own habitation. With not less magnificence is the same wonderful agent represented, as taking these heavens and folding them up, as a decayed garment is folded by its owner, and laying them aside as useless to any future purpose. In this imagery there is obviously a direct reference to the consummation of all things; when the present heavens and earth, being set on fire, shall be dissolved and flee away, and no place be found for them any more. Mutable in their own nature, and destined to temporary purposes only, they will be continued while their use continues, and then perish for ever. To this changing character of even these great and splendid works of his hands, the psalmist studiously contrasts the character of God. 'They shall perish, but thou shalt endure; yea, all of them shall wax old as doth a garment, and as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end.'

In these words is presented to us, not only a direct assertion, but a highly poetical, sublime, and glorious exhibition of the eternity and immutability of God, strongly impressed on the mind by the contrast which it forms to the vanishing character of these great works of his hands. The passage is indeed declared by the apostle Paul, to be a description of the character and agency of the Lord Jesus Christ, the second person in the divine Trinity. But to us, who regard Christ as being unquestionably God, it has exactly the same import as if applied to the Father or to the Godhead at large. In this light I shall therefore consider it, and proceed under this guidance to examine these illustrious attributes of the Creator.

1. God is eternal: or in other words, his existence is without beginning or end.

Of this doctrine the text is a direct assertion, and therefore a complete proof: but it is only one among a vast multitude of such assertions in the Scriptures. No attribute of God is perhaps more frequently declared, more variously recited, or more universally diffused, throughout the sacred pages. In the very first verse of Genesis, it is said, 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.' He existed, therefore, before the beginning of created things; or in other words, from everlasting. In the last chapter of the Apocalypse, Christ solemnly declares this character of himself; 'I am Alpha and Omega,' saith he, 'the beginning and the ending, the first and the last.' In the xcth psalm and 2d verse, the divine writer exclaims, 'Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God.' 'I lift my hand to heaven,' says God, Deut. xxxii. 40, 'and say, I live for ever.' 'I am,' that is, I exist alike in all times and places, in eternity and immensity. Jehovah and 'Jah,' that is, existence illimitable by space and duration, are, you well know, the peculiar and incommunicable names of the Godhead; in accordance with which, 'the eternal God,' and 'the everlasting God,' are current phraseology of the Scriptures. From this source, then, it cannot be necessary to adduce any farther proofs of the doctrine.

To this full evidence from the Scriptures, reason subjoins her fullest attestations. That God existed before all things, has been heretofore, as I trust, sufficiently proved. The universe was plainly derived from him, the first or original cause. Consequently he was uncaused, underived, and of course, from eternity, or without beginning.

That God will for ever exist is plain also from reason, beyond dispute. He cannot be supposed to terminate his own existence. Without insisting on the natural impossibility of this fact, it may be safely asserted to be morally impossible. The Being who has all good in his power, possession, and enjoyment, must be infinitely delighted with perpetual life, or existence. The contemplation of his perfections, designs, and works, the purpose of accomplishing eternally the su-

preme good of the universe, the manifestation of his infinite beauty, glory, and loveliness, to the intelligent system, for ever rising, enlarging, and improving, and the complete assurance that all his pleasure will be accomplished, constitute at once an aggregate of happiness which must be regarded by him with immense complacency, and render his existence infinitely desirable in his own eyes.

It is scarcely necessary to observe, that creatures can in no way affect the existence or the happiness of God; for being absolutely dependent on him, they can be, and do, nothing, but what he permits. From these considerations it is plain, that God must continue to exist for ever.

God is *immutable*.

By this I intend, that he is subject to no change in his manner of being, his perfections, thoughts, desires, purposes, or determinations.

This doctrine also is directly asserted in the text. 'They shall be changed; but thou art the same.' It is also declared in various other passages of the Scriptures. 'I am the Lord; I change not.' Mal. iii. 6. 'Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.' Jam. i. 17. 'Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.' Heb. xiii. 8. In these passages we are taught not only that there is no change in God; but no variableness, no capacity or possibility of change.

Of this doctrine also, reason furnishes to him who admits the existence of an intelligent cause of all things, an absolute demonstration. God gave being to all things. Of course he contrived them all. Every being, and every event, which has been, is, or will be, together with all their qualities and operations, existed in his mind; or, in the beautiful language of David, were 'written in his book, and what day they should be fashioned, when as yet there was none of them.'* They can therefore furnish to him not a single new thought or idea. His thoughts were the cause of these beings and events. They therefore cannot be the cause of his thoughts. Hence it is manifest, that neither from himself, nor from his creatures, can God receive a single new thought. But if no change can exist in his thoughts, it is obvious that none can exist in his desires, designs, or determinations. New desires must be originated, and new designs and determinations formed if they should exist at all, in consequence of some new views of the mind in which they exist; some change in the object viewed, or in the manner in which the mind regards the object. As all the works of God are thus proved to have been, according to the declaration of St James, Acts xv. 18, 'known unto him from the beginning;' it is evident, that no such change is possible to him. His desires, designs, and determinations, must therefore be precisely the same for ever.

From these considerations it follows, that the eternity of God is a totally different thing from that which is ascribed to created, particularly to intelligent, beings. The Scriptures attribute eternity in a certain sense to angels and men; but this is wholly unlike the eternity of God. All creatures change incessantly; and no idea can be formed of their duration, but that of a continual succession of changes. Their thoughts, desires, purposes, and determinations, together with their existence, are, and can be, no other than a continued series of changes. God, on the contrary, is not, and cannot be, the subject of the least possible change. His eternity is, of course all one present time. To him there is no past, and no future; nothing old, and nothing new; nothing gone, and nothing to come. Past and future are modes of created existence only; and have no application, no possible reference, to the Creator.

This glorious and sublime truth, though thus demonstrated by reason, seems to have been first and alone communicated by revelation. 'One day,' saith St Peter, 'is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.' The apostle does not here speak, as he has sometimes been supposed to speak, in comparative, but in absolute, language. He does not declare that, because the eternity of God is such an amazing duration, a thousand years will be so lost in this abyss, as to be comparatively the same thing with one day. On the contrary, he intended to declare what he actually declares; that a thousand years are to God exactly the same thing with one day. In his existence there is no long, nor short duration; nothing fleeting, nothing successive. His duration is a mere and eternal now. In our own existence, the clearest resemblance to the duration of God is found in the contemplation of a single present moment of our being, without taking at all into view the succession even of that which immediately follows.

This doctrine is also most sublimely exhibited in that singular declaration of Isaiah, 'Thus saith THE HIGH AND LOFTY ONE, that inhabiteth eternity,' that is He who fills eternity at once; who inhabits it, just as he also inhabits immensity. As he is present in all the regions of immensity at once; and does not come from the west, pass by the present place of our existence, and go to the east; so he fills eternity at once, and does not come from the past, go by the present, and enter the future.

The same transcendently glorious mode of existence is also sublimely indicated in the incommunicable names of God I AM, and JEHOVAH; that is, EXISTENCE, present in every place, and through every period of duration alike.

REMARKS.

1. How great and glorious a character of God is presented to us by these perfections.

'Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever he had formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, he is God.' Possessed of perfect excellence, contemplating with infinite complacency his glorious attributes, and containing in himself a boundless sufficiency for the accomplishment of every thing great and desirable, he saw that it was becoming his character to unfold his perfections, and communicate his goodness, to an endless and innumerable race of being. From an infinite height, he took a survey of the immeasurable vast of possible beings; and in an expansion without limits, but desolate and wild, where nothing was, called into existence with a word the countless multitude of worlds, with all their various furniture. With his own hand he lighted up at once innumerable suns, and rolled around them innumerable worlds. All these he so dispersed and arranged, as that all received light, and warmth, and life, and comfort; and all at the same time he stored and adorned

* Psalm cxxxix. 16, margin.

with a rich and unceasing variety of beauty and magnificence, and with the most suitable means of virtue and happiness. Throughout his vast empire, he surrounded his throne with intelligent creatures, to fill the immense and perfect scheme of being, which originally existed with infinite splendour in his own incomprehensible mind. Independent of all possible beings and events, he sits at the head of this universe, unchanged, and incapable of change, amid all the successions, tossings, and tumults, by which it is agitated. When empires are overthrown, or angels fall; when suns are extinguished, and systems return to their original nothing; he is equally impassive and unmoved as when sparrows expire, or the hairs fall from our heads. Nothing can happen, nothing can be done beyond his expectation, or without his permission. Nothing can frustrate his designs, and nothing disappoint or vary his purposes. All things, beside him, change, and fluctuate without ceasing. Events exist and vanish. Beings rise, and expire. By his own existence, the thoughts which he entertains, the desires which he admits, the purposes which he forms, are 'the same yesterday, today, and for ever.' Throughout the coming vast of eternity also, and the boundless tracts of immensity, he sees with serene complacency his own perfect purposes daily and invariably advancing, with a regular fulfilment towards their absolute completion. In its own place, in its own time, and in its own manner, each exists in exact obedience to his order, and in exact accordance with his choice. Nothing lingers, nothing hastens: but his counsel exactly stands, and all his pleasure will be precisely accomplished.

2. How necessary are these attributes to the character of God as the ruler of all things.

By his eternity this glorious Being is always in existence, to know, and to bring to pass, to approve or to condemn, to reward or to punish, whatever he pleases, and whatever is done by his intelligent creatures. As an eternal Being only, can he form plans of existence and administration which shall extend through eternity, and propose designs invested with boundless perfection. As an eternal Being only, is he qualified to execute those designs in an everlasting progress, and to complete for ever the infinite good which he has begun.

By means of his eternity only, is he able to offer to his creatures eternal rewards, and place before them infinite motives to obedience and virtue: rewards and motives, in their nature, differing immensely from all others. Without this attribute, with whatever wisdom the system of his works was planned, however bright and benevolent the designs which he formed, however just and excellent his administrations, while they continued; still, at a period comparatively near, the splendour and the promise of this day-spring would set in darkness, and the sun of glory and of good be extinguished for ever. The universe of matter and of minds, holden in being by his hand, would at an untimely day find that hand withdrawn, and itself, with all the prospects formed, the hopes indulged, and the blessings enjoyed, by the unnumbered hosts of intelligent beings, sink at once into the abyss of annihilation.

By his immutability, God is possessed of immeasurable dignity and greatness; and fitted to be entirely feared, loved, honoured, and obeyed, by all his rational creatures. The humble and imperfect dignity of created beings is entirely dependent for its existence on stability of character. Infinite dignity cannot belong to a character, which is not literally unchangeable. Created dignity is completely destroyed by fickleness; the least mutability would destroy that which is uncreated. The least possible change would be a change from perfection to imperfection; change infinite in itself, and infinitely for the worse. God, if changed at all, would cease to be God, and sink down, from his infinite exaltation of being and character, towards the humble level of imperfect creatures. How differently, in this case, would his nature, his laws, his designs, and his government appear to us! Were the least change to commence, who can divine its consequences, or foresee their progress and their end? Who can conjecture what would be its influence on his character, his designs, or his conduct? Who can foretell the effects which it would produce on the empire which he has created, and on the innumerable beings by which it is inhabited? Who does not see, at a glance, that God could no longer be regarded with that voluntary and supreme veneration, now so confessedly his due, because he had descended from his own infinite dignity, and was no longer decked with majesty and excellency, nor arrayed in glory and beauty? Who does not feel, that a serious apprehension of such a change would diffuse an alarm through all virtuous beings, and carry terror and amazement to the most distant regions of the universe?

By his immutability, God is qualified to form and to pursue, one great plan of creation and providence; one harmonious scheme of boundless good; and to carry on a perfect system, in a perfect manner, without variableness or shadow of turning. An immutable God only can be expected to do that, and nothing but that, which is supremely right and desirable; to make every part of his great work exactly what it ought to be; and to constitute of all the parts a perfect whole. In this immense work, one character is thus every where displayed; one God, one Ruler, one Sun of Righteousness; enlightening, warming, and quickening the innumerable beings of which it is composed. Diversities, indeed, endless diversities of his agency, exist throughout the different parts of this work; but they are mere changes of the same light, the varying colours and splendours of the same glorious sun.

Without this uniformity, this oneness of character, supreme dignity could not exist in the great agent. Without this consistency, safety could not be found; reliance could not be exercised by his creatures. God is the ultimate object of appeal to intelligent beings, the ultimate object of confidence and hope. However injured, deceived, or destroyed by his fellow-creatures, every rational being still finds a refuge in his Creator.

To him, ultimately, he refers all his wants, distresses, and interests. Whoever else may be deaf to his complaints, he still is assured that God will hear. Whoever else withholds the necessary relief of his sufferings, or the necessary supplies of his wants, still he knows that God will give. This consideration, which supports the soul in every extremity, is its last resort, its final refuge. Could God change, this asylum would be finally shut; confidence would expire, and hope would be buried in the grave. Nay, the immortal mind itself, unless prevented by an impossibility inherent in its nature, would languish away its existence, and return to its original nothing.

It ought here by no means to be forgotten, that this glorious attribute, so absolutely indispensable to the government of all things, is in an illustrious degree manifested in that government. The laws of nature, as they are customarily called, or as they are in much better language styled in the Scriptures, the 'ordinances of heaven,' are eminent and affecting displays of the immutability of God. These laws are no other than rules or methods which God has formed for the guidance of all things, and in conformity to which he is pleased to act. Thus, by the attraction of gravitation, all the atoms of which the material universe is composed, are drawn towards each other, by a power, diminishing exactly in proportion to the increase of the squares of the distances between them. By this law, atoms are united into worlds, and worlds into systems. By this law, moons perform their revolutions round the planets, and planets and comets round the sun. By this law, summer and winter, seed-time and harvest, so useful and so necessary to mankind, regularly perform their successions. In the same regular manner the planets revolve around their axes; and furnish us with the delightful, and indispensable, vicissitudes of day and night. By other laws, equally uniform, the vegetable world is regulated from its first implantation in the soil to its full growth, and thence to its final decay. By others still, animals are born, arrive at maturity, decline, and die. The mind, also, with all its faculties and operations, is by similar laws governed, and conducted towards a future immortality. Thus, independently of the few miraculous events, originally inwoven in the great system, as useful, indubitable, and intentional, proofs of the immediate agency of God for particular, important purposes, all things are directed, each in its own manner, by fixed, uniform laws. These, like their author, have been unchanged from their commencement. In the language of the scoffers in the last days, mentioned by St Peter, all things have continued as they were from the beginning of the creation; and instead of proving, according to their atheistical suggestions, the failure of the promise of his coming, they clearly, and only, display the immutability of the creator. This divine attribute we are thus enabled to trace, in the regularity manifested by the progress of the vegetable, animal, and mineral kingdoms; in the steady confinement of the ocean within its bounds; the permanency of the mountains, and the stability of the earth. We read it in lines which cannot be mistaken, in the exact and wonderful revolutions of the planets; in the unaltered position, aspect, influence, and glory of the sun; and in the uniform stations and brilliancy of the stars. In all, one immutable purpose, one uniform agency, is every where seen; and must, if reason be permitted to decide, be every where acknowledged.

This agency of God is remarkable in all cases, where we are able to understand its nature, for its extensive efficacy; producing at the same time and by the same thing, many important consequences. In this respect it is in a great measure a contrast to our agency; which usually employs many things which bring to pass a single consequence. Thus the uniformity of this agency, together with the regularity and stability which it gives to the universe at large, is the foundation of almost all our knowledge. From this source are derived the two great principles, that the same causes produce the same effects, and that similar causes produce similar effects. These principles are the basis of all our analogical reasoning, and of the analogy from which we reason. This analogy runs through creation and providence; and is the source whence we derive almost all the knowledge, which we possess of the works of God. It extends alike to the natural and the moral world; and without it we could hardly be said to know any thing. In this manner, therefore, is displayed not only the immtuability, but also in a glorious manner the wisdom of God.

3dly. By these attributes, the character of God is peculiarly rendered awful in the sight of wicked beings.

By his eternity he will exist for ever; and they cannot but know that he will exist for ever, to execute his threatenings against all the impenitent workers of iniquity. By his immutability every hope is forbidden, that he will change any purpose, which he has formed, or fail to accomplish any declaration, which he has made. If he has ever been infinitely opposed to sin, and to sinners; this opposition cannot but be always and unchangeably the same. Of course, impenitence cannot rationally indulge a single hope of escaping from the punishment which he has denounced. All rational beings are, from this source, presented continually with a character of God inconceivably awful. Dreadful indeed will God be, in this character, to the finally impenitent. 'How will they abide in the day of his anger? How will they stand in the fierceness of his eternal indignation?' A fearful looking for of judgment must that be, which is derived from a full conviction, that all the threatenings denounced by God in the scriptures, against sinners, dying without repentance, and faith in the Lord Jesus, will be exactly executed. At the same time, this awful character will contribute as much, perhaps, if not more than any thing else in the divine kingdom, to preserve righteous beings in a state of unchanging obedience. Obedience cannot be the result of constraint and coercion. The number and nature, the power and presence, of motives, only, can produce, or continue, in the minds of moral beings, a disposition to obey. Among these, the immutable hatred of God to sin, and his immutable determination to execute vengeace on obstinate sinners, are pre-eminently cogent; and, united with his unchangeable love to holiness, and his unchangeable determination to reward it, may be regarded as the chief means of retaining virtuous beings in their allegiance and duty. At the same time, these motives have a primary and commanding influence in the present world, to produce the awakening, conviction, and conversion of wicked men. 'Knowing the terrors of the Lord,' says the apostle Paul, 'we persuade men. Knowing the terrors of the Lord, men are actually persuaded to turn from the error of their ways, and save their souls alive.'

4thly. These attributes, especially, render God the object of supreme confidence to virtuous beings.

Confidence, every man knows, can never, though chiefly an emotion of the heart, exist rationally or permanently, unless firmly founded in the conviction of the understanding. Of course, the being who is rationally confided in, must be seen, with solid conviction, to possess those qualities, on which confidence may safely repose. Immutability of character, and the immutability of purpose and conduct resulting from it, are undoubtedly the only objects, in which rational

beings can ultimately confide. A being possessing these attributes must, if he love holiness at all, love it invariably and for ever. That which he loves, he will bless, of course. All his designs to reward those who possess it, must be unchangeable; all his declarations true; and all his promises exactly fulfilled. That faithfulness, by which they are fulfilled, is no other than the moral immutability of God, and an essential part of his infinite glory. On this character every virtuous being places an entire and safe reliance; a hope which can never make him ashamed. However vast, however rich, however incredible in appearance, the promises of future happiness may seem to such minds as ours; we know, that they are the promises of Him, who can neither deceive, nor change; and that, therefore, every one of them will be carried into complete execution. According to these observations, the immutability of God is directly asserted in the scriptures to be the only foundation of safety to righteous men. 'I am Jehovah;' says God, in the passage already quoted from Malachi, 'I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.' The backslidings and provocations, even of the best men in this world, are in all probability, great enough to shake any purposes of kindness in any mind, which is not absolutely incapable of change. The eternal God is the true and final refuge of his children, only because he cannot change. Amid all their wanderings, their unbelief, their hardness of heart, and their multiplied transgressions, they have hope and security, because 'his truth is as the great mountains, steadfast and immovable; and his promises endure for ever.'

Were God, contrary to this glorious character, to begin to change, what a mighty difference would be introduced into his being, his attributes, and his conduct? As he is possessed of all power, knowledge, and goodness, it is intuitively certain that he cannot have more. Of course, any change must be a diminution of one or other of these attributes; and God must, in the case supposed, become less powerful, less knowing, or less good. How fearful, to all virtuous beings in the universe, must such a change be? How plain is it, that it might, for ought that appears, be the beginning of a course of mutability, endless in its progress; that God would ever after exist, as a successive changeable being; have no fixed purposes; and be divested of that unalterable faithfulness, on which, now, his intelligent creatures rest with confidence and safety? What might not in this case be dreaded, in the everlasting change of his administrations, by all who love good, either in the creator or in his creatures?

5thly. How great encouragement do these attributes of God furnish to prayer?

All encouragement to prayer is derived from these two considerations; that God has required it of us as a duty, and that he has promised blessings in answer to our prayers. Were he a mutable God, it would be impossible for us to know, that what was his pleasure yesterday, would be his pleasure to-day; that what he required yesterday, he would not prohibit to-day; or that what he promised yesterday, he would be willing to perform at any future period.

It is impossible to determine, that a mutable God would not alter, not his conduct only, but his views, his principles of action, and the rules by which he governed his creation. What he now loved, he might hereafter hate: what he now approved, he might hereafter condemn: what he now rewarded, he might hereafter punish. Of course, virtuous beings now loved, approved, and rewarded by Him, might one day be hated, condemned, and punished. Wicked beings, on the contrary, now the objects of his hatred, and declared to be hereafter the objects of his punishment, might one day become the objects of his friendship and favour; and triumph over the good in a manner equally unreasonable and dreadful.

Of these changes we could gain no possible knowledge, unless he should choose to communicate them to us by an immediate Revelation. From his mode of being, so diverse from ours, we could learn and conjecture nothing. From his past designs and administrations we could never argue at all, to those which were future. Equally barren of instruction would be the nature of things: for we could never be assured that he would, or would not, regard this subject; or in what manner he would regard it at any period to come. Even if he should reveal his designs and his pleasure, we could never be certain that he had revealed them truly; and, if we were assured of this fact, the Revelation could be of no material use, except for the moment. What he disclosed he might at any time revoke: and nothing could be known to be acceptable to him any longer than during the moment in which the disclosure was made. In the mean time, his power and his knowledge would still be such, that no hope could be indulged of either resistance or escape. Existence would in this case be, therefore, a dreadful succession of suspense; and immortal being, so far as we can discern, undeserving of a wish.

In such a situation of things, what encouragement would remain for prayer? The humble and faithful suppliant, coming to God with a firm belief 'that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him,' might find the manner of his praying, the spirit with which he prayed, and his prayers themselves, unacceptable and odious. The things heretofore most proper to be urged, might hereafter be the least proper. The considerations which once insured success, might at another time insure rejection. The prime, the only motives to prayer, would therefore be taken away.

In the same manner the whole use of this duty, as it is intended to affect advantageously the character of the suppliant, would be finally removed. The great use of prayer in this view, is to establish in the heart an humble dependence on God, and a firm confidence in him. Confidence, as I have already observed, would, in the case supposed, be shaken and destroyed; and without confidence, dependence would possess neither use nor worth. In the present state of things, these attributes constitute the proper, and the only proper temper of the soul, for the reception of blessings: the spirit which is eminently beautiful and lovely in the sight of God, and which is accordingly chosen by him as the proper object of his unchangeable favour. In the case supposed, these attributes could not be united, because confidence could not exist: since the mind could not but perceive, that a changing God might, and probably would, in the infinite progress of things, become the subject of infinite change. If therefore it could feel satisfied or safe, for a hundred or a thousand years, it would still rationally fear, that at some unknown and more distant period of eternity, the order of

all things would be inverted; and its former obedience and former prayers rise up at this dreaded season in the character of crimes, and prove the causes of its future suffering. Dependence therefore, existing solitarily, would degenerate into anxiety and alarm; and, instead of being the means of union between the soul and its Maker, would become a wall of dreadful separation.

The immutability of God has often, but erroneously, been imagined to involve inexorability in his character. The scriptural account of this great Being is, on the contrary, that he is immutably exorable; or, in other words, that he is immutably disposed to hear and answer prayer. His own words are, 'Every one that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.' This and this only is his true character, agreeably to which the system of his dispensations is immutably established. In this system, infinite encouragement is holden out to every suppliant, and to every faithful prayer. Here the petitioner knows, that what is once acceptable to God will be always acceptable: and that the things which he has once required, he will require for ever. His faith therefore is built on the Rock of ages; and with whatever violence the rains may descend, the winds drive, or the floods beat, their rage and fury will assault him in vain.

SERMON VI.

OMNIPRESENCE AND OMNISCIENCE OF GOD.

O Lord, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my down-sitting, and my up-rising; thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compassest my path, and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether. Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it. Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee.—Psalm cxxxix. 1—12.

In my last Discourse, I considered the eternity and immutability of God. As motivity, or active power, the power by which all motion and action are originated, cannot be conceived to reside in any other than an intelligent being; the knowledge of God becomes naturally the next subject of investigation. As his presence is most intimately connected with his knowledge, it will be advantageously united with it in a discourse of this nature. Accordingly these attributes are frequently joined together by the divine writers.

In the text, the knowledge and presence of God, usually termed, from their extent, his omniscience and omnipresence, are in the fullest manner declared. The Psalm, of which the text is a part, is one of the most remarkable poetical compositions ever seen in this world; and, did the time permit, would richly repay the labour of an extensive critical investigation. In comparison with it, the most admired odes of heathen antiquity are the mere effusions of children.

My audience cannot but have observed, that the manner in which these perfections are attributed to God is not that of plain logical discussion. The subject is assumed as a thing granted and acknowledged, as a thing equally removed beyond debate and doubt. The writer, animated with the most enthusiastic ardour, of which a sublime imagination is capable, seizes these great themes of his attention; and amid his enraptured contemplation of them, pours out a succession of the boldest and loftiest conceptions that were ever uttered concerning these subjects. Himself, his thoughts, his words, his actions, he declares, with a mixture of awe and exultation, to be all perfectly known to God. From this knowledge, he at the same time informs us, there is no possible escape. Should he ascend into heaven, or make his bed in hell; should he, borne on the sunbeams, hurry, with their celerity, into the distant regions of the west, still God would be present in all these and all other places alike. Were he still farther to place his hope of a secure retreat in the darkness of night, he perceives the night to shine in the presence of God as the day, and the darkness and the light to be both alike unto him.

With these views of the psalmist, those of every other divine writer on this subject exactly conspire; and all, with a single voice, attribute these perfections to Jehovah. Thus, Jer. xxiii. 23, 24, 'Am I a God at hand, saith the Lord, and not a God afar off? Can any hide himself in secret places, that I shall not see him? Do not I fill heaven and earth, saith the Lord? The heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee. Great is the Lord, his understanding is infinite.'

In accordance with this doctrine only is all our obedience, particularly our worship, prescribed in the Scriptures. We worship and obey God every where, and are commanded thus to do, because God is every where present, to see, and know, and accept our services, to protect our persons, and to supply our wants. It ought to be here observed, that these attributes are directly ascribed to all the persons of the Trinity. Thus Christ says of himself, 'Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.' Again, 'Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.' Peter says to him, John xxi. 17, 'Lord,

thou knowest all things.' Christ says of himself, 'And all the churches shall know that I am he, who searcheth the reins and the hearts,' Rev. ii. 23. And again, Matt. xi. 27, 'No one knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any one the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.'

The omnipresence of the Spirit of grace is emphatically asserted in the question, contained in the seventh verse of the text, Whither shall I go from thy Spirit?' especially as connected with the answers following. 'The Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you,' that is, Christians universally, saith St Peter, 1 Epist. iv. 14. 'Your body, saith St Paul to Christians, 'is the temple of the Holy Ghost,' 1 Cor. vi. 19; and, 'The Spirit searcheth all things, even the deep things of God,' 1 Cor. ii. 10.

These attributes of God are also demonstrated, and holden out continually to our inspection, by reason and experience.

In every part of the universe to which we turn our eyes, we discern in the inanimate, animated, and intelligent worlds, most evident proofs of an agency, which it is impossible rationally to attribute to any other being but God. In the motions and powers of the elements; in the growth, structure, and qualities of vegetables and animals; and in the thoughts, volitions, and actions of minds, we perceive a casual influence, an efficiency, totally distinguished from every other; as distant from that of man, as the agency of man from the movements of an atom. This character is never mistaken by savages, nor even by children, when once informed of the character of God.

This agency is conspicuous in all places, at all times, and in all things; and is seen in the earth, the ocean, the air, and the heavens, alike. Equally evident is it in the splendour and life-giving influences of the sun; in the motions, order, and harmony of the planetary system; and in the light and beauty of the stars; as in the preservation, direction, and control of terrestrial things.

No agent can act where he is not. As therefore God acts everywhere, he is everywhere present. In this agency, contrivance and skill, to which no limits can be set, are everywhere manifested: it is of course equally, and unanswerably, a proof of the omniscience of God.

This attribute of God is also inferred with absolute certainty, from his omnipresence. As God exists everywhere, so he is in all places the same God; all eye, all ear, all intellect. Hence it is impossible that he should not know every thing, in every place, and at every time.

Again, all things are derived from God; and received their nature, attributes, and operations, from his contrivance, as well as from his power. All things were therefore known to him, antecedently to their existence. Nor are possible things less perfectly known to him, than those which are actual. Nothing is possible, but what he can bring to pass; and whatever he can bring to pass he cannot but know.

REMARKS.

1. How majestic, awful, and glorious a manifestation of God is furnished to us by this passage of Scripture, thus considered.

We are here taught, that God is essentially present in all places, and to all beings. We are taught, that he is equally 'at hand, and afar off;' that he is equally present in this world, and in the heavens; that he dwells alike throughout the universe of being, and the uninhabited regions of immensity. In all places also he is Jehovah, the same God, possessing the same attributes, and operating with the same wonderful agency. From the same passage we also learn irresistibly, that he comprehends, at the same moment of time, and with the same intuitive survey, every thing possible and actual; that eternity past and future is perfectly present to his eye, and that no distance of place or duration can be any thing to him; that no retreat can conceal, and no darkness cover any being, or event, from his sight. The mind of man is here exhibited as equally open to his view with the body; the thoughts and affections as the words and actions; hell as equally naked and present to him as heaven, and the destroyer and the seraph as alike without a covering. It is indubitably certain therefore, that he is able to attend, and actually attends, to all things at the same moment; to the motions of a seed, or a leaf, or an atom; to the creepings of a worm, the flutterings of an insect, and the journeys of a mite; to the excursions of the human mind, and, the efforts of an archangel; to the progress of a world, and the revolutions of a system.

2. How necessary are these attributes to the government of all things.

This interesting article may be advantageously illustrated in the following particulars.

(1.) God is eminently qualified by these attributes for the preservation of all things. The universe is a work of stupendous greatness, composed of worlds innumerable by us, and inhabited by beings still more emphatically surpassing number. The characters and kinds of these beings are incomprehensibly various, and their circumstances beyond measure more various. As these are hourly existing and advancing in an endless progress, they demand a providence minute, comprehensive, and enduring without a limit.

Every one of these is also a part of one immense whole. Each has its station allotted to it, the part which it is to act, the duties which it is to perform, and the purposes to which it is intended to be subservient, together with powers and circumstances suited to the accomplishment of them. Should one being fail of fulfilling its appointed end, a chasm, a defect would of course be found in the system, which could not be remedied. No finite measure can correctly determine the importance and danger of such a defect, however minute it may seem to a created understanding. Even the improper fall of a leaf, nay, the improper position of an atom, may, for aught that appears, be followed by consequences injurious, in the course of eternity, both to the character of the Creator, and the good of his creatures. The motions of a fly are capable of terminating the most important human life, or of changing all the future designs of a man, and altering the character, circumstances, and destiny of his descendents, throughout time and eternity. Such defects may, unless prevented by him, continually take place in every part of his vast kingdom. It is therefore indispensably necessary that he should be present to every being, at every moment, to perceive and regulate every event; to farther every part of his infinite designs, and to prevent every obstruction and failure. An exact, unremitted attention on his part, is necessary to the greatest

and to the least alike; a knowledge intimate, entire and perfect, of all their relations, changes and circumstances.

Of this attention, this consummate knowledge, the presence of God is the real foundation. In consequence of his presence in all places, he sees that every thing is contained in its own proper sphere of being and action, and discerns every approach towards exposure, and towards defect. Hence his great work is always guarded, advanced, and prospered. In this world, his presence, attention, and knowledge, are indispensable, to renew, refine, and strengthen in virtue, the souls of his children; to guide them in the paths of duty, to relieve their distresses, to supply their wants, and to brighten their hopes of a blessed immortality.

Equally indispensable is it to advance the general cause of truth and righteousness, to befriend his church in all its interests; to prevent the gates of hell from prevailing against it, to confine rebellion within the destined bounds, and to inflict the proper judgments on the workers of iniquity. In a word, his presence is indispensable here to bring light out of darkness, order out of confusion, and good out of evil.

In the world of punishment his presence is equally necessary, to confine the prisoners of his wrath; to render to every impenitent sinner the reward due to his crimes, to teach the abominable nature and the deplorable consequences of sin, and to show his unchangeable hatred of iniquity.

In the various worlds where virtue and happiness reside, he is necessarily present to inspire, invigorate, and quicken the obedience of their inhabitants; to distribute the innumerable and diversified rewards which he has annexed to obedience, and cause to arise and shine the endless varieties of beauty and loveliness, of which their happy spirits are capable.

In heaven, the brightest and best of these worlds, he is indispensably present, to perfect that glorious system of virtue and happiness, which he has ordained through the mediation of his Son, and promised to all the redeemed. There he has instituted a perfect scheme of dispensations, which is the consummation and the crown of all his works. There every inhabitant receives, and loves, and keeps his own place, duties, and enjoyments; and consecrates with all his heart, without weariness and without end, his exalted faculties and immortal life, to the sublime purposes of glorifying his Maker, and advancing the universal good. To this end, God there lives in every being, in a manner wholly peculiar; and diffuses a peculiarly quickening influence through every object. Hence 'the river' which proceeds from his throne, is styled 'the water of life;' and 'the trees' which grow on its banks 'bearing twelve manner of fruits,' are named 'trees of life.' The body he animates with vigour, youth, and beauty, which cannot decay: the mind he informs with a divine and supernatural quickening, which empowers it to advance without intermission, and with incomprehensible celerity, in knowledge, virtue, and enjoyment. In that world, God unfolds himself in infinite diversities of beauty, glory, and majesty; enables them to 'see eye to eye, and to behold his face in righteousness.' In that world he exhibits, with clear and unalterable conviction, that the great work which he has made, the system of dispensations which he has chosen, is a perfect work, a system of perfect wisdom and goodness, in which no real good is wanting, and into which nothing which upon the whole is evil is admitted. Particularly, he manifests the transcendent wonders of forgiving, redeeming, and sanctifying love; and the supreme desirableness of restoring, through the Redeemer, apostate sinners to the character and privileges of the children of God. Here also he unfolds in a perfect manner the inherent tendency of virtue to make intelligent minds wiser, better, and happier for ever.

It is hardly necessary to remark, that unless God were present in heaven, all these divine purposes must necessarily fail of being accomplished.

(2.) The presence of God is equally indispensable, to supply the innumerable wants of his creatures. In every other world, as well as in this, every creature is dependent on God 'for life, and breath, and all things.' Here, as we well know, 'all creatures wait upon God, that they may receive their supplies in due season. That which he giveth them, they gather: he openeth his hand, and satisfieth the wants of every living thing. He hideth his face: they die, and return to their dust.' These wants are endless in number, kind, and degree; exist every moment in every creature, are natural and spiritual, and respect alike both time and eternity. When God gives, creatures receive: when he withholds, they are destitute. Where he is not, where he gives not, there good is never found. But if these wants are to be supplied, they must be known; and to know them, he must be present. Hence he must exist in every place, and in every being.

(3.) His presence is indispensable, that he may know the moral character of his intelligent creatures. The actions of intelligent beings are of a moral nature; or, in other words, deserving of praise or blame, reward or punishment. These are originated in the soul; and in the soul receive their whole moral character. Hence, in order to know the true nature of the conduct of such beings, God must continually reside in every soul, to discern their rising motives, the commencing affections, and the infant designs; to trace them through their progress, and to witness their completion. In this manner 'he searches the hearts, and tries the reins;' and discerns, intuitively, the moral nature of all the conduct. All words he is present to hear, and all actions to behold. In this manner is he perfectly qualified to perform those great 'acts of governing the universe, and judging and rewarding his intelligent creatures 'according to their works.'

3. From the omniscience and omnipresence of God it is evident, that all things must come to pass either by his choice or permission.

As God is thus ever present in all places, and to all things, it is impossible that he should not know whatever comes to pass, or is about to come to pass. But of every possible thing it is truly said, that its existence is, upon the whole, either desirable, or undesirable. If it be desirable, or undesirable, God cannot but be perfectly acquainted with its true nature, in either case, because he cannot fail to see every thing as it is. If he sees any thing to be, upon the whole, desirable, it is impossible, that he should not choose its existence; if he sees it to be undesirable, he cannot but choose that it should not exist. If there is in the nature of things a foundation for preferring the existence of any thing to its non-existence, he cannot fail to discern this fact, and choose accordingly that it should exist: and thus,

vice versa. Whatever he chooses should not exist, cannot. Whatever he chooses should exist, must exist of course.

The same things are equally true of the time and place, modes and circumstances, events and attributes, in connexion with which beings exist, as of the beings themselves; for there is nothing, beside his choice, which could originally give these or any of them birth. If, for example, it has appeared to him good to endue creatures in any case with such powers as constitute an efficiency properly their own, and permit them afterward to accomplish by this efficiency whatever will result from the nature and tendency of such powers, then this will be the mode in which such creatures will exist and act; and in this manner all those things which result from their existence and action will take place. Should he at the same time see it to be desirable, that himself should exert a controlling, regulating, coinciding, or assisting influence, with regard to the agency of such beings, then this influence will, for the same reason, be exerted.

But whatever be the manner in which events are introduced into existence, whether by his single immediate agency, or by the instrumentality of created beings, nothing can take place which is contrary to, or aside from, his choice or permission; unless something can escape his knowledge, or overcome his power.

4. It is evident from what has been said, that God attends to every individual being and his concerns, as perfectly as if there were no other being.

Not a small number of men, and among them many philosophers, and what is more strange, many professed Christians, have believed and taught, that God cannot be supposed to attend to the concerns of individuals; but that he regards only the greatest affairs of empires, worlds and systems.

This opinion springs, not improbably, from three sources: first, Want of examination: second, An apprehension, that it is beneath the dignity of God to regard things of such minuteness: thirdly, A dread, in the mind, of such attention on the part of God, to its own concerns, because they will not bear divine inspection.

The first and third of these articles need no comment. The second appears to have arisen from the strong propensity in man to think God almost, if not 'altogether such a one as himself;' and is fraught with the rankest absurdities. If it is beneath the dignity of the Godhead to regard individuals; how much more was it beneath his dignity to make them? The end for which they were made, is unquestionably more important than themselves, who were only means to it; and claims proportionally a higher regard. Individuals also compose empires, and worlds, and systems. If then, God do not attend to the concerns of individuals, he must cease, of course, to attend to those of empires, worlds, and systems; since the affairs of these great collections of rational beings are only aggregates, made up of the affairs of individuals.

The concerns of one individual often constitute the hinge, on which all the great concerns of empires are turned. Thus the concerns of Cyrus, Alexander, and Cæsar, changed in a great measure the situation of those states, of which they were sovereigns, and put a new face on a great part of the habitable world. Even the conduct of Ravillac altered in a great measure the state, not only of France, but of Europe. Nay, from an early period of their republic, the state of the whole Roman empire, and consequently of a great part of mankind down to the present day, was essentially changed by the cackling of a goose.

Again, God created all individuals for certain ends, in themselves good and desirable, and, of course, designed by him to be accomplished. But these ends cannot be accomplished, unless his providence supply the powers and faculties, and regulate all the actions and events, necessary to their accomplishment; and would therefore be frustrated, were he not always present, and always attentive to them, for these purposes.

Every individual also is a part, and exactly a desirable, proper, and necessary part, of the great work which God has begun. If then one should fail, the whole would be disordered: and consequences would be produced, the extent and mischiefs of which, no mind less than infinite could comprehend.

Each of these arguments refutes this doctrine. But we need not recur to them, or to any of them, for this refutation. The nature of God proves this doctrine to be false. He is everywhere present; and is all eye, all ear, all consciousness. Of course, he cannot but attend to every thing, and know every thing. This is essentially and unchangeably his character. He can no more fail of regarding an insect than an angel, an atom than a world. As we, when our ears are open, cannot but hear; when our eyes are open, cannot but see; when our minds are directed to any object, cannot but perceive; so God, who is all mind, all perception, cannot but perceive all things. Among all things he cannot but perceive whatever is preferable, or upon the whole desirable, in the least as well as in the greatest; and cannot, without denying his nature, fail to choose its existence, rather than that to which it is thus preferable. The least, also, is as truly necessary and indispensable to the whole as the greatest, and cannot therefore fail to be chosen and accomplished.

Besides, experience unanswerably proves the doctrine which I have asserted. None but God can form or preserve, direct or regulate, an atom, a leaf, a mite, or an insect, any more than an angel, a world, or a universe. We see his power, wisdom, presence, and agency, in these least things, as truly and as constantly as in the greatest: and so clearly discern it to be the agency of an infinite hand, as to be incapable, when we open our eyes, of mistaking it for any other. In perfect harmony with these observations, the Scriptures declare, that God clothes the grass of the field; continues the life, and directs the death of sparrows; and numbers the hairs of our heads. What employment can, according to the opinions of those who contend against this doctrine, be less suitable than these to the dignity of God? Yet these, he has been pleased to declare, are things about which he is employed. The truth is, this universal attention to the several parts of the universe is infinitely glorious to his character. To be able to attend to the infinite multitude of beings and events, at the same and at all times; to render an entire regard to the least, without lessening at all the attention due to the greatest; to be able to see that every individual continues in his proper place and circumstances; answering the proper end of his being; to secure in this manner the well-being of the whole; and to do all this without weariness, or confusion; is to possess the highest state of being, of dignity, and of glory.

5. From the above considerations how solemn, how affecting, does our own existence appear.

This use of the doctrines contained in the text is made particularly, and in the most illustrious manner, by David, throughout the psalm from which it is taken. It cannot therefore fail to be profitably made by ourselves.

From the observations contained in the preceding part of this Discourse, it is evident that we are at all times, and in all places and circumstances, surrounded by God. In our walks, amusements, and business, at home and abroad, when we are asleep, and when we are awake, God is with us as really and as evidently, as we are with each other. Every thought in our minds, every word on our tongues, every action of our hands, is perfectly naked to his all-seeing eye. Of what amazing importance is it then, that these thoughts, words, and actions, 'be acceptable in his sight;' be such as we should be willing to have him witness, such as he can approve, justify, and reward! Those certainly are the only wise, the only prudent human beings, who continually remember this great truth; and who at all times, in their amusements as well as in their serious business, say in their hearts, 'Thou God seest me.' No consideration is so solemn, so affecting, so useful as this. None possesses the same influence to restrain the hands or the heart from sin; to produce, preserve, or quicken obedience; or to awaken unceasingly the most profitable attention of the soul to its everlasting welfare, or its remembrance of that awful judgment, where all its thoughts, words, and actions will be displayed in 'the light of God's countenance,' and become the reason and the measure of its final reward.

On the contrary, how imprudent, how sottish, how delirious is the conduct of him, who habitually forgets the presence of God; of whom it is truly said, 'that God is not in all his thoughts;' and who, settled upon his lees, quietly persuades himself, that 'the Lord will not do good, neither will the Lord do evil.' This man has either negligently or intentionally removed from his mind the chief source of virtuous conduct, the well-spring of hope, the great security against temptation, the prime preventive of sin. He is left unguarded, therefore, in circumstances infinitely dangerous, and voluntarily exposes himself to evils of infinite magnitude. Compared with this man, the prodigal, who causelessly squanders a throne and an empire, is a miser; and the soldier, who, when the enemy surrounds the citadel, sleeps at his post, is a faithful watchman.

6. Let every sinner remember, that God is present at the commission of all his crimes.

When thoughts of rebellion, profaneness, and ingratitude, arise in the soul; when thoughts of pride, envy, malice, deceit, injustice, and cruelty deform; and when thoughts of intemperance, levity, and lewdness, debase it; then God is in the polluted guilty mind, searching its secret chambers, and laying open to the full sunshine all the hiding places of iniquity.

When the sinners who are in this house rise up in rebellion against their Maker; when you murmur against his government, lay your sins to his charge, impeach his justice, mercy, and truth, and wish that he were to exist and rule no more; when you form impure, unjust, amd fraudulent designs; proceed to acts of violence and cruelty and become 'stout-hearted,' and therefore eminently 'far from righteousness;' when you devise false doctrines and systems to lead yourselves and others astray; deceive yourselves with arguments formed to justify sin, and flatter conscience into quiet and security; when you oppose the truth of God, dishonour his name, revile his Son, grieve his Spirit, and profane his sabbath and sanctuary, his commands and ordinances; when, finally, you ensnare, pollute, and destroy others as well as yourselves, by carrying all your evil designs into a guilty and dreadful execution; then, however, you may imagine yourselves concealed by the shades of solitude, or the curtains of midnight, from the view of every eye, God is present, sees, hears, and takes an account of all your thoughts, words, and actions. Then his eye, as a flame of fire, lights up a clear and searching day in your souls, and around your steps; and shows in sunbeams the iniquities which you devise, utter, and perpetrate.

7. Let every child of God remember also, that his Creator is equally present with all his conduct.

The Christian may be, in his own view, he may be in fact, poor, ignorant, little, and insignificant. When he reviews himself, he may not unnaturally exclaim, 'I am a worm, and no man:' when he reviews his services, he may pronounce them too worthless to be remembered of God: when he reviews his sins, he may believe them so great as to cut him off from every reasonable hope of a share in the divine attention. But notwithstanding his insignificance, fears, and doubts, he is not forgotten here, and will not be forgotten in the day when God makes up his jewels. The tears which he has shed, the prayers which he has offered up, the two mites which he has consecrated to God, the cup of cold water which he has given to a fellow-disciple, were neither unnoticed nor unregarded. God was present, when each act of humble and sincere obedience was performed; marked it with his eye, recorded it in his book, and will acknowledge it at the final day.

From this constant, kind, and merciful regard of his Maker, no situation, no circumstances will preclude him, even for a moment. However, lowly, however solitary, however forgotten of mankind, his course through life may be, himself and his interests, his wants and his woes, are tenderly as well as continually regarded by his God.

In seasons of sorrow, of sickness, bereavement, or desertion; when he has lost his parents or his children, or is forsaken by his former friends and companions: when the world begins to seem to him a desert, and life to be a burden: God is then at hand, his Father, and everlasting Friend; and will be 'better to him than sons and daughters.' The physician of the body, as well as of the soul, will administer healing to his diseased frame; pour the balm of consolation into his wounded spirit, and enable him to say, 'Why art thou cast down, O my soul; and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.'

When those around him become hostile to his character, and to his religion; when he himself is hated, despised, and persecuted; when for help he looks through the world in vain, and is ready to sink in the gulf of dispair: let him remember that God has been present to behold all his sufferings, and will effectually guard him from every fatal evil. He may indeed be 'persecuted,' but he will 'not be forsaken;' he may be 'cast down,' but he will 'not be destroyed.' Let him also remember, that 'his afflictions,' though they may

seem heavy, are 'but for a moment,' and are therefore really 'light;' and that they will 'work for him an exceeding and eternal weight of glory.'

In seasons of temptation, when his resolution to resist, his fortitude to endure, his patience to suffer, his wisdom to devise means of escape, and his diligence and faithfulness to use them, fail and decline; or even when, immersed in sloth and security, he ceases to watch over himself, and to guard against impending evil: God still is present, to supply all his wants, to renew his vigour, to support his yielding constancy, to awaken in him new vigilance, to quicken in him a contrite sense of his backsliding, to deliver him from the unequal contest, and to bless him with returning hope, peace, and safety.

When self-confidence, self-flattery, and self-righteousness inflate, deform, and betray him: when no Christian friend is near, to know, to pity, or to rescue him: God even then is present, to humble, to guide, and to restore him: and to enable him to find a safe path over the otherwise insurmountable obstacles to his continuance in the way of life.

Does he, with other humble followers of the Redeemer, 'mourn in Zion' the hidings of God's face, his own backslidings, or the depression and sufferings of his fellow Christians; and feel, as if both himself and the church were deserted and forgotten? Let him remember that although his heavenly Father 'hath smitten him for his sins with a rod, and for his iniquities with stripes; yet his covenant he will not take away, nor forget his mercy; that the walls of Zion are continually before him, and that she is graven on the palms of his hands; that although a woman may forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb; yet will the Redeemer not forget his church; and that He will keep her in the hollow of his hand, and preserve her as the apple of his eye.' Let him remember, that Jehovah will soon lift upon him, and his fellow saints, the light of his countenance; and will soon 'appoint unto them all, beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.'

Is he come to a dying bed? Is eternity, with all its amazing scenes beginning to be unveiled? Is his final trial ready to commence? Is his account even now to be given, his sentence to be pronounced, and his endless allotment to be fixed? Behold on the throne of judgment that glorious Person, who has promised 'that he will never leave him, nor forsake him.' He is the judge by whom he is to be tried, the rewarder by whom his destiny is to be fixed for ever. This divine Redeemer will now remember him as one of those for whom he died, as one of those for whom he has made unceasing intercession before the throne of the Majesty in the heavens.

3. What an affecting and amazing display will be made of the omniscience of God, at the last judgment.

On this solemn day, all mankind will be judged 'according to the deeds done in the body.' That these may be the foundation of 'the righteous judgment of God,' it is indispensable that they should be known clearly and certainly: the sins, together with all their aggravations and palliations; the virtues, with all their diminutions and enhancements. To the same end it is equally necessary that the system of retribution should also be perfectly comprehended, so that every administration of reward, both to the righteous and the wicked, should, throughout eternity, be measured out to each individual exactly as his whole character demands. Of course, the knowledge which will here be indispensable, will be a perfect comprehension of this system, together with all the moral conduct, and all the circumstances, of the innumerable beings who will be judged. The display of this knowledge, it is evident, will be the greatest display announced by the Scriptures, and infinitely greater than any other, conceivable by the human mind. The display will be also far more affecting than any other, for on it will depend all the immortal concerns of the innumerable children of Adam. Yet such a display will certainly be made, to such an extent, as to exhibit God in the character of an upright judge, an impartial dispenser of good and evil to his creatures; as to stop every mouth, and force every heart to confess 'that he is just when he judgeth, and clear when he condemneth.'

What manifestations of the human character will then be made! How different will be the appearance which pride, ambition, and avarice, sloth, lust, and intemperance will wear in the sight of God, in the sight of the assembled universe, and in the sight of those who have yielded themselves up to these evil passions, from that which they have customarily worn in the present world! How low will the haughty man be bowed down! How will the splendour of power and conquest set in darkness! How will the golden mountains of opulence melt away, and leave the dreaming possessor poor, and naked, and miserable, and in want of all things! How will the sensualist awake out of his momentary vision of pleasure, and find it all changed to 'vanity and vexation of spirit!' How little, in innumerable instances, will the worldly great then appear! How contemptible the renowned: how weak the powerful: how foolish 'the wise men and disputers of this world!' On the contrary, with what confidence and joy will the poor, despised, humble Christian 'lift up his head,' and take his proper place in the great scale of being, because he 'beholds his redemption arrived!' Here, first, his character will be openly acknowledged, and his worth confessed. Last in the present world, he will be numbered among the first in the world to come. A feeble, faded, half-extinguished lamp on this side of the grave, he will 'shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of his Father.'

How differently will our own characters appear, from what we imagine them to be, during our present life! Here most of our sins are forgotten; there they are all recorded in the book of God's remembrance. Here vast multitudes of them are concealed; there they will all be displayed in the open day. Here they are often mistaken by self-flattery for virtues; there they will be irresistibly seen in all their native deformity. How delightful will it then be to find, that they have been 'blotted out' by the divine mercy 'as a thick cloud;' that they have been expiated by the blood of the Redeemer! What a consolation, what transport will it be to find, that numerous and great as our iniquities have been, yet our whole character was such in the eye of the heart-searching God, as to entitle us through the merits of Christ, to a reward of endless life and glory!

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SERMON VII.

OMNIPOTENCE AND INDEPENDENCE OF GOD.

I am the almighty God.—Gen. xvii. 1.

In my last Discourse, I considered the omnipresence and omniscience of God. The next subject in the natural order of discussion is his *almighty power.*

In the text, this attribute is asserted directly by God himself to Abraham, when he renewed with him the covenant of grace, and instituted the sacrament of circumcision. In a manner equally explicit are similar declarations made throughout every part of the Scriptures.

The omnipotence of God is also easily demonstrated by reason; so easily, that no divine attribute has perhaps been so strongly realized, or generally acknowledged. So general is this acknowledgment, that a sober attempt to persuade a Christian audience of the truth of this doctrine would be scarcely considered as serious, or as compatible with the dictates of good sense. An attempt to impress this doctrine on the mind is not however liable to the same objections, nor indeed to any objection. It cannot but be a profitable employment to examine briefly several things, in which we find the most striking displays of this perfection. To such an examination I shall therefore proceed; and observe,

I. *That the power of God is gloriously manifested in the work of creation.*

Creation may be defined, the production of existence where nothing was before. The power displayed in the act of creating, not only exceeds all finite comprehension, but is plainly so great as to exclude every rational limitation. It is impossible to believe that the power which originally gives existence, cannot do any thing, and every thing which in its own nature is capable of being done; or in other words, every thing, the doing of which involves not a contradiction. When we contemplate creative power, we neither attempt nor pretend to form any estimate of its extent, but are lost in wonder and amazement at the character of him who gives being wherever he pleases.

On the simple act of creating, however, it is not easy for such minds as ours to dwell. A single glance of the mind makes us possessed of all which we know concerning this effort of omnipotence, as it is in itself. But there are several things relative to the effects which it produces, capable of mightily enhancing our ideas concerning this astonishing exertion of power. Of this nature is,

1. The vastness and multitude of the things which were created.

The world which we inhabit, is itself a vast and amazing work. The great divisions of land and water, the continents and oceans into which it is distributed; nay, the mountains and plains, the lakes and rivers, with which it is magnificently adorned; are, severally, sufficiently wonderful and affecting to fill our minds, and to engross all the power of contemplation. Nor are our thoughts less deeply interested by the vast multitude of plants, trees, and animals, with which every part of the globe is stored at every period of time. All these also rise and fall in an uninterrupted succession, When one perishes, another immediately succeeds. No blank is permitted, and no vacuity found: but creating energy, always operating, produces a continual renovation of that which is lost.

When we lift up our eyes to the heavens, we are still more amazed at the sight of many such worlds, composing the planetary system. The comets which surround our sun, greatly increase our amazement by their numbers, the velocity of their motions, and the inconceivable extent of their circuits. It is still more enhanced by the union of these numerous worlds in one vast system, connected by a common centre, and revolving round that centre with a harmony and splendour worthy of a God.

But this system, great and wonderful as it is, is a mere speck, compared with the real extent of the creation. Satisfactory evidence exists, that every star which twinkles in the firmament, is no other than a sun, a world of light, surrounded by its own attendant planets, formed into a system similar to ours. Forty-five thousand such stars have been counted, by the aid of the Herschelian telescope, in so small a part of the heavens, that supposing this part to be sown no thicker than the rest, the same telescope would reach at least seventy-five millions in the whole sphere. By means of new improvements in the same optical instrument, they have been found to be numerous to a degree still more astonishing. Every one of these is, in my view, rationally concluded to be the sun and centre of a system of planetary and cometary worlds. Beyond this, I think it not at all improbable, that were we transported to the most distant of the visible stars, we should find there a firmament expanding over our heads, studded in the same manner with stars innumerable. Nay, were we to repeat the same flight, and be again wafted through the same distance, it is not improbable that we should behold a new repetition of the same sublimity and glory. In this manner immensity appears, in a sense, to be peopled with worlds innumerable, constituting the boundless empire of Jehovah. How amazing then must be the power and greatness of him, who not only 'telleth the number of the stars, and calleth them all by their names,' but with a word spoke them all into being!

2. The peculiar nature and splendour of many of these works strongly impress on our minds the greatness of creating power!

Of this nature are all those vast works in the heavens, which I have mentioned under the last head. To single out one of them: How glorious a work is the sun! Of what astonishing dimensions; of what wonderful attraction! Possessed of what supreme, unchangeable, and apparently immortal glory! Of what

perpetual and incomprehensible influence on the world which we inhabit; not only causing it to move around its orbit with inconceivable rapidity, but producing over its extensive surface, warmth and beauty, life and activity, comfort and joy, in all the millions of beings by which it is inhabited!

Magnificent however as this object is, one mind is a more wonderful, more important, more illustrious display of creating power, than the whole inanimate universe. Suns with all their greatness and glory are still without life, without consciousness, without enjoyment; incapable in themselves of action, knowledge, virtue, or voluntary usefulness. A mind, on the contrary, is possessed of all these exalted powers, and is capable of possessing all these sublime attributes. A mind can know, love, and glorify its Creator; can be instamped with his image, and adorned with his beauty and loveliness: and can appear desirable and delightful to his eye. It can 'reflect, as a mirror, the glory of the Lord,' (for so ought the passage * to be translated,) 'and be changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord.' It can love and bless its fellow minds, be loved and blessed by them; and become a useful and honourable instrument of advancing endlessly the universal good of the intelligent kingdom. In all these glorious attainments it can advance with an unceasing progress throughout eternity. In this progress it can rise to the heights where angels now dwell; and passing those heights, can ascend higher and higher, till in the distant ages of endless being, it shall look down on the most exalted created excellence which now exists, as the mere dawnings of infantine intelligence. Worlds and suns were created for the use of minds; but minds were created for the use of God.

3. The same impressions are strongly made, when we regard God as the author of life.

The communication of life is a creative act entirely, and illustriously superior to the mere communication of existence. In the wonderful power manifested in this communication, the glory of God, in the character of the Creator, is pre-eminently displayed. Accordingly, 'the living God, and the living Father;' that is the God who has life originally and independently in himself, and is the source of it to all living beings, are titles chosen to unfold especially the glory of the divine nature. In the same manner also our Saviour challenges this wonderful attribute to himself, as a direct and unquestionable proof of his divinity. 'As the Father,' saith he, 'hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself. As the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will.' In the same manner it is elsewhere said, 'It is the Spirit that quickeneth.'

The possession of life confers on every thing which is the subject of it, a distinction by which it is raised at once above all inanimate matter. Even vegetables, of which life is predicated in a figurative sense only, derive from it a total superiority to all those beings which are found in the mineral kingdom. Animal life, which is life in its humblest degree, raises the being in whom it exists, totally above all those things which are not animated, by making them at once, objects on which the emotions of the soul may be employed, and subjects of pleasure or pain, happiness or misery. Of these great distinctions, every one knows, no part of the mineral or vegetable world is susceptible.

Rational life is an attribute of importance and distinction far higher still, and is the most wonderful display of the divine energy which the universe contains. Indeed, it is in a sense the end for which all things else were created, and without which there is no probability that they would ever have been. In exact accordance with the views which I have expressed on this subject, we find a peculiar attention rendered to it by God, in the creation of man. Other things had been called into being, antecedently to this event; and man, as the most important of all terrestrial beings, and the end for which they were made, was reserved to be the closing work. The world, his magnificent habitation, was finished before the tenant was formed, by whom it was to be occupied. Then God held a solemn consultation on this new and interesting work, and said, 'Let us make man in our own image, after our likeness.' This consultation, holden by the persons of the Godhead on the subject of communicating rational life, plainly and affectingly declares it to be a higher and more noble object of divine power, than all those which had preceded. From this pre-eminent importance it arises, that the termination of it, usually denominated annihilation, is, in the view of the mind, invested with intense gloom, and the deepest horror; and that immortality, or the endless continuance of rational life, is an object always encircled with radiance, and regarded with exultation and rapture.

4. The manner in which the Scriptures exhibit the work of creation as being performed, most forcibly impresses on our minds the greatness of creating power.

The greatness of power is discerned not only in the magnitude of the effects which it produces, but in the ease also with which they are produced. In this we are led rationally and indeed irresistibly to discern, that the whole of the power possessed is not exerted; and that other and greater effects would, of course, spring from superior efforts, of which the same power is obviously capable. When 'God created the heavens and the earth,' he said, 'Let there be light: let there be a firmament: let the waters be gathered into one place; and let the dry land appear.' All these and other similar commands were exactly and instantaneously obeyed. In a moment, light invested the world; the firmament arched above it; the waters rolled backward into their bed; the dry land heaved; and the mountains lifted their heads towards heaven. The world with all its furniture and inhabitants, the heavens with all their magnificence, arose out of nothing, at a command. How superior to all finite comprehension must be the power of him, 'who spake,' and this stupendous work 'was done.'

II. *The omnipotence of God is divinely displayed in the government of all things.*

The existence and attributes which God has given to all beings, he only can continue. He only holds together the innumerable atoms which compose the innumerable material forms, found in the universe; the plants and trees, the hills and mountains, the rivers and oceans. His power is the only bound by which worlds are bound, or by which they are united in the planetary systems. This union, this continuance of their being, is both an effect and a proof of the same energy from which they were all originally derived. The same en-

* 2 Cor. iii. 18.

ergy upholds all their attributes, and conducts all their operations.

These beings are endless in their multitude, immensely distant in times and places, wonderful often in their greatness and importance, and, to finite minds, innumerable in their diversities. All, also, are parts of one vast and perfect whole; to the perfection of which, each, in its appointed place and time, is indispensably necessary. What a power must that be, which at one and the same moment works in every vegetable and animal system in this great world; which upholds, quickens, and invigorates every mind; which at the same moment, also, acts in the same efficacious manner in every part of the solar system, and of all the other systems which compose the universe. What must be the power of him who sends abroad every moment, immense oceans of light from the sun, and innumerable such oceans from the stars; who 'holds all worlds in the hollow of his hand,' retains them exactly in their places, and rolls them through the fields of ether with unceasing, most rapid, and at the same time perfectly harmonious motions; and who, thus accomplishing every purpose for which they were made, prevents the least disturbance, error, or imperfection!

III. *The omnipotence of God is strongly impressed on our minds by the consideration, that it is unaltered and undecaying.*

These mighty exertions have been already made through many thousand years: still they are perfectly made. They are made without intermission, rest, or relaxation. From century to century their energy operates night and day, and operates now with the same force and effect as at the beginning. Every where it is seen, and is seen everywhere to be the same. It is therefore wholly unspent, and plainly incapable of being spent or diminished.

In this wonderful fact is exhibited unanswerable proof of that sublime declaration of the prophet: 'Hast thou not known, hast thou not heard, that the Everlasting God, Jehovah, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary?'

REMARKS.

From this doctrine we learn,

1. That God is absolutely independent.

By the absolute independence of God I intend, that he needs, and can need, nothing to render his ability, either to do or to enjoy whatever he pleases, greater or more perfect; but that he possesses, in and of himself, all possible ability for both these purposes; so that his desires can never be opposed, nor his designs frustrated, either from want of knowledge to discern, or power to accomplish, whatever is desirable or useful. The proof of this independence is complete, in the account which has been given of the omnipresence, omniscience, and omnipotence of God. He who contrived, who created, and who governs all things, can contrive, create, and do whatever involves not a contradiction. He must therefore have all good in his power and possession, and can plainly need and receive nothing. Every created thing he made, and gave it just such attributes as he pleased. Every thing continues in existence for just such a time, and in just such a state as he chooses; and operates in that manner only which is prescribed, or permitted by him. Nothing therefore can do or be, what is on the whole, contrary to his choice. Of course he cannot be disappointed of any purpose, unless we were to suppose him pleased to be disappointed, a self-contradiction too manifest to be admitted even by a child. According to this scheme, he says of himself, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.'* And again, 'He doth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?'

2. By this perfection, God is eminently qualified for the government of all things.

From what has already been said of the manifestation of this divine attribute in the government of the universe, we cannot but perceive, that to this purpose the omnipotence of God is indispensable. The same power which formed this vast machine, is absolutely necessary to continue in their proper places the several parts, and to conduct the operations of the whole to the ends which they are destined to accomplish. By this attribute only is God able to prevent all disorder and decay, and to frustrate all opposition. Many of the intelligent creatures which he has made, are possessed of such powers, as, if uncontrolled by him, might occasion important obstructions to the progress of many parts of his great kingdom, and a consequent frustration or prevention of many of his designs. The mischiefs and miseries which in the course of eternity might be introduced into the universe, might easily exceed all finite estimation. But to every one of these beings he is able to say, and actually says, as he said in ancient times to the restless ocean, 'Hitherto shalt thou come, but no farther.'

In the same manner he is infinitely able also to furnish all beings, animate and inanimate, rational and irrational, with that energy by which they operate to the unceasing promotion of the infinite good which he has begun to accomplish. The kingdom of God is a kingdom of means. With infinite wisdom and benignity he has chosen to adorn his intelligent creatures with such faculties as enable them to become subordinate agents in the great system, to coincide voluntarily with him in the furtherance of his perfect designs, and thus to sustain the character of moral excellence, and become lovely in his sight. Even the inanimate world as a passive instrument in his hands and theirs, of promoting the same designs, claims in this manner a species of inferior but real importance, and shows forth the praise of its divine Author. But all the powers and faculties by which his creatures perform the respective parts allotted to them, are continued as well as given by his omnipotence, which in this manner is everywhere glorified, and is everywhere the Rock on which is founded the great building of the universe.

As God by his omniscience and omnipotence is possessed of a complete sufficience for the accomplishment of all his pleasure, and thus rendered absolutely independent, it is evident that he must be infinitely removed from all fear on the one hand, and from all favouritism on the other. From the former of these considerations it is certain, that he cannot in any degree be deterred from the performance of any thing which is right and good; and from the other, that he cannot possibly be allured to the production of any thing which is wrong, or injurious to his creatures.

* Isaiah xlvi. 10. Dan. iv, 35.

To him who is raised above all actual and possible want, who can do what he pleases, and has therefore every thing in his possession, unchangeably and eternally, there can be no private, partial interest; no conceivable prejudice, no bias, no undue regard towards any being. His views, and his conduct alike, must be impartial, public, founded on the real state of things, and directed towards all beings according to their proper character and real desert. His creatures can plainly present no motive to Him to depart from that course of conduct, which in his view is wise and good. Here then, in the character and circumstances of the Deity, an immovable foundation is laid for universal, perfect, and glorious rectitude.

From the omnipotence of God also is derived that awful character, regarded by sinful beings with supreme dread, and by virtuous ones with supreme reverence. Intelligent beings are governed only by motives. In this attribute, especially as inseparably connected with omniscience, all such beings find most solemn and cogent motives to 'fear that glorious and fearful name, Jehovah their God;' to be terrified at the thought of sinning against him, to tremble at the effects of his anger, and to abstain from rebellion against his government. Here the righteous find the strongest motives to resist temptation, and the wicked to return to their duty. A powerless God, however lovely and excellent, could neither defend his own honour, nor protect his creatures, however dutiful, from injustice and ruin. To a ruler of free agents; therefore, power is indispensable for the support of his own dignity, and the safety and peace of his subjects. To the ruler of all the free agents, omnipotence is indispensable for the perfect establishment of his infinite glory, and the obedience and consequent happiness of his immense and eternal kingdom.

3. How terrible an enemy to obstinate and impenitent sinners is an omnipotent God.

'I love them that love me, and will cause them that love me to inherit substance; I will render vengeance to mine enemies, and reward them that hate me,' is language completely descriptive of the designs and dispensations of Jehovah towards his rational creatures. This is the only exhibition of the divine government in the Scriptures: it is the only view which can be satisfactorily formed of that government by reason. No man can for a moment seriously believe, that God can love and reward those who hate him, or hate and punish those who love him. Such conduct would be wholly inconsistent with the nature of an intelligent being, and cannot therefore be attributed to the Author of all intelligence.

Let me now bring this subject home to the heart of every member of this audience. Let me ask, and let each individual solemnly answer in his own mind, Do you love God? Do you desire to please him? Do you cheerfully obey his commandments? Do you humbly and faithfully walk in his ordinances? Or do you, with the wicked of old, and of all succeeding ages, 'say unto God, Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways? What is the Almighty, that we should serve him; and what profit should we have, if we pray unto him?'

Call to mind, I beseech you, how many denunciations of future vengeance against impenitent sinners are uttered in his word. Remember that all these were uttered by him, with a perfect knowledge of the guilt of sin, and of the extent of the punishment which it demands; with a perfect conviction of the rectitude of his own designs, and with an immovable purpose to carry them into execution. How certain it is then, that they will be exactly executed; and that the impious and the profligate, the impenitent and the unbelieving, will drink the dregs of divine indignation. Consider in how many forms of alarm these threatenings are delivered; what woes they contain, and what that is terrible, they do not contain. With these affecting things in view, remember, that he who has denounced these woes, he who will execute these denunciations, is the Almighty God. How fearfully able is such a God to inflict every punishment, and to execute every threatening! What amazing sources of suffering are within the limits of his omniscience and omnipotence! How easily can we make every pore, faculty, and thought, the channel and the seat of inexpressible anguish!

Think, I beseech you how utterly unable all other beings are to deliver out of his hand. Who on earth, or in heaven, 'has an arm like God, or can thunder with a voice like him?' His hand can reach, as his eye can pierce, beyond all limit. No caverns, no solitudes, no depth of the earth or the ocean, can hide from him the miserable objects of his wrath. 'Should they ascend up into heaven; he is there. Should they make their bed in hell; behold, he is there. Should they take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there would his hand lead them, and his right hand would hold them. Should they say, Surely the darkness will cover us; even the night would be light about them.'

Let these most affecting things sink deep into your hearts. Remember that you were made, and are preserved in life, health, and comfort, in probation and hope, by the almighty power of God; and that on him you depend for every blessing, present and future, for safety from every evil, and for final deliverance from every danger. On his pleasure alone is your being suspended, and your welfare. Of what importance then is it to every one of you, that he should love you, and be pleased with you; and, of course, that you should love him, and faithfully labour to please him! Have you ever brought this subject home to your hearts, and pondered it with that solemnity which its importance requires? Has the amazing interest which you have in obtaining the favour of God, been realized by you? Is it now a part of your plans for future life, to begin the great work of attaining his approbation at some approaching period? Is this period fixed and known? Are the terms on which this immense possession may be gained, considered and adopted by you? Have you remembered, that Christ 'is the only true and living way, to acceptance with God; and that through faith in his blood alone is found the justification of life? Have you remembered that he has said, 'To-day, if ye will hear my voice, harden not your hearts?'

Are you, on the other hand, prepared to encounter the exertions of that power which formed the earth and the heavens, when employed to inflict on you the terrible evils threatened to all those who displease him? Have you devised, or can you devise any means of escape or safety in the day of visitation; any means to which you dare trust your souls, and with which you dare launch into eternity? He has told

you of one way in which safety may certainly be found, and which leads directly to heaven. Do you know any other which terminates in that happy place, and will conduct you to everlasting joy?

4. How useful a friend must such a God be to the righteous.

That God is a faithful and steadfast friend to the righteous, cannot be questioned: because they love and labour to please him, and must therefore be loved of him; and because they are the friends and followers of his Son. Accordingly, he has disclosed in his word designs of mercy and goodness to them, so great as almost to transcend belief, and to leave the mind rather lost in astonishment, than filled with expectation. He who regards his own character with the candour and humility of the gospel, who considers how greatly and how often he has sinned, how guilty his life must appear before God, and how utterly unworthy he is of the least of all his mercies; cannot but exclaim, when he casts his eye over the promises of the gospel, 'Who am I, O Lord God, that thou hast brought me hitherto? For thy word's sake, and according to thine own heart, hast thou spoken all these great things to make thy servant know them. Let thy name be magnified for ever: for now, O Lord God, thou art God, and thy words be true; and thou hast promised this goodness unto thy servant; and with thy blessing let me be blessed for ever.' *

In the covenant of grace there are contained treasures of good, to which no limit can be assigned. On this subject the apostle Paul, in comments of unrivalled sublimity, has expressed the most accurate, as well as the most exalted and astonishing sentiments, which can be found even in the Scriptures. 'All things,' saith he to Christians, 'are yours. Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours:' And again, 'I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.' And again, 'We know that all things do labour † together for good to them that love God.' From these declarations we learn, that all things are the property and the destined possessions of the righteous; that no being or event shall preclude them from the enjoyment of this mighty inheritance; but that, on the contrary, every being and every event is employed, with one vast and united effort, to place this boundless good in their hands. Whatever therefore is really needed by them, whatever is really good for them in the present life, whatever can render their future immortality blessed and glorious, God has covenanted to bestow on them through the mediation of Christ.

When he who can truly 'say to corruption, Thou art my father, and to the worm, Thou art my mother, and my sister,' turns his eye to these wonderful promises, and to the immense assemblage of blessings which they convey; he is naturally lost in amazement, and prepared to believe them only in a loose and general manner. Scarcely can he persuade himself that they are not the language of bold and sublime exaggeration, of ardent and daring hyperbole, rather than sober communications of simple truth. Were the rewards promised as the result of his own obedience, well might he doubt. But when he remembers, that 'God has not spared his own Son, but delivered him up for us all,' he cannot, if he would act rationally, fail to unite with the apostle in exclaiming, 'How shall he not with him also freely give us all things?' The benevolence necessary to the origination and the communication of these blessings, is in this event proved beyond a question.

In the omniscience of God we are presented with ample ability to contrive, and in his omnipotence with ample ability to accomplish, every part of this amazing sum of good. To him who willed the universe into being, it is equally easy to create great enjoyments as little, many as few, endless as momentary. The vast system of good which he has promised, he can call into existence in a moment, with the same ease with which he can create an insect or an atom. Whatever he gives, his store cannot be lessened; nor can a preceding communication of good be with him a reason for refusing, or neglecting to communicate again. Immeasurably bountiful, he can never be weary of giving; immeasurably powerful, he can never be weary of providing.

From the omnipotence of God every righteous man may then confidently expect a final deliverance from all his enemies, sorrows, and sins, from death and the grave, from future perdition and eternal woe. He may be certainly assured, that the same glorious and everlasting Friend will communicate to him, and to his fellow Christians, immortal life; will enlarge their minds with increasing knowledge, will improve them with ever-growing virtue, and supply them with endlessly advancing happiness.

5. How great and glorious does God appear, as invested with almighty power.

'Great is the Lord,' says the psalmist, 'and greatly to be praised. One generation shall praise thy works to another, and shall declare thy mighty acts. All thy works praise thee, O Lord, and thy saints shall bless thee. They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom and talk of thy power. Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and thy dominion endureth throughout all generations.' 'Canst thou,' says Zophar, 'by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is high as heaven, what canst thou do? Deeper than hell, what canst thou know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea.' 'Who hath measured the waters,' says Isaiah, 'in the hollow of his hand; and meted out heaven with a span; and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure; and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance.'

The Being who made, upholds, and governs, the universe, discloses in these acts his own proper character; a character infinitely greater and more glorious than the highest creature can sustain or comprehend. 'All things are before him as nothing, and justly accounted unto him less than nothing, and vanity.'

We were not, indeed, present at the birth of this wonderful work. We did not behold the boundless midnight enlightened with suns, or the desolate wilds of immensity filled with worlds and their inhabitants. We did not hear 'the morning stars sing together, and the sons of God shout for joy.' But in the history of the creation, dictated by the voice of God, we are pre-

* 2 Samuel vii. † Συνεργει.

sented with such sublime views of this amazing subject, as stretch our imagination to the utmost, and fill our understanding with astonishing ideas. In the same work, as it is daily seen by our eyes, we discern wonders surpassing number and measure, and gloriously illustrating the power by which all are accomplished. In the history of past events, also; in the deluge, the destruction of Sodom, the wonders of Egypt, of Sinai, and of Canaan; in the miracles of the prophets, of Christ, and of the apostles, are such manifestations of almighty power, as cannot fail to astonish every mind, and fill every heart with the most awful apprehensions of its Maker.

In the daily providence of God, we are also witnesses of the amazing effects of his omnipotence, In the rising and setting of the sun, and the revolutions of the heavens, we behold a hand whose exertions disclaim all limit. We hear him also 'thundering marvellously with his voice;' we see him 'sending forth lightnings with rain,' making the earth to tremble, and the mountains to fall; pouring out rivers of fire from the volcano, and whelming cities and countries in a general conflagration.

On the other hand, what pleasing and glorious proofs of the same power are exhibited in its softer and gentler, its less awful, but no less solemn exertions through the circuit of the seasons: in the spring, particularly, when God appears 'as the light of the morning when the sun ariseth, even of a morning without clouds; and as the clear shining of the sun after rain, upon the tender herb of the field.' Then, with a hand eminently attractive and wonderful, he diffuses life and warmth, and beauty and glory, over the face of the world; and from the death of winter, bids all things awake with a general and delightful resurrection. The successive seasons are replete with successive wonders, wrought by the same almighty hand. 'Day unto day, indeed, uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge,' concerning this great subject. He who does not mark these astonishing disclosures, made in heaven and in earth, in ten thousand and ten million forms, must be a brute; and he who, surveying them, does not regard God as infinitely 'wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working,' has indeed 'eyes, but he sees not; ears, but he cannot hear; and a heart, but he cannot understand.' Every good man, on the contrary, must admire and adore him, 'who doeth all these things;' must rejoice with humble gratitude and divine joy, in all the stupendous displays of his goodness; must tremble at the 'terrible things' which he doeth 'in righteousness, when his judgments are abroad in the earth;' and must on every occasion be ready to exclaim, 'Who is like unto thee, O Lord? glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders.'

SERMON VIII.

BENEVOLENCE OF GOD, PROVED FROM THE WORKS OF CREATION AND PROVIDENCE.

For God is love.—1 John iv. 8.

Having considered the existence and the natural attributes of God at some length, I shall now proceed to the next subject of theological inquiry; viz. his moral attributes. In the order best suited to the method of discussion which I have preferred, that which first offers itself for examination is his benevolence.

This perfection is ascribed to God in the text, in a singular manner. It is not asserted, that God is benevolent, but that he is benevolence; or that benevolence is the essence, the sum of his being and character. The force and beauty of this assertion will be felt by every one who attends to it, without any remarks from me.

That Αγαπη signifies the kind of love which in English is called benevolence, will not, I presume, be questioned. If any one is at a loss concerning this fact, he may be satisfied by reading St Paul's extensive definition of this word, contained in the 13th chapter of the first Epistle to the Corinthians.

In canvassing this important subject, I propose to inquire in what manner it is exhibited to us.

I. *By reason;* and, II. *By revelation.*

I. *I propose to inquire in what manner it is exhibited to us by reason.*

In examining this part of the subject, I shall, first, allege several arguments furnished by reason, in proof of the benevolence of God; and, secondly, answer the principal objections to this doctrine.

The importance of the question, whether God is a benevolent being, is no less than infinite. Every thing therefore which seriously affects it, must be of high moment to every intelligent creature. The decisions of reason on this subject undoubtedly affect the question in a serious manner, and are of course very interesting to us. Although I can by no means admit, with many of my fellow men, respectable for their understanding and worth, that the benevolence of God is not capable of being completely proved, or that it is not in fact completely proved by the Scriptures, independently of all other sources of argument; yet I cannot help believing, that if the proof furnished by reason be satisfactory also, and can be fairly exhibited as satisfactory, the minds of many men at least will rest on this subject with a conviction more unmingled, a confidence less exposed to danger and disturbance. To compass this object, if it can be compassed, will then be very desirable.

It is hardly necessary for me to observe, that the question concerning the amount of the evidence which reason gives concerning this doctrine, has long been and is still disputed. It is well known to many of this audience, that divines and other Christians, as well as

other men, differ in their opinions about it; and that the proofs of the divine benevolence from reason are regarded by many persons of reputation as insufficient. I have myself entertained, heretofore, opinions on this subject, different from those which I now entertain. As I have not seen it discussed in such a manner as satisfied my own wishes, I shall now consider it with more particularity than might otherwise be necessary.

The self-existence, eternity, immutability, omnipresence, omniscience, and omnipotence of God, have, I flatter myself, been clearly proved by arguments derived from reason. From these attributes it has, I trust, been unanswerably evinced, that God is absolutely independent; that all things which can be done or enjoyed are in his power and possession, and that he can neither need nor receive any thing. From these considerations it is evident,

1. That God can have no possible motive to be malevolent.

It will not be pretended that the nature of things can furnish any such motive. That to be malevolent is a more desirable character or state of being than to be benevolent, cannot be asserted nor believed. Nor can any motive to this character be presented to God from without himself, or from other beings.

As all other beings, together with every thing pertaining to them, are and cannot but be just what he pleases; it is certain that he can gain nothing to himself by the exercise of malevolence. Finite beings may discern goods in the hands of others which they may covet, and at the same time be hindered from possessing, unless by the indulgence of fraud, injustice, or unkindness; or by attacking and injuring such as prevent them from gaining the beloved object. Those who possess it, they may envy or hate. Those who hinder them from gaining it, they may regard with resentment or anger: and under the influence of these malignant passions, may be induced to disturb their rights and invade their happiness. But it is plain that these considerations can have no more application to God, than the circumstances which gave them birth. All good is actually in his possession: there is therefore nothing left for him to desire. All beings and events are exactly such as he chooses either to produce, or to permit; and such as he chose, antecedently to their existence. He can therefore have nothing to fear, or to malign. As he gave all which is possessed by other beings, he can evidently neither gain nor receive any thing. If he be malevolent, then, he must sustain this character without a motive.

2. An omniscient Being cannot but see that it is more glorious to himself, and more beneficial to his creatures, to sustain and to exhibit a benevolent character, than its contrary; or, in other words, in every respect more desirable.

The glory of the Creator, and the good of his creatures, involve every thing that is desirable. That this character, in its existence and exercise, is on both these accounts more desirable than its contrary, cannot be questioned. We, narrow as our faculties are, perfectly know this truth. It is therefore absolutely desirable. That this truth must be seen by an omniscient Being, in a manner infinitely superior to that in which we see it, hardly needs to be asserted.

The desirableness of this conduct, arising from the glory of the Creator, and the good of his creatures, seems to present, when we consider it as extending through eternity, an infinite motive to the Creator, to cherish a benevolent character, and to manifest it in all his conduct. To the power of this motive there is at the same time, no motive opposed. On the contrary, we know, and the Creator, in a manner infinitely more perfect, knows, that the existence and exercise of a malevolent character would be infinitely dishonourable to himself, and in the progress of eternity infinitely injurious to his creatures. Each of these considerations presents to the Creator an infinite motive to exercise benevolence on the one hand, and not to exercise malevolence on the other. If, then, he has in fact exercised malevolence, he has done it without any motive, and against the influence of both these; each of them of infinite importance.

Thus it is, I think, clearly certain, that God cannot be induced to exercise a malevolent spirit because malevolence is in itself a desirable character; nor because the nature of things offers any enjoyment, which upon the whole is good, to the indulgence of this disposition, nor because he does not perfectly know these truths. If he is malevolent, then, he is so from an original inherent propensity in his own nature; a propensity uninfluenced by truth, and immovable by motives.

How far such a character can be rationally supposed to be possible in a Being who has all things in his power, it is difficult to determine. The observations already made, clearly prove, that such a Being must discern with absolute certainty, the infinite disadvantage of indulging this spirit. The difference between rejoicing in all his works, as means of glory to himself, with a consciousness that he has formed and conducted them to this exalted end, and feeling the gloomy dreadful pain of boundless malice, is in itself obviously boundless. If then God has not chosen this enjoyment, he has failed to choose it, with a clear discernment that it was in his power, and under the influence of a disposition which would not yield to conviction, nor to motives infinite in their magnitude. That he has not exercised this disposition I shall now proceed to show; and for this purpose observe:

3. The only conduct which a Creator can receive with pleasure from his creatures, must plainly be attachment, reverence, and the voluntary obedience which they produce.

Whether the Creator be benevolent or malevolent, it is impossible that he should not choose to be loved, reverenced, and obeyed. But the real Creator has so formed his works, and so constituted his providence, that the minds of men, irresistibly and of absolute necessity, esteem a benevolent being more than one of the opposite character. I do not mean here, that this is the dictate of the heart; but I mean that it is the unavoidable dictate of the intellect, of the conscience and understanding. The intellect is so formed by the Creator, that it is impossible for it to think otherwise. Any person who will make the attempt, will find it beyond his power to approve of malevolence at all. If therefore the Creator be malevolent, he has so formed his intelligent creatures in this world, that they cannot possibly esteem his character. In other words, he has made them incapable, by a natural necessity, of rendering to him that regard which, in itself, or in its consequences, is the only possible conduct, on the part of

his intelligent creatures, which a Creator can have proposed when he gave them existence.

Should it be objected, that benevolence is estimable in the nature of things; that to see its nature is the same thing as to esteem it; and that therefore intelligent creatures cannot avoid experiencing this esteem: I answer, should it be granted, as I think it must, that all this is true, still an omnipotent Creator might, for aught that appears, have formed intelligent creatures with such optics, with powers of understanding so directed that they might have seen his character in an estimable light. Hypochondriacal and insane minds are direct proofs, that minds can exist with directly opposite views to those which intelligent creatures in this world usually experience. Nor is there any evidence that an omnipotent Being could not so form intelligent creatures, as to vary their modes of perception in any manner, and to any extent, which pleased him. At the same time it is perfectly obvious, that as we are wholly passive in receiving ideas and impressions, he might with entire ease have given us just such ideas as he pleased, by presenting to us only those objects from which they would be derived. In this manner he might have prevented us from forming any conceptions of his moral character, and led us only to admire his omniscience and omnipotence in the stupendous works which they are capable of producing. This, it is believed, involves no contradiction; and every thing which does not involve a contradiction, such a Being can confessedly perform.

Should the scheme which I have here suggested, not be admitted, I answer again; There was no necessity that he should create intelligent beings at all; and there is no conceivable motive which could induce an infinite Being to form intelligent creatures, who, from their nature and their circumstances, could not possibly esteem, but from absolute necessity, must disesteem him.

But this is not all. Men are so formed as irresistibly to hate and despise malevolence. This conduct, on their part, is the unvarying dictate of mere intellect, as well as of the heart. It is therefore absolutely necessary, the unavoidable result of that state of things which he himself has formed: is his own immediate work; and, so far as we know, the only work of an intelligent nature which he has produced; being found in all men, and therefore justly presumable of all other intelligent creatures. It is hence unavoidably concluded to be a direct and genuine expression of his choice. If, then, we suppose the Creator to be a malevolent being, he has thus necessitated, beyond a possibility of its being otherwise, his intelligent creatures to hate and despise that which he supremely loves and approves; *viz.* his own moral character: and to esteem and love that which he supremely hates and despises; *viz.* the moral character which is directly opposed to his own. This he has farther necessitated them to do, with the entire and irresistible approbation of their own understanding and conscience; and therefore without any possibility of a future conviction, on their part, that this conduct is wrong in them, or that they are on this account guilty, blame-worthy, and justly punishable. On the contrary, they are furnished with complete conviction, that this conduct is right, praise-worthy, and rewardable; a conviction which can never be removed nor weakened, and which will attend them through every period of their future being. Thus he has, in the most perfect manner, and, at the same time, in the manner most perfectly unaccountable, formed intelligent beings so as effectually to prevent the only end which he could propose in their creation, from ever being accomplished.

4. The Creator has placed mankind either in a state of trial, or a state of reward. but our present state is, on neither of these suppositions, compatible with the doctrine that he is malevolent.

I say, that mankind are placed either in a state of trial, or a state of reward; because rational creatures can exist in no possible situation, except one of these two. If then we are placed in a state of reward, we are beyond measure more happy and less miserable, than is consistent with the character of malevolence in the Creator. No man can say or believe, that the present state of the human race is so unhappy, as to satisfy the desires or accomplish the purposes of infinite malevolence.

If we are in a state of trial, our circumstances are equally inconsistent with the designs of a malevolent disposer. All our opposition to his character and designs is necessarily and perfectly approved by our own consciences; and all our approbation and love towards the opposite characteristics is equally approved by the same umpire. In the meantime, our approbation or adoption of malevolence, or our disesteem and rejection of benevolence, is in the same necessary and perfect manner condemned by our consciences. But these are the only kinds of conduct in which we can possibly be guilty of revolt or disobedience to a malevolent Creator: for these only can we then be tried and condemned by him. Should we, accordingly, be condemned and punished, we shall still necessarily, certainly, and for ever discern, beyond a doubt, that in all that for which we are punished, we acted with entire rectitude. Of course, whatever punishment we receive, we shall still be supported by the entire approbation of our own minds; and shall therefore be far removed from that finished misery, which could not fail to be destined by infinite malevolence for the punishment of its enemies. We should know that our conduct was right and excellent; should dwell upon it with entire satisfaction; and should feel no small support, no contemptible alleviation of our sufferings, in the conviction that our punishment was unmerited and unjust; and that the evil for which we suffered, existed not in ourselves, but in our iniquitous sovereign.

If it can be supposed that such a Being could confer rewards on any of his creatures, it is evident that he must confer them on such as resembled him in their disposition, and approved of his moral character; and for this very resemblance and approbation. But it is perfectly easy to perceive, that the happiness which would constitute their reward, must be embittered by a complete conviction, that the conduct for which they were rewarded, was in itself wrong, vile, and despicable, and they themselves were vile and despicable in loving and practising it; that their happiness is wholly unmerited; and that those who are punished by the same Being, are far more excellent than themselves, and in truth are the only excellent beings. Of course, their happiness must be deeply embittered by a miserable sense of unworthiness, by a perpetual self-condemnation. Such must be the manner in which this supposition exhibits

the conduct of the Creator towards his enemies on the one hand, and towards his friends on the other.

All these considerations are enhanced by the great fact, that God has so constituted the world as to make misery the only legitimate and natural consequence of malevolence, and happiness the only natural consequence of benevolence. In this manner has he irresistibly impressed these truths on the minds of men; exhibited them as practical certainties, visible in all their practical concerns, and thus fixed them beyond removal in the minds of his rational creatures. When we remember that these things were contrived and chosen by an omniscient Being, who of course discerned their real nature and import before he chose them, we cannot but discern that they grow necessarily out of the character of a benevolent Creator, but are utterly inconsistent with the opposite character.

5. The goodness of God displayed in the present world, is a strong argument that he is a benevolent Being.

St Paul observes, that God 'left not himself without witness' to the heathens, 'in that he did good, and gave them rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling their hearts with food and gladness.'* In this passage God himself declares that his goodness to mankind, in the several particulars here recited, is a witness to them of his true character. What the Scriptures here declare, the reason of man has in every age approved. All nations have supposed God to be a good being; and whenever they have employed themselves in accounting for the origin of evil, by attributing it to the agency of superior beings, they have, in no case within my recollection, attributed it to the original or supreme God. Him they have uniformly believed to be a good or benevolent Being.

When we examine the works of creation and providence, we are liable, in pursuing this argument, to a considerable degree of perplexity, arising from the vast multitude and perpetual complication of the things to be examined. To prevent this perplexity, into which men fall very easily, I know of no better method than to lay hold of certain prominent and distinguishing features of these works, from which we may derive correct general apprehensions of their nature, without confounding ourselves by dwelling on particulars. This, after premising that in every part of such an examination we must carefully separate what is done by men, from what is done by God, I shall attempt to accomplish under the following heads:

(1.) God makes mankind the subjects of extensive enjoyment in the present world.

Our health, food, and raiment, are means of enjoyment to us daily, throughout our lives. Our friends and connexions, also, continually and extensively contribute to our happiness. The pleasantness of seasons, the beauty and grandeur of the earth and the heavens, the various kinds of agreeable sounds ever fluctuating on our ears, the immensely various and delightful uses of language, the interchanges of thought and affection, the peace and safety afforded by the institution of government, the power and agreeableness of motion and activity, the benefit and comfort afforded by the arts and sciences, particularly by those of writing, printing, and numbering, and the continual gratification found in employment, are all, in a sense, daily and hourly sources of good to man; all furnished, either directly or indirectly, by the hand of God. If we consider these things with any attention, we shall perceive that some of them are unceasing, and that others of them are so frequently repeated as almost to deserve the same appellation. We shall also perceive that they are blessings of high importance to our well being; and that, notwithstanding this character, they are apt to be forgotten in the list which we form of our blessings, and to be numbered among those which we call things of course. It ought to be remembered, that in this manner we are prone to diminish both the number and the greatness of our blessings, and the goodness of God in bestowing them; and that we are thus apt to regard them with a very erroneous estimation. But if we consider the number and the importance of these and the like blessings, the frequent recurrence of some of them, and the uninterrupted continuance of others; we cannot fail, if influenced by a just and candid spirit, to unite with the psalmist in his earnest wish, 'that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men.'

(2.) God has furnished mankind with many alleviations and many remedies, for the evils which they suffer in the present world.

Of this nature are the innumerable medicines which he has provided for the relief, or the cure of our diseases; fire, for our deliverance from the evils of cold; shade, from those of heat; rest from those of labour; sleep, from those of watching; together with innumerable others, which cannot here be mentioned. I feel myself obliged however to take notice of the attention which God has given to the preservation of life, of health, and of safety, in the warnings which our senses give us of the approach or the existence of injuries, in an innumerable variety of ways; and in the various instinctive efforts by which we are, in a sense involuntarily, either guarded or relieved. Thus, on the one hand, pain warns us of almost all injuries to which our bodies are exposed, or by which they have begun to be affected. On the other, the eye, by its power of contracting the pupil, instinctively exercised, defends itself from the blindness which would otherwise necessarily ensue from the admission of too great a quantity of light. The hands, also, and other members, are instinctively employed to defend us from evils in many cases where contrivance would come too late for our safety. To mention one more example; fear, the most active and sudden of all our passions, is a continual preservative against innumerable evils by which we are threatened. Nor ought I here by any means to omit the self-restoring power of our bodies, so remarkable in recovering us from sickness, in the healing of wounds, and in the renewal of our decayed faculties. These and innumerable other things, of a nature generally similar, are certainly strong proofs of the goodness of God to mankind.

(3.) The original and main design of each particular thing appears plainly to be benevolent.

This is an argument of Dr Paley on the subject of the present Discourse; and it is certainly a sound one. The eye is made to furnish us with the benefit of seeing; the ear, of hearing; and the palate, of tasting. The organs of speech are manifestly intended for the purpose of articulation; the hands and the feet for their well known important uses. The evils to which these

* Acts xiv. 17.

several things are subject, are in the meantime incidental, and not parts of the main design. No anatomist, he observes, ever discovered a system of organization calculated to produce pain and disease. But the character, the disposition of the contriver is, undoubtedly, chiefly seen in the main design of the contrivance; and this is justly observed to be universally benevolent. In the state and circumstances of infants, where this contrivance is complicated with few appendages, we see usually the most pure, unmingled enjoyment; although even here it is not a little alloyed by many mixtures, derived from the agency of man.

(4.) All the blessings experienced by mankind are bestowed on sinful beings.

The subject of moral evil will be further examined under the head of objections against this doctrine. At the present time I am only concerned with the fact, that it exists in the human race. On these guilty beings, then, the blessings of this world are bestowed. It will not be denied, that the communication of good to an evil ungrateful creature is a far higher manifestation of goodness, than the communication of the same good to a virtuous and grateful one. As therefore all the blessings found in the present world are in every instance given to creatures of this evil character; the goodness of God in giving them is enhanced beyond our comprehension. An impartial and contemplative mind, when observing the conduct and marking the character of the human race, cannot but be struck at the sight of such extensive beneficence, communicated unceasingly for so many ages, to beings of such a character. The patience and forbearance of God, particularly, towards such a world as this, are an illustrious proof of his benevolence. Mankind rebel against his government; accuse him of weakness, injustice, and cruelty; murmur against his dispensations, profane and blaspheme his name, refuse to him the only regard which they can render him, namely, reverence, love, and obedience; and pay this regard to men and beasts, reptiles and stocks. In the meantime they deceive, defraud, pollute, hate, oppress, and murder each other; and make it a great part of their whole employment to carry violence, death, and devastation through the world. All these have also been their employment and their character, ever since the apostasy; a character, perfectly understood and comprehended by God. Still he has patiently waited on them six thousand years, has forborne to execute the vengeance which this evil conduct has universally merited; has returned day and night, summer and winter, seed-time and harvest, to this polluted world; and has given its inhabitants, unceasingly, 'rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling their hearts with food and gladness.' Can our minds conceive of a character, at once wise and just, and at the same time fraught with higher benevolence!

II. *I shall now attempt to answer the objections usually made to this doctrine.*

These are all reducible to two—(1.) The existence of moral evil; and, (2.) The existence of natural evil.

1. On the existence of moral evil, I observe,

(1.) That God cannot be proved to be the efficient cause of sin.

It is, I think, dictated by reason, as well as revelation, that 'no man may say, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: but every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then, when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin when it is finished, bringeth forth death.'

It will not be disputed that we ought not to admit the doctrine, that God is the efficient cause of sin, until it is proved. Until this is done, therefore, man is unquestionably to be acknowledged as the cause of his own sin.

(2.) It cannot be proved that God was obliged, either by justice or benevolence, to prevent sin from existing.

A state of trial supposes a liability to sin; and it cannot be proved that it is inconsistent with justice or benevolence, for God to place his rational creatures in a state of trial. The benevolence of God in this case is to be estimated by a clear and complete comprehension of all the ends which he has in view; and of the nature, fitness, or unfitness, of all the means to those ends. But of such a comprehension we are not possessed; and therefore are certainly unable to discern, that it is inconsistent with perfect benevolence to place us in such a state. If we are to be rewarded, it would seem necessary, as well as proper, that we should be tried; because our own conduct is the only thing for which we can be rewarded. That benevolence may propose such a trial, in order to such a reward, appears to be the natural and universal dictate of reason.

All that justice seems to require in this case is, that more and higher motives to obedience, than to disobedience, should be presented to the mind of the probationer. This in the present case is certainly and invariably the fact.

(3.) It cannot be proved that the existence of sin will in the end be a detriment to the universe.

Until we know what will be both the progress and the end, we certainly can never prove this proposition, because the means of proof lie beyond our reach. All moral beings are governed by motives only. What motives will upon the whole produce the greatest good, united with the least evil, to the intelligent kingdom; and how far the fall and punishment of some moral beings may, in the nature of the case, be indispensably necessary to the persevering obedience of the great body, cannot be determined by us. But until this is done, and indeed many other things of great moment to the question, it can never be proved that the existence of moral evil is injurious to the universe, or the permission of it inconsistent with the most perfect goodwill on the part of God.

At the same time, I acknowledge myself utterly unable, and my complete conviction that all other men are unable, to explain this subject so as to give to an inquirer clear and satisfactory views, by the light of reason, of the propriety of permitting the introduction of moral evil into the intelligent system.

The only object which I have in view, or which is necessary to my present purpose, is to show, what I persuade myself I have shown, that no proof can be drawn from this source against this attribute in the Creator.

2. The existence of natural evil is also objected against the benevolence of God.

On this subject I observe,

(1.) That in considering this objection, we are bound to separate carefully the evils which are caused by God, from those which are produced by men.

Were this separation accurately made, we should all be astonished to see how small would be the number of

evils of which God is the proper author. Were we to consider attentively the multitude of sufferings brought upon mankind by the evil disposition of themselves and their fellow men, either mediately or immediately, the mass would rise so much higher than our expectations, as to disappoint every preconception which we had formed on this subject. Even in those cases in which we acknowledge the infliction to be derived from our Maker, we should be astonished to see how great a proportion of our sufferings is produced by ourselves, or by our fellow creatures. We suffer greatly from poverty. How large a part of human poverty is created by sloth, profusion, intemperance, rashness, fraud, falsehood, contention, oppression, and war. We suffer greatly from disease. What a vast proportion of the diseases in this world owe their origin to indolence, imprudence, intemperance, passion, and other causes merely human. The same observations are applicable to many other things of the same general nature. In truth, men in almost all cases either originate or increase the evils suffered in the present life.

(2.) The evils inflicted by God are always less than the subjects of them merit by their sins.

A strictly just being is a benevolent being. Certainly then he who inflicts less than justice will warrant, or than the criminal deserves, is benevolent. If the general position therefore be true, it is perfectly evident that the very evils which are here alleged as proofs that God is not benevolent, are unanswerable proofs that he is. But no sober man will for a moment pretend that the evils which himself suffers, are greater than he deserves. Every such man will acknowledge readily, that he suffers much less than he merits. Of course, the aggregate of human sufferings is less than is merited by the aggregate of human guilt.

It will perhaps be here replied, that these sufferings fall as heavily upon the best men as upon the worst, and that they experience greater evils than they have deserved. If this should indeed be said and believed, it can only spring from gross inattention to the subject, and gross ignorance of the demerit of sin: an inattention and ignorance, it must be acknowledged, most unhappily common among men. The doubt, if it exist, may be easily removed. Go to as many such men as you please, and every one of them will inform you, that his own sufferings are much less than he is conscious of having deserved. In truth, good men never call this fact in question; but find themselves sufficiently employed in lamenting, on the one hand, their own guilt, and in thankfully admiring, on the other, the forbearance of God.

But it will be farther said, that infants, also, are subjected to sufferings, and that beyond any desert which can be imputed to them. The situation of infants, and the dispensations of providence towards them, I acknowledge to be in many respects mysterious, to a degree beyond my ability satisfactorily to explain. But I utterly question the ability of any objector to show, that they suffer more than they deserve. We can never know the moral state of a mind which possesses no means of communication with our minds, sufficient to explain that state to us. Yet it is with the highest probability argued from reason, since every infant which advances to the state of childhood proves himself to be a sinful being, that infants, if moral beings at all, are also sinful beings in their infancy. The contrary conclusion no objector can maintain. The objection therefore fails entirely of proof.

Besides, it is reasonably argued, that the same God who never afflicts adults, whose case we can understand, beyond their deserts, does not afflict infants, whose case we cannot understand, beyond their deserts; and that, as there are plain proofs of benevolence in the former case, so it is justly to be presumed in the latter. This analogical argument is the more forcible, because no reason can be imagined, why even a malevolent being should take any peculiar pleasure in afflicting infants.

(3.) These evils are necessary parts of a benevolent system of dispensations towards a sinful world.

That in such a world it is absolutely necessary to check iniquity in its progress, and prevent it from accomplishing those miseries which it is its universal tendency to accomplish, if unrestrained, must be granted by all men, if the existence of the world is to be continued. For plainly, this world, without restraints of this nature, would in a little while come to an end. The weak would become a prey to the strong, the simple to the cunning, the quiet to the violent, and all men to the sloth and indulgence, to the passions and mischiefs, of themselves or each other. So far then as the natural evils of this world are necessary to restrain the wickedness of man, they are proofs of benevolence on the part of God. But the proof that there are no more such evils, than are necessary for this purpose, is complete; because the wickedness is not more than sufficiently restrained. On the contrary, how often is each man conscious of believing, that still greater restraints are necessary to keep evil men within due bounds; and of wishing and praying that God would make bare his arm for the further hindrance of evil designs, and the more extensive protection of the distressed from the injustice of their oppressors.

The afflictions of this world are also plainly benevolent in their intentional and actual influence on those who suffer. No means have, probably, a more frequent or efficacious influence in reforming wicked men, than afflictions. Prosperity, which one would expect to see draw them to obedience, as a cord of love, not only fails of this effect, but appears usually to harden their hearts in sin and security, and to terminate in a total alienation of their minds from all virtuous regard to God, or to mankind. 'Fullness of bread' was one of the great sources of corruption to Sodom and Gomorrah. 'When Jeshurun waxed fat, he forgot the God that made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation.' Thus both nations and individuals have commonly acted in circumstances of high prosperity. The pride and insolence of wealth, office, power, and conquest is, as you well know, proverbial phraseology; an unanswerable proof, that pride and insolence are the standing effects of prosperity. The more we possess of worldly enjoyments, although our happiness is often diminished, the stronger do our attachments to the world become, and the weaker our disposition to think of our duty. Afflictions only seem to break down this attachment, and to awaken the attention of the soul to virtue and to God. Even the security of life itself, as has been proved in the case of the antediluvians (the length of whose lives is attested by both scriptural and profane history), can become of course a most powerful mean of emboldening men to sin, and involving them in misery: and death, at the comparatively

untimely period of seventy years, has been a most important blessing to mankind. Were men again to live a thousand years, the same violence, corruption, and wretchedness, which preceded the deluge, would again overwhelm the globe.

Nor do good men stand in a less absolute need of afflictions. The same tendencies to negligence of God and their duty, although weakened, exist still in their minds also. 'Before I was afflicted,' says the psalmist, 'I went astray; but now have I kept thy word.' The mind of every good man will echo this declaration. Riches, honours, and pleasures, are all eminently seductive, and allure the heart insensibly after them. Afflictions teach us how vain they are, how deceitful, and how dangerous; pluck us by the arm in our downward course, and conduct us back to safety and peace. In both of these views, also, afflictions are plainly eminent blessings; and in this manner it is satisfactorily evinced, that 'God doth not willingly afflict, nor grieve the children of men.'

All the observations which I have hitherto made under this head, have been intended to respect only those evils, of which in the proper sense God is the author. They are however to an extensive degree applicable to those produced by men. These, intended by men for evil, are very often by God converted into means of good; who thus glorifies himself by bringing good out of the evil, designed by his creatures.

It ought here to be added, that every human account agrees with the Scriptures in asserting, that the world, as it came from the hands of God, was only beautiful and delightful; and that man was created upon it in a state of perfect holiness and felicity; that man apostatized from this state of perfection, and became sinful and odious to his Maker; that in process of time all his descendents, one family excepted, became wholly corrupt, abandoned their duty, perpetrated every iniquity, dishonoured God, and destroyed each other; that a deluge was at length brought on the earth, to lay waste both the world and its polluted inhabitants; and that in consequence of this event, the earth itself was rendered comparatively a barren and uncomfortable habitation, and its inhabitants afflicted with many evils from the hand of God, which were before unknown. The history of these events in the Scriptures, which I here consider merely as a history, and not as a revelation, is supported by such high internal evidence, by so uniformly concurrent a tradition, by so many facts in the general history of mankind, and by so many and so powerful proofs, found on the surface and in the bowels of the earth; that it cannot fail to be admitted as true, by every candid mind. Hence therefore it is unavoidably concluded, that the evils inflicted by God had no existence before the apostasy of man; and are only intended either to check or to punish iniquity and rebellion. In this view they cannot evince the least want of benevolence on the part of God, but exhibit him as wise, just, and good.

From these considerations it is, I think, clearly evident, that the objections specified, furnish no solid argument against the benevolence of the Creator; and as these involve all the objections hitherto alleged by mankind, it is evident that the direct arguments on this subject remain in their full force.

The chief difficulty attending this subject, lies in the uncertainty in which the future existence of the soul is seen by the light of nature. As the end of all things exists beyond the grave, and as the twilight of reason feebly illuminates all objects which lie beyond that limit, and exhibits them dimly and doubtfully; the mind cannot fail, in taking a prospect of them, to feel unsatisfied with such uncertainty concerning things so important, and yet so imperfectly known. The whole force of the arguments on this subject is, in my view, in favour of the soul's immortality. These arguments are also of no inconsiderable strength. From this source then, the objector against the benevolence of God will find himself weakened, and his antagonist strengthened; for if a future existence be admitted, all which seems irregular, improper, or mysterious, may plainly and easily be rendered proper, even to the view of creatures, by means of the relation which things in this world may then be seen to have to those which are future and eternal.

Such is the view of the benevolence of God, presented to my mind by the works of creation and providence. I will not say that the arguments amount to a demonstration, in the strict, logical sense; but they furnish the most solid foundation for a rational and immovable confidence. Indeed, the moral character of intelligent beings, particularly of virtuous beings, and peculiarly that of God, is susceptible of evidence from experience only. We consider such beings as good, because they say and do that which is good; and we are incapable of seeing that it is impossible for them to say and do that which is evil. Spirits are in their nature incapable of being immediately discerned, except by the infinite Spirit, whose prerogative it is alone to search the heart, and try the reins. But when such beings do good only and uniformly, they are concluded to be good on such firm and rational grounds as can never be shaken. Nor is this want of intuitive or demostrative certainty, any disadvantage to intelligent creatures. Intuitive or demonstrative certainty concerning the moral character of God might exist in every supposable case, without any useful influence on the heart or on the life. Nor would he, who, in the possession of high probable evidence, that God is a benevolent Being, demanded a demonstration of this truth before he would yield his heart to his Maker, be at all more inclined to yield it when he arrived at the demonstration. Confidence, on the contrary, is always a virtuous state of mind; being invariably a cordial assent to that truth which is its object. Confidence in the moral character of God is a virtuous emotion, capable of reaching to any degree of excellence predicable of rational creatures; and being founded on evidence which, like a converging series, will rise higher and higher for ever, it will increase eternally in strength and excellence; and will, more and more intimately, in an unceasing progress, unite the hearts of all moral beings to their glorious and perfect Creator.

SERMON IX.

BENEVOLENCE OF GOD AS EXHIBITED BY REVELATION.

For God is love.—1 John iv. 8.

In my last Discourse, I proposed from these words to consider the benevolence of God, as exhibited to us in the first place, by reason; and secondly, by revelation.

Under the former of these heads, I proposed several direct arguments in support of the doctrine, that God is benevolent; and also examined the objections usually alleged against it.

I shall now consider the exhibition of this doctrine, furnished by revelation.

On this subject I observe generally, that in my own view, the arguments in support of this doctrine contained in the Scriptures, may be completely satisfactory, notwithstanding the apprehension usually entertained, that the character of God must be proved, antecedently to the admission of all arguments professedly derived from a revelation supposed to be given by him. The revelation itself may, for aught that appears, be so formed as to become an indubitable proof of his existence, and of any or all of his attributes. The revelation itself is an effect; and from its nature, the nature of the cause which gave it existence may be as satisfactorily argued as from any other effect. In other words, it may be such an effect as to prove the cause divine. Still more obviously may this be the case, when the revelation in question is such a comment on the works of creation and providence as to explain such mysteries existing in them, and remove such difficulties, as before prevented us from a correct judgment concerning their nature and tendency. A text may be very difficult to be understood, and may yet by an ingenious and just comment be rendered perfectly plain, even to a moderate understanding. The Scriptures, therefore, which are an extensive and explicit commentary on the works of creation and providence, may so exhibit their nature to us, even if we should suppose them incapable of exhibiting the same doctrine in a convincing manner by themselves only, as to prove unanswerably, when considered in this light, the benevolence of God.

The manner in which revelation exhibits the divine benevolence, is the following.

1. God directly asserts his character to be benevolent.

The text is the strongest conceivable example of this assertion. 'Thou art good,' says David, 'and thou doest good; and thy tender mercies are over all thy works.' 'There is none good but one,' saith Christ, 'that is, God.'

2. He recites a great variety of specimens of his goodness to individuals and nations, and exhibits them as being unquestionably acts of benevolence only.

It will be unnecessary for me here to mention particularly, the providential dispensations of God to his church or to individuals, in order to exhibit this argument in its proper light. The history is sufficiently known to those who hear me, to convince them that a great multitude of dispensations to the patriarchs, Jews, and Christians, fairly and only sustain this character. These dispensations are not only related to us, but are explained, as to their cause, nature, and design, so as to show beyond a doubt their benevolent nature. At the same time, he has taught us all along, that his blessings in every instance were intended as testimonies on his part, to the excellency of the same character wherever it was found in men. The whole history therefore is made up of exhibitions of his own benevolence, his approbation of this character, and his hatred of the opposite one, in his creatures.

3. He explains the whole system of his dispensations, in those instances not recorded in the Scriptures, in the same manner.

This he does by unfolding to us his designs at large in formal declarations concerning this subject. These declarations contain what may be called the general science of his providence; and teach, that men, as sinful beings, are righteously afflicted by him for their iniquities; that afflictions exist for no other cause but to punish or restrain the rebellion of mankind, or to bring them to repentance and reformation; that, on the other hand, he rewards always, and with the greatest delight, every virtuous being, and every benevolent action.

In this manner he explains this part of his providence, which is indeed the sum and substance of it, and diffuses a general illumination over a multitude of things, which to beings infantine and ignorant as we are, must otherwise be mysterious and perplexing.

4. He exhibits to us sin as far more vile, and deserving of far more punishment; and virtue, or benevolence, as far more excellent and meritorious, than our reason would otherwise have enabled us to conceive.

In the Scriptures we are taught in the clearest manner, that sin is a universal opposition to God, and a universal hostility to his benevolent designs; and that it is universally mischievous to the well-being of the sinner himself, and of his fellow creatures. Thus we learn that it is a direct war upon the Creator and his creatures, a malignant contention against all that is good, and the voluntary source of all that is evil. Virtue or benevolence is, on the other hand, exhibited as a voluntary coincidence with God in all the designs which his own loving-kindness has proposed; a delight in his perfect character and supreme blessedness, and a cheerful promotion of the good of the universe; unspeakably amiable and delightful in itself, and boundlessly productive of happiness to others. With these views we cease to wonder that men are afflicted in this world, and are surprised only to see them no more afflicted.

5. He exhibits to us that he is kind, not only to such beings as are virtuous, but to such also as are sinners; and that this kindness in its extent and consequences is infinite.

In the Scriptures we are informed, that, notwithstanding the rebellions of mankind, God is still disposed to regard them with kindness; and that to such a degree, as to proffer to them the forgiveness of their sins, and a restoration of their minds to the character and privileges from which they have fallen. To this end, as we are farther taught, he has sent his only-begotten Son into this world, to die in our stead; and has promised, that 'whosoever believeth on him shall not perish, but have everlasting life.' In consequence of his mediation, God has also sent into the world his Holy Spirit, to sanctify our souls, to purify our lives, to aid all our virtuous endeavours, and to conduct us in safety to the kingdom of the blessed. In this manner he has proved to us his mercy, the consummation and glory of infinite good-will. When all the circumstances of this wonderful scheme of dispensations are duly considered, even in such a manner as that in which we are able to consider them, we are forced to acknowledge, that no manifestation of benevolence within our comprehension can be compared to this; and to accord with the views which angels formed of it, and which they expressed in their divine hymn at the birth of the Redeemer; 'Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, and good-will towards men.'

6. In the law which he has given to mankind for the regulation of all their moral conduct, he has required no other obedience, except their love to himself and to each other.

This law, which was formed by him according to his own pleasure, is undoubtedly a perfect expression of that pleasure. But love is the only object of its requisitions. Towards him it is required to be supreme; towards other intelligent beings, sincere and universal. Of course, as he has made love the only object of that law by which he governs his moral creatures, it is undoubtedly the object in which he supremely delights; and by necessary inference is his own moral character.

This truth is the more strongly impressed, when we remember, that the law regards nothing else as excellent, praise-worthy, or rewardable. He himself informs us, that 'love is the fulfilling of the law.' This then is the only thing which it requires, and therefore the only thing which it esteems excellent or desirable. In all the various exercises of duty towards God, or towards our fellow creatures, in whatever form they appear, or by whatever name they are called, there is no other real principle or performance of duty beside love. It is hence made the spring and directory of all our conduct towards friends and enemies, towards strangers, and neighbours, towards those who can requite us and those who cannot. No being capable of happiness, is above or beneath the reception of its benefits: and every moral being is under immovable obligations to exercise it. Thus it is made by the law of God the foundation and the sum of all good, natural and moral; of moral good, as being the amount of all our duty; and of natural good, as in this way the means of all our blessings.

Still more strongly is this truth impressed by the sanctions of this law. By it nothing, except love, is rewarded, and nothing, except the opposite character, punished. The reward is no less than endless life, the punishment no less than endless death. In these sanctions, God expresses in the strongest manner his supreme delight in benevolence, and his supreme detestation of its opposite. How forcible a proof is all this, that his own character is infinitely benevolent.

7. God requires the whole regard which he claims, to be rendered to him only as a benevolent God.

In the Scriptures we are required to love, worship, and serve, that is, to exhibit our love in different forms to a God of love, and to such a God only. Whatever being God is, he undoubtedly loves his own character, and must of course choose that this should be to creatures the object of their approbation and love. No other conduct is, I apprehend, consistent with the intelligent nature. But in the Scriptures he has not required us to approve, admire, or love himself, in any other character, except as a benevolent God. If this then be not his real character, he has not required us to love, admire, or approve his true character at all, but another which does not belong to him. Of course, he has not, according to this supposition, required us to render this regard to himself, but to an imaginary god, an object diverse from himself in every moral characteristic. All, therefore, which he has done to enjoin, and to procure the veneration, love, and obedience of his creatures; the pomp of miracles, the series of revelations; the humiliation, life, and death, the resurrection, ascension, and intercession of Christ; the labours of the Spirit of grace, the establishment and support of his church in the world: have all been accomplished, merely to gain our homage and service to a fictitious god, and not to himself, the true and only Jehovah. To the same end have been directed also his law, with its promises and threatenings, and his whole system of providence, with its long train of judgments and mercies. According to this scheme, God is exhibited as having laboured from the beginning for a being which has no existence, except in fancy; a mere nihility; and therefore as labouring without an end. According to this scheme, therefore, all the wonderful works, both of creation and providence, have been accomplished for no end; and notwithstanding their amazing magnificence, are no other than a solemn farce, which he has informed us shall endure for ever. According to this scheme, God has been employed from the beginning, in inducing mankind, by a series of most wonderful works, to assume the most excellent of all characters, and the only really excellent character, for no conceivable end; and in this employment has, without any reason, exhibited a perpetual succession of mere deceit and illusion. Necessity of deceit cannot exist with God, because, without it, he can with infinite ease accomplish whatever he chooses. It must then, if existing at all, exist without cause or motive. He who can believe this, can believe any thing. But no man who understands what he believes, can seriously adopt so gross an absurdity.

8. God has informed us in the Scriptures, that there is beyond the grave an immortal state of retribution, in which, whatever seems irregular in the present state, will be adjusted according to the most exact dictates of benevolence and equity.

At the final judgment, we are taught in the Scriptures, mankind will be universally tried by those rules of duty which have already been recited, according to the means of knowing them which God has placed in their power. Those who are possessed of the revealed law, 'will be judged by the law;' and those who are not, 'will be judged without the law.' In other words,

'every man will be judged according to his works.' At this time the whole state of mankind will be settled agreeably to the most consummate benevolence. Such as in this world have loved God and each other, will then, through the righteousness of Christ, be acquitted of all their former transgressions; delivered from the punishment which they had merited, and rewarded with everlasting life in the kingdom of glory. Those who have not performed this duty, will be consigned to 'blackness of darkness for ever.' In this great transaction, and its consequences, 'the mystery' of the present world 'will be finished:' the dispensations of God, both to the righteous and the wicked, exhibited as perfectly accordant with infinite benevolence; and the difficulties, which to the eye of reason attend them here, explained in such a manner as to stop every mouth and remove every objection.

By these several arguments the benevolence of God is, I think, completely evinced in the Scriptures.

REMARKS.

From the considerations which have been suggested in this Discourse, connected with those which have preceded it, I observe,

1. That the benevolence of God is strictly infinite.

In the Divine Mind every attribute is necessarily co-extended with the greatness of that mind. The benevolence of God is as truly thus extensive, as his knowledge or his power. To his love of happiness existing, to his desire of happiness as a thing to be produced, no limit can be affixed. Intense and glowing beyond degree, although perfectly serene and complacent, it furnishes the most solid foundation for the truth of that remarkable declaration in the text; 'God is love;' or, infinite love is the infinite God.

It is equally evident, that the benevolence of God is immutable and eternal. This divine attribute is, like omniscience and omnipotence, plainly incapable of addition or diminution. How can it be increased? By whom or what can it be lessened? What can put an end to its existence? All these questions convey their own answer.

2. The benevolence of God cannot but be ever active.

Epicurus, and after him no small multitude of succeeding philosophers, have adopted the opinion, 'that God is either absolutely, or in a great degree quiescent, or inactive;' at least so far as a great part of what we have been accustomed to call his providence is concerned. Some of these philosophers have denied the providence of God absolutely. Others have denied a particular providence. But all to whom I refer have attributed some degree of inactivity to the Creator. Their opinion seems generally to have been, 'that after he had ended the work of creating the universe, and set it in motion, he left it to take care of itself, and found his own enjoyment in something which demanded no active exertion on his part. Epicurus himself taught that the gods, whose existence he admitted, resided at a great distance from created beings, in some unknown happy region; where they passed their immortal life in a state of absolute quiet, and pleasurable enjoyment, without feeling any interest in the affairs of mortals, or exercising any government or providence over them.'

This opinion, in substance, but with several modifications, has been adopted by no small number of philosophers down to the present time. They indeed admit the existence of one God only; he acknowledged many; they suppose God to be separated from human affairs only by a voluntary inattention to them; he, by local distance also. The most specious foundation for this doctrine is the supposition 'that God, being infinitely perfect, and therefore infinitely happy in himself, can have no inducement to attend to the concerns of his creatures, since no such attention can at all add to his happiness.' This supposition is plainly and wholly erroneous, although the terms in which I have expressed it, the same in which it is usually expressed, seem to convey an unquestionable truth. It is true that God is infinitely perfect, and therefore infinitely happy; and equally true, of course, that no addition can be made to his happiness. It is also true, that this happiness exists in himself in a manner perfectly independent; but it is not true, that God would be, or would ever have been, thus perfectly happy, had he not made the universe; or were he not to conduct it to the purpose for which it was made. Benevolence, like gold, finds its chief value in its use. It is, in the nature of the case, 'more blessed to give than to receive,' or to be in any other employment or situation.

The happiness of God is perfectly independent, because he is able to devise and execute whatever he pleases; and thus to accomplish boundless glory to himself, and boundless good to his creatures, dictated by his benevolence, and comprehended by his omniscience. There is nothing in the nature of the case which furnishes a shadow of evidence, that the happiness of God is, or can be, independent of his own active exertions. As these exertions can be all made with infinite ease, with perfect rectitude, and with absolute certainty of success, it is impossible that they should not accord with the most complete independence. Benevolence is the love of happiness, and the desire of its existence, wherever it does not already exist. Should this happiness thus desired, fail to exist, the frustration of the desire must be a prevention or annihilation of the enjoyment which was found in the contemplation of its existence, or which the fulfilment of it would have produced. If then God desired the existence of happiness in other beings, or, in other words, if God was benevolent (for these phrases mean exactly the same thing); we cannot but see that it was impossible, in the moral sense, for him to fail of producing it; and that if he had not produced it, his happiness must have been diminished. The very nature of the disposition therefore proves this doctrine to be false, and the conduct which it asserts of God to be impossible.

With equal evidence it is proved to be false by facts. If the doctrine were true, it would furnish unanswerable proof that God would never have created the universe. He was just as happy in the contemplation of his own perfections, antecedently to the creation, as at the present time; and according to this doctrine, could have had no inducement to create, any more than at the present time to superintend. The existence of things could be no more necessary to his happiness than the government of them. But he has created them, and has thus proved that he took pleasure in their existence. Of course, his happiness partly consisted in the fact, that they existed; and would have been lessened, so far as

this part extended, if they had not been brought into existence. But the universe, and every thing which it contains, was created for some end; that is, it was created for the purpose of bringing into existence, the happiness which the conscious beings contained in it were intended to enjoy, and for the pleasure which God experienced in producing this happiness. This truth will not be denied, unless for the sake of denying it; since the contrary supposition would impute to the Creator the most absolute folly, and would therefore be a palpable blasphemy. Nor will it be any more denied, that the superintendency of God over all things is absolutely necessary, every moment, in every place, and to every being, in order to the accomplishment of this end; all other agency beside his, being infinitely inadequate to this purpose. This happiness, being eternal, is an object infinitely great and desirable; and was of course, infinitely desired by God. An infinite inducement therefore, continually exists, to the continual and universal agency of God in the government of all things.

I know of but one seeming objection to this doctrine. It is this: that, if the happiness of God in any degree consists either in beholding or producing the happiness of his creatures, then it will seem to follow, that he was less happy antecedently to the creation, than at the present or any future period. This conclusion will however vanish, if we call to mind that all duration is present to God, and that his manner of existing excludes all possible application to him of past and future. Whatever was or will be, with respect to creatures, is only and alike present to him. His happiness therefore is 'the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.'

Epicurus, who denied a creation, was undoubtedly more consistent with himself than modern philosophers, who admit this event, and yet deny the providence of God. If God had not thought proper to create the universe, it might with some show of reason be concluded, that he would not find any interest in governing it; but if he created it, as the philosophers in question in many instances acknowledge, it is unanswerably certain, that he will unceasingly conduct it by his providence to the purpose for which it was created.

This consideration is infinitely glorious to God. The divine disposition here exhibited is infinitely unlike the boasted benevolence of modern philosophy, which is wholly confined to the mere contemplation of happiness as a beautiful picture, or to the impassioned exhibition of good-will in sighs and tears, and pathetic expressions; useless to the subjects of it, and fruitless towards its objects; or is spent in mere unavailing wishes, in themselves wholly devoid of efficacy or worth. This divine disposition is the boundless energy of the infinite mind, the intense and immeasurable love of doing good unceasingly, and endlessly producing that happiness in which it delights. It creates with an activity never wearied and never discouraged, means to this glorious end, without number and beyond degree, fitted with a diversity incomprehensible, to effectuate in the most perfect manner this eminently divine purpose. It is a tree, which, planted in this distant world, reaches the highest heaven; adorned with branches endless in their multitude, covered with leaves and blossoms of supernal beauty, and loaded with fruits of life and happiness countless in their number, unceasing in their succession, and eternal in their progress; while all the innumerable millions of percipient beings approach, and eat, and live.

3. The benevolence of God is his whole moral character.

We commonly, and I think in most cases necessarily, speak of the moral character of God as composed of many separate attributes; of goodness, bounty, mercy, truth, justice, faithfulness, and patience. In the same manner also the Scriptures unfold his moral character. In this they have accorded with that mode of thinking which is natural to us, and in which we usually think more clearly and advantageously, than in any other. The exercises of benevolence are so numerous and so diversified as to need, if we would consider them clearly and usefully, to be arranged in different classes, denoted by different names, and separately contemplated by our minds. Still, it is also useful to remember what the Scriptures have taught us in the text, that the whole moral character of God is love, endlessly diversified in its operations and manifestations, but simple and indivisible in its nature; an intense and eternal flame of uncompounded good-will.

How glorious a character is here presented to us of the great Ruler of all things! Nothing less than infinite and unmingled benevolence could qualify him for the great work of replenishing his vast kingdom with unceasing and eternal good. All good-will inferior to this must, it would seem, be wearied, discouraged, influenced to change its views by rebellion and provocation, and thus inclined to vary its original and best designs, and to fall short of the perfect objects which it began to accomplish. But the love of God, evidently without limits, is equally 'without variableness, or shadow of turning.' Hence, 'every good gift, and every perfect gift,' flows from it unceasingly, and will flow for ever.

In this view of his character, how infinitely distant is Jehovah from all the gods of the heathen! These imaginary beings were not only imperfect, but were debased by every human weakness, and deformed by every human passion; possessed of no fixed character or purpose, contentious among themselves, revengeful towards mankind, flattered into good humour again by their services, wearied by their own labours, and invigorated anew only by food, sleep, or pastime.

I cannot but add, how different a Saviour must he be, whose mind is informed with this boundless love, united with its concomitant perfections, from the Saviour presented to us by Socinianism and its kindred systems! Christ, as exhibited to us by these systems, is a created, and therefore an imperfect and mutable being. When Stephen was expiring he committed his soul finally, with all its interests, into the hands of the Lord Jesus. All his faithful followers, at the close of their lives, adopt the same conduct. How desirable must it be, at so solemn a period, when our all is depending, to realize, that he on whom we depend is possessed of love great enough to comprehend even us, and to be incapable of weariness, alienation, or change; love, in a word, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. How desirable must it be to find him, in whom we are required to repose confidence as the condition of inheriting eternal life, able, willing, and faithful, to bestow on us all that is meant by this divine reward.

4. The perfect benevolence of God must, it is evident, delight in greater good, more than that which is less, and most in that which is supreme.

That the omniscience of God cannot but discern all the differences of good, and distinguish with complete accuracy and in all cases the greater from the less, and that which is on the whole most desirable, from that which is not, will be admitted of course. That perfect benevolence must choose this, in preference to any other, is, unless I am deceived, equally evident. Indeed I can conceive of no possibility that benevolence can, in any being, prefer a smaller degree of what he thinks good to a greater. Much less can this be attributable to God. As he knows perfectly what is really good, so on this only must his desire or delight be fixed, and with the more intenseness in proportion to the greatness of the degree in which it does or may exist.

Should it be said, that there may be two or more systems of good, equally perfect and desirable; I am not disposed to contend with him by whom it is said. Those who say it, ought however to remember, that it is said gratuitously, there being no evidence by which the assertion can be supported. But should it be granted, it will not at all affect the doctrine under consideration. These two or more systems are by the supposition equally good; and therefore, as an object of contemplation or adoption, neither is in any degree preferable to the other. That then which has been actually adopted, has by this fact become preferable. In all other respects it was equally desirable; and as it has been actually commenced, it is more desirable that it should be continued, than that it should be given up for the sake of adopting that which was only equal to it; because in that case, all that has been already done must have been done in vain; conduct which, I need not say, would be unbecoming the divine character, and for this reason at least, wholly undesirable. The present system, or the system actually adopted by God is therefore, to say the least, now the best and most perfect system of good.

The same reasoning will equally prove, that the means which he has employed for the accomplishment of this great end, are also the best and most proper means which could be chosen; and of course, that the whole work of creation and providence, composed of the means and the end, is a perfect work, entirely suited to his character.

5. It is evident that God, who is thus benevolent, must love the same disposition in his creatures, and hate the opposite one, unchangeably and for ever.

That God delights with infinite complacency in his own moral character, cannot be questioned. Benevolence in his intelligent creatures is a direct resemblance of this character, his own image instamped on created minds; and cannot fail therefore to be an object of the same complacency, wherever it exists. He loves also his own purposes. Of course, he must love this disposition in his creatures; because all those in whom it exists, love the same purposes, and voluntarily coincide with him in their endeavours to promote them.

On the contrary, that disposition in his creatures which is opposite to his own, is in itself odious in proportion as his is amiable; and voluntarily endeavours to oppose and to frustrate his purposes; that is, to diminish or destroy the boundless good which he has begun to accomplish. It is not here intended, that so vast a scheme of thought or action, usually enters into the minds of sinful creatures; but that this is the real tendency of all their opposition to his law and government. In this view, the rebellion of sinners assumes a most odious and dreadful aspect; and is here seen to be a direct hostility against the benevolent character and designs of God, and against the well-being of his intelligent creation.

When therefore he shall come to 'judge the world in righteousness,' and to render to them such rewards as are suited to their characters; it is plain that he will approve of those, and those only, who resemble him by being benevolent; and disapprove of those who have cherished the contrary disposition. The former he will bless, or make happy; the latter he will punish, or make miserable. His approbation at the final judgment, is no other than a testimony of the pleasure which he takes, in the moral character of those who are approved; and his disapprobation, a similar testimony of the displeasure which he feels, towards those who are condemned. Of this pleasure and displeasure, his rewards and punishments are only proofs of a still higher kind, all founded on the moral character of the respective beings who are judged and rewarded. How odious, how undesirable, then, is that disposition in us, which God, by the dictates of his infinite benevolence, is in a sense compelled thus to hate and punish, because it is a voluntary opposition of his own perfect character, and a fixed enmity to the well-being of his creatures! How lovely and desirable, on the contrary, is that disposition which he thus loves, and will thus reward, because it is a resemblance of his own beauty and excellence, a cheerful accordance with all his perfect designs, and universal good-will to his intelligent kingdom!

SERMON X.

ATTRIBUTES OF GOD.—THE JUSTICE OF GOD.

Just and right is he.—Deut. xxxii. 4.

The end for which the Song, of which this verse is a part, was written, is expressed in the preceding chapter, verse 19, in these words: 'Now therefore write ye this song for you, and teach it to the children of

Israel: put it in their mouths, that this song may be a witness for me against the children of Israel.'

To this end it is perfectly suited. It is a general testimony of the perfection of God, and of his peculiar kindness to that people. As it strongly and unanswerably exhibits the righteousness and goodness of God in all his dealings with them; so, in the same evident and forcible manner, it manifests their ingratitude and unreasonableness in rebelling against him. These it presents in the most affecting light; because it shows that God clearly foreknew all their transgressions, and with this foreknowledge, still performed for them all these blessings.

At the same time it forewarned them of their sin and danger, and urged on them the strongest motives to obedience. This timely testimony was itself a most convincing and affecting proof of his goodness, and left them without excuse.

The text is a general ascription of supreme excellence and glory to God, in his nature, agency, and works. 'I will publish the name of the Lord, Jehovah,' saith Moses, in the preceding verse; 'ascribe ye greatness unto our God.'

This name, or character, is published in the verse which contains the text. 'He is the Rock; his work is perfect, for all his ways are judgment; a God of truth, and without iniquity; just and right is he.' That is, God is 'the Rock,' or foundation, on which the universe stands. 'His work,' the great work of building and governing the universe, 'is perfect,' without imperfection, error, or fault; comprising all things which it ought, and nothing which it ought not to comprise. The reason of this perfection is, that 'all his ways are judgment;' that is, are a perfect compound of wisdom, righteousness, and goodness. 'Just and right,' may signify the same thing; or, as is often the meaning of 'right,' so here it may naturally denote, the perfection of God generally considered.

DOCTRINE.

God is a Being of perfect justice.

Before I enter upon the proof of this doctrine, it will be necessary to examine the different meanings of this term; as, like most other abstract terms, it is variously used.

(1.) Justice, as applied to cases in which property is concerned, denotes the exchange of one thing for another of equal value. Considered in this manner, it affects all bargains, the payment of debts, and the adjustment and fulfilment of all contracts. Whenever these are so made and performed, as that an exact equivalent is rendered for what is received, then, and then only, justice is done. This is called commutative justice.

(2.) As applied to the conduct of a magistrate towards subjects, it denotes exactly that treatment of the subject which his personal conduct merits. To reward the good subject, and to punish the bad, according to equitable laws, and real desert, is to treat both justly; or to exhibit justice in the distributions of government. Accordingly a ruler, conducting himself in this manner, is by the common voice declared to be a just ruler. Justice in this sense is properly called distributive justice.

(3.) Justice in a much more extended sense than either of these, denotes doing that which is right upon the whole in all cases; that which is fittest and most useful to be done; in other words, that which will most promote the universal good. In this sense justice is, together with its corresponding term, righteousness, used as synonymous with benevolence or virtue, and involves the whole of moral excellence. This is sometimes called general justice. This use of the word is very frequent; and many persons appear to make no distinction between this sense of the word and the last mentioned. Yet the meanings are widely different. In the former sense, justice is the conduct of a ruler only; in the latter, it is applicable to all intelligent beings. In the former it is a course of conduct respecting a single object, according to his merit or demerit; in the latter it always respects the universe.

(4.) Justice, when considered as an attribute, is the disposition which gives birth to these, or to either of these kinds of conduct.

With respect to the first of these senses, we cannot easily suppose a case in which God, who is the giver of all good, can receive any thing for which an equivalent can be rendered. The nearest resemblance to such a case, which is applicable to God, is one in which he requires the service of mankind in a particular manner, and promises to reward them for such service with worldly possessions. Several such instances may be found in the Scriptures. Thus he promised the Israelites abundant worldly good, in consequence of their faithful obedience. Thus he promised David, as a reward for his obedience, many earthly blessings. Thus for the execution of his decree against Tyre, he gave Egypt into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar.

These instances are, however, all plainly imperfect ones, for the purpose of exhibiting a complete display of this attribute in the sense in question. God, in all the cases specified, exhibited his bounty and mercy so much more strongly than mere commutative justice, that we are apt to forget that this was exhibited at all. Nor can we suppose a case in which this difficulty will not arise from the character and situation of God, as the author and giver of all good, and as the receiver of nothing from the hands of his creatures.

Yet, if a case could be proposed, in which God could act as just, in the commutative sense, his disposition to be just, in this sense, would be as perfect as in either of the other senses. This is unanswerably evident from the consideration, that he requires, under the most awful penalties, the exercise of such justice from the hands of his subjects. In the two last senses, the justice of God is perpetually and perfectly exercised towards all his intelligent creatures.

As the ruler of the universe, he rewards every rational being exactly according to his works, except that he hath shown mercy to numberless sinners who had merited nothing but wrath and punishment; an exception supremely glorious to his character, and formed in entire consistency with exact justice.

As the great friend of happiness, he has devised also the most perfect happiness of his immense kingdom, and the most perfect means of accomplishing it. This he pursues with infinite intenseness of energy, without intermission, without change, and without end.

In this sense, the justice of God respects, first, himself; and secondly, his creatures.

First, God is infinitely just, as his conduct respects himself. In a uniform series of dispensations, he exhibits to the universe his own character as supremely

glorious, excellent, beautiful, and lovely; and as therefore deserving all possible admiration, confidence, love, reverence, worship, and obedience, from all intelligent beings. In this divine employment he has published to intelligent beings a glorious rule of rectitude, as the rule of his own conduct: a rule to which all that conduct is entirely conformed, 'without variableness, or shadow of turning.' To this rule he requires them to conform all their conduct also. In obeying it are involved their duty, interest, honour, and happiness, alike. This he has exhibited as an unchangeable and everlasting rule; by which the intelligent universe is everywhere, at every period, and with respect to every thing, to be governed; and which he will never forsake, even though that universe were to be the sacrifice.

Secondly, In the same sense, God is perfectly just to his creatures. The justice of God to himself is the highest and first act of justice to his creatures. But for this regard to himself, they could never venerate his character, nor render him their love, or their confidence. As the promoter of the universal good, God can in no way so contribute to this great and glorious end, as in unfolding his own supremely excellent character. This is the source and foundation of all virtuous, sincere, and enduring happiness. In this conduct of God, therefore, the universe is infinitely interested.

In each particular dispensation to them also, he directly pursues the same end, in all the parts of his endlessly diversified administration. Not a wrong, not a mistake, not a defect finds admission into his providence, throughout eternity and immensity.

But it is chiefly as the great ruler of all beings, that the justice of God demands a particular consideration at this time. In this character, his justice is employed in the distribution of rewards to holy and virtuous creatures, and of punishment, to false and rebellious subjects of his government.

All these distributions are made on the ground of law. Such as obey the law of God, are by impartial justice rewarded: those who disobey are punished. The perfection of these distributions consists in this; that each creature is rewarded, or punished, according to his character and conduct, exactly; so that the reward or the punishment shall be precisely proportioned to the several degrees of virtue or guilt, just as they have existed. In this case all the palliations and aggravations of guilt, and all the means of increasing or diminishing virtue, will enter completely into the estimate of the character of each individual. Of all these, God, who searcheth the heart and trieth the reins, is a perfect judge. Nothing is unknown or forgotten by him, and nothing will be left out of the estimate of character, which will be the foundation of the reward or the punishment.

I. The proofs of the justice of God exhibited by reason, or found in the system of providence, are not to us demonstrative: yet they are well deserving of our attention.

1. The character and circumstances of God strongly lead us to believe in his perfect justice. God is perfectly independent, in the actual possession of all possible good, and completely secure against every possible loss and evil. Whatever he pleases to have exist or done, is certainly brought to pass, and in the precise manner which is pleasing to him. Hence no temptation or inducement to any injustice can exist with respect to him. Possessing all things, he can need nothing; contriving all things, he can fear nothing; effecting all things which he chooses, with infinite ease, and no possible obstruction, he can never have occasion to adopt any other character or conduct but that of perfect justice. Injustice in our experience is always derived, and of course, from the dread of some disadvantage, or the desire of some advantage, which otherwise would not exist. But these things have no possible application to God. Reason sees not, therefore, how God can be under any inducement to injustice. But without such inducement, injustice cannot exist.

2. In this state of trial, many exhibitions of the divine justice are made in divine providence. These are seen chiefly in the application of punishments and rewards to nations, considered in their national capacity. Nations as such, exist only on this side of the grave. Hence it would seem, that in this peculiar character as nations merely, they are with propriety rewarded or punished here. Thus nations, after they have become corrupted to a certain degree, have constantly been destroyed for their national corruption. God indeed has usually waited with wonderful patience, until their iniquities were full; and so evidently, that the ancient heathens described and painted justice as lame; that is, slow in arriving. This conduct of the Creator is highly becoming his glorious character, as a most bountiful and merciful God towards beings still in a state of trial.

Yet the destruction or punishment has been sure, however late it may seem to us. 'The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as men count slackness; but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.' So evident has been the justice of God in such instances, that the heathen have strongly marked and fully acknowledged it, generally throughout the whole heathen world: a clear proof that it has struck the eye, and convinced the mind of common sense.

3. The justice of God is conspicuous in this great fact, that mankind are never afflicted beyond their deserts. In the last Discourse but one, I have observed, that this truth is rendered evident in the only case in which it can, with the least appearance of reason, be disputed; *viz.* the sufferings of virtuous men; by their own uniform acknowledgment, that they never suffer even so much as they are conscious of having deserved. But the only tendency of any mind to injustice is to withhold good, or inflict evil, contrary to or beyond the desert of the recipient. As neither of these is ever the fact; as, on the contrary, men always receive more good and less evil than they have merited; it is plain that the justice of God on the one hand, and his absolute freedom from injustice on the other, are strongly evinced in his dispensations to man in the present world.

4. All the arguments which I have deduced from the character and circumstances of God, to prove that he is benevolent, are capable of an equally forcible application to the present subject, and contribute in the same manner to prove that he is just. As these have been so lately rehearsed, it will be unnecessary to mention them again at the present time.

5. As God is benevolent, it is impossible that he should not be just. In the last Discourse I observed, that love

constituted the whole moral character of God; and that although we were obliged for the sake of distinctness to consider, as the scriptures themselves often do, this character in different views and under different names; yet it is in reality a disposition simple and indivisible; these names denoting only its different modifications and exercises. As I expect hereafter to consider this subject more fully, I shall only observe here, that the doctrine being admitted, the benevolence of God, if proved, as I flatter myself it has been, from the light of nature, is itself complete proof of the justice of God. A Being, willing, as a benevolent one necessarily is, to do more good to others than justice demands, cannot be willing to do less, the only manner in which he could possibly be unjust.

This proof of the justice of God is, I think, ample and satisfactory. At the same time, in such a world as this, where the system of dispensations extends to so many beings and so many events, in themselves varied almost endlessly, and in their relations still more numerous and diversified; it cannot but be, that mystery should in a great measure overspread the whole. In each individual case there will be much that we cannot understand: in the comparison of that case with others, there will be more. A state of trial also involves the doctrine, that in it a complete exhibition of justice cannot be made. All that is just in such a state cannot be seen to be just, especially by creatures whose discernment and comprehension are like ours, so limited and so disproportioned to the objects of investigation. Amid the multitude of these objects we are lost, by their variety we are perplexed, by their strangeness we are staggered; and by the relations which they bear to each other, often apparently very dissimilar, often seemingly inconsistent, we are not unnaturally nor unfrequently overwhelmed with difficulties, doubts, and distresses.

It is probable that, except in the case of nations already mentioned, the dispensations of good and evil in this world are designed rather as restraints on the sinful conduct, and as encouragements to the virtue of mankind, than as full manifestations of the justice of God. In this view of them they contain abundant proofs of wisdom, equity, and goodness, wholly suited to the state of man. It ought at the same time to be observed, that there is no argument which renders it probable in any degree that God is not just.

II. What the state of providence thus teaches, the Scriptures have completely disclosed. The justice of God is in the Scriptures exhibited to us in various methods.

1. God has informed us in multitudes of direct declarations, that he is a God of consummate justice. All these declarations receive the whole weight of his whole character, as exhibited in the Scriptures; a weight which no mind that admits any part of this character can resist.

2. He has displayed in the history of the Scriptures many highly important and impressive instances of his justice, executed on mankind, both as nations and individuals. These are very numerous and various, and in them all, complete examples of this awful attribute are presented to our view.

3. In his law he has required all men to be just, assuring them that in this character they will be loved by him, and in the contrary character hated; promising them in this character glorious rewards, and threatening them, in the contrary character, most fearful punishments. Exactly of this nature is every command, every promise, and every threatening. These promises and threatenings have, also, as was observed under the last head (for these considerations illustrate each other), been often most exemplarily executed even in the present world. In these instances we are not left to our own conjectures to interpret the dispensations of providence; but are directly informed of their nature by God himself. In these instances, therefore, the dispensations become plain and intelligible, and all doubt is excluded.

4. He has informed us, that there is beyond the grave a future being; that in the future world he has appointed, at the end of this system, a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness, and will reward every man according to his works.

5. He has required us to acknowledge, reverence, love, worship, and obey him, as being just, perfectly and infinitely. In no other character does he require any love, homage, or service. That God, in requiring our homage to him, should require it to a character *not his own*, is an absurdity which can neither be admitted nor explained.

There is, indeed no possible reason which can be devised, why any and all of these things should be done in the Scriptures, except that God is the just Being which he is there represented to be. These things united, comprise all the proof which we can reasonably wish, of the justice of God, and cannot possibly be destroyed nor lessened. Accordingly no person who believed the Scriptures to be the word of God, ever thought of doubting this great truth.

REMARKS.

1. How gloriously is God qualified by this attribute for the government of all things! In what an amiable, majestic, and dignified light is he here manifested to our view. Without this attribute all others would be vain. A ruler he might be, because his power would easily compel all beings to obey him. But he would be merely an arbitrary and despotic ruler, neither venerable nor lovely. No creature would or could serve him willingly, with either love or confidence. The fear which gendereth bondage would be the only principle of subjection; nor would any subjection or service secure his creatures from perpetual danger and distress.

What a dreadful instrument would omnipotence be in the hands of an unjust being! What evils must not all creatures fear! What evils would they not suffer! What spectacles of vengeance and woe, would not his arm call up into being! How instantaneously would all hope vanish, all safety cease, all good perish! The universe would become a desert, a dungeon, an immense region of mourning, lamentation, and woe.

Now, all creatures are secure from every possible act of injustice from the hand of God. Powerful as he is, knowing all things as he does, these amazing attributes are employed only to discern that which is just and right, and to bring it in every instance to pass. Hence, he is the universal safeguard of his unnumbered creatures, the rock on which their rights and interests immovably rest, the proper and unfailing object of supreme and endless confidence. Wrong he cannot

do, right he cannot fail to do. Submission to his will, his law, his government, is safe; and when voluntary, is assured of the regard, the approbation, and the rewards which are promised to cheerful obedience.

Were God not possessed of this glorious attribute, his benevolence would be mere weakness. All froward, rebellious, obstinate creatures would presume on his want of energy to vindicate his own honour, and the rights of the suffering universe. A mind formed for immortal being, naturally makes progress in all its habits, and in the strength of all its powers. An evil mind, unrestrained by the awe or the exertions of omnipotence, would naturally increase in its pride, selfishness, malice, and cruelty; in a general disregard to the well-being of others, and in a supreme devotion to its private, separate purposes. To all who oppose, to every thing which clashes with these things, such a mind is, of course, an enemy. Nor can any bounds be set to this enmity, or to its effects, except by God himself. Were he to remain quiescent, in mere kindness and good wishes to the universe, the schemes of personal greatness, oppression, rage, revenge, and fury, which would be formed by evil beings, cannot be measured. Every evil being would become a fiend; and to tempt a race, to ruin a world, and to involve a system in misery, would be familiar events in the annals of the universe.

2. What reason have wicked men to fear the justice of God! The wicked are secured by God's perfect justice from the sufferance of any evil which they have not deserved; but, at the same time, are wholly exposed to the sufferance of all such evils as they have deserved. These are sufficiently dreadful to excite in their minds every degree of alarm which man is capable of experiencing.

The denunciations of woe in the Scriptures of truth are couched in as awful terms as language can furnish. The God who is immutably and eternally just, as he uttered them in conformity to strict justice, so, in executing them, will conform to the same justice in the most perfect manner.

Whatever their rebellion against God, their rejection of his Son, their deceit, injustice, and cruelty to each other, and their pollution of themselves, deserve, they will receive exactly at his hand, and will be rewarded exactly 'according to their works.' It becomes every impenitent sinner to ask himself, what reward he ought to expect for a life spent wholly in rebellion of thought, word, and action; with no account of voluntary obedience, and millions of accounts of gross disobedience against his Maker.

It is plainly 'a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.' In his hand, and within his knowledge and power, are all the avenues to woe, all the ingredients to misery. He is equally able to pierce the soul, and to agonize the body. There is no escape from his power, no concealment from his eye. What, then, will become of hardened sinners? How will the justice of God overwhelm them in consternation and horror at the great day!

3. We see here the great reason why the Scriptures are opposed and denied by wicked men. All the difficulty which men find in admitting the Scriptures to be the word of God, exists in this attribute. I do not remember that I ever heard or read of a single objection to the scriptural God, except what was pointed against his justice. All men are usually willing to acknowledge his power, wisdom, goodness, faithfulness, truth, and mercy; but few, besides good men, are ready to acknowledge his justice.

Whence this objection? Is not justice a glorious and eminently divine perfection? Can an unjust ruler be the object of approbation? Is not injustice the ground of perpetual complaint against earthly rulers? The secret lies wholly in this fact. We are willing, nay, desirous that rulers should be just, when justice does not endanger ourselves and our happiness; but no character is so dreaded, so hated, when justice is considered as inconsistent with our safety, peace, and hopes. But can this be right? A just ruler must punish wicked and unjust men. We choose that other wicked and unjust men should be punished, and hesitate not to say, that the common good indispensably requires it. But we make another law for ourselves, and would rather that the ruler should prove unjust, than either reform ourselves or be punished.

The justice of God holds out to us and to all others, certain and dreadful punishment as the proper reward of our sins. If God be just, we cannot, without repentance, faith, and reformation of life, possibly escape. Between reformation and punishment there is no alternative. Reform we will not; be punished we cannot. Hence we believe that God is not just, because we wish this not to be his character. Of course, we deny the Scriptures to be his word, to free ourselves from the terror of his justice. What wretched reasoning is this! How foolish, how fatal! How foolish, because it cannot possibly help or save us; since God will plainly pursue his own counsels, and accomplish his own purposes, whether we believe his justice or not. How foolish, because the whole purpose for which such reasoning is adopted, is to enable us to continue peacefully in sin; a miserable character and plainly exposed always to a miserable end.

How fatal is such reasoning! because it will actually induce us to continue peacefully in sin, and prevent us from repentance and salvation. On what is it grounded? On mere wishes. Who form and indulge them? Wicked men only. Can God be such as wicked men wish him to be? Can they suppose it? What kind of a ruler do wicked men wish to have rule? A vile one. What God do wicked men wish to have rule the universe? A vile one. Why? Because such a God only can be supposed to favour them. No good man, no angel, ever regretted that God was just. It is impossible that a virtuous being should not rejoice in the justice of God. The instinctive voice of all the virtuous universe is the voice of angels, and of the spirits of just men made perfect in the heavens, crying, 'Alleluia! Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, be unto the Lord our God: for true and righteous are his judgments. Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints!'

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SERMON XI.

ON THE TRUTH OF GOD.

And the truth of the Lord endureth for ever.—Psalm cxvii. 2.

In my last discourse, I considered briefly the justice of God. I shall now proceed to make some observations concerning *his truth*, which in the text is asserted to be an eternal, and therefore an inseparable, attribute of Jehovah.

As a prelude to these observations, it will be useful to take a concise notice of the several significations of this term. The word *truth*, denotes,

(1.) A proposition, conformed to the real state of things. Thus, St Paul says, 'I speak the truth in Christ, I lie not,' Rom. ix. 1.

(2.) All such propositions, generally considered. Thus, Pilate asked Christ, 'What is truth?' John xviii. 38.

(3.) That collection of such propositions which is contained in the gospel, and is commonly called evangelical truth. Thus, says our Saviour, 'The Spirit of truth shall guide you into all truth,' John xvi. 13, Thus, also, St Paul observes, 'Love rejoiceth in the truth,' 1 Cor. xiii. 8. In both these instances, the truth mentioned is evangelical truth.

(4.) Reality, in opposition to that which is fancied or visionary. Thus 'the true God' denotes the real God, in opposition to the imaginary gods of the heathen.

(5.) The substance, in opposition to types. Thus Christ calls himself 'the Truth,' as being the great antitype of all the types in the Old Testament.

(6.) Veracity, that is, a disposition always to declare truth, or to speak according to the real state of things.

(7.) Faithfulness, that is, a disposition always to fulfill covenants, trusts, and promises.

In these two last senses, I shall consider the truth of God as declared in the text. Veracity and faithfulness are attributes so nearly allied, as to be considered together with great advantage. The former is speaking, and as the case may be, acting according to a state of things, seen or supposed to exist. The latter is declaring a future state of our own conduct, and afterwards acting so, that that conduct shall be conformed to the declaration. No moral attributes are more perfectly of a kindred nature, nor can we conceive of him who possesses one of them, as in any less degree possessed of the other. There is no reason, therefore, for making them separate subjects of examination in this series of Discourses.

It will be obvious to those who hear me, that as the works of creation and providence, consisting of beings and events merely, furnish us with no declarations made by God; and as every such declaration must in its nature be a revelation; so in these works there can be no proper specimen of his truth or faithfulness. To every direct display of these attributes, declarations are indispensably necessary. The only way in which the works of God exhibit, by themselves, any manifestation of these attributes, seems to be this. In the regular succession of causes and effects, a state of things is formed and continued, on which we usually and safely rely; and so far as this is concerned, enter upon our various kinds of business with security from disappointment. This state of things may be justly considered as manifesting a disposition on the part of him, by whom it is established, not to deceive his creatures, but to exhibit to them that conduct on which they may place a safe reliance. Thus we confide in the regular succession of seasons, the return of day and night, the productiveness of the earth, the efficacy of rain and sunshine, and generally, in the nature, qualities, and effects of the various things by which we are surrounded.

But, notwithstanding this want of declarations in creation and providence, the proofs by which the truth of God is capable of being evinced by reason, independently of revelation, are, I think, satisfactory, and sufficient.

I. *The truth of God (by which I intend throughout this Discourse both his veracity and faithfulness) is completely evident from his benevolence.*

In a preceding Discourse, I flatter myself, I have proved the benevolence of God from the light of nature. From this attribute, his truth is easily and unanswerably inferred. The happiness of intelligent beings is derived in a great measure from society; nor is it possible that they should be equally happy in the solitary, as in the social state. But no society can exist without confidence, and no confidence without truth. Truth therefore is the basis on which society rests. Even thieves and robbers are obliged to speak truth to each other, in order to maintain their own dreadful society.

Confidence also is one of the most important ingredients of happiness; so important, that no rational being can be happy without it. But without truth, this happiness can never be enjoyed. On the contrary, distrust would create in the mind a dreadful state of suspense, another name for misery. All enjoyments would be seen to hang in doubt before the eyes, and safety and quiet could never be attained.

Again, falsehood, as an attribute, renders a moral character supremely debased and despicable. So far as we are able to judge from our experience, fixed, absolute falsehood in any mind infers absolute depravity. No vice in man is probably so universally and perfectly despised as deceit. But such depravity is utterly inconsistent with any happiness whatever.

All these evils would attend the want of truth in rational creatures. A general character of deceit in them would utterly destroy, or prevent, the whole of their happiness. But a deceitful character in the Creator would far more effectually destroy it. On his character, all their happiness is ultimately founded; and, were he capable of deceiving them, would be destroyed. The very sense in them, of such depravity in him, would also completely prevent them from being happy. If then he wishes their happiness, or in

other words, is benevolent, it is impossible that he should not be sincere. His benevolence, like that of creatures, as described by St Paul, 'rejoiceth in the truth.'

II. *As God contrived and executes all things according to his will, throughout eternity, it is inconceivable that he should not speak of them exactly as they are: because the state in which they are, is exactly agreeable to his pleasure.*

Truth, as I have already remarked, is, in the original sense, made up of declarations, exactly conformed to the real state of things. But that state of things is in every respect such as God has chosen. Declarations, therefore, conformed to the real state of things, are also conformed to his pleasure; while those which are not conformed to the real state of things, are in the same degree not agreeable to his pleasure. It seems of course a contradiction in the nature of the case, that he should not utter declarations of the former kind, or that he should utter declarations of the latter kind; in other words, that he should not always speak that which is exactly true.

III. *The independence and immutability of God involve, by an absolute moral necessity, his veracity and faithfulness.*

The independence of God places him above all possible temptation to vary at all from his own original purposes. These purposes were all at first perfectly pleasing to him. As his character is absolutely immutable, they will for ever be thus pleasing. On the one hand, therefore, he can have no possible motive to make declarations, unaccordant with these purposes; because no being and no event can make it in any sense necessary or advantageous to him to make such declarations, or disadvantageous to make those of a contrary nature, or to declare that which is true. On the other hand, sustaining alway exactly the same character, which he originally sustained, and choosing alway the same things, he cannot but be always pleased with the state of things itself, and with such declarations as express it. Truth, according to what has been here said, must be infinitely advantageous to the furtherance of his designs; as being the only medium by which his rational creatures can understand them. If they do not understand them, it is plainly impossible that they should voluntarily coincide with him in promoting them. But it is a prime part of his designs, that his intelligent creatures should thus coincide with him. Truth on his part being, then, absolutely necessary to this voluntary conformity of his rational creatures to his designs, and this conformity being a prime and essential part of these designs; truth, the indispensable mean of accomplishing it, must evidently be of an importance proportioned to the designs themselves; that is, of infinite importance. To this infinite motive to speak truth, there is no opposing motive; because he is perfectly secured by his independence from all danger of defect and disappointment.

In the meantime, falsehood in him would effectually prevent the execution of his designs, in this essential part of them; because it would prevent his intelligent creatures from knowing them, and therefore from voluntarily uniting with him in their accomplishment. An infinite motive to speak truth only is also furnished to the Creator by this consideration.

Farther, truth is the only moral immutability. Falsehood is in his own nature change of character. As every proposition, or its converse, is necessarily true; he who should invariably utter that which is false in form, would invariably indicate that which is in substance true. In other words, those who heard him speak, would invariably know, that the converse of what he declared was true. He also who immutably intended to deceive would speedily become unable to deceive at all; because, when his character was once known, he could never be believed. In either of these cases his conduct would differ no otherwise in its effects, from that of him who invariably uttered truth in the direct manner, except that, as he chose a different mode of communicating truth, or did not choose to communicate it at all, he would either be believed to declare it indirectly, or would be entirely disbelieved and disregarded. In this manner therefore he would defeat his own design. Thus immutable falsehood is evidently a self-contradiction. So obvious is this to all men, that liars, even of the weakest minds, find it absolutely necessary to speak truth frequently, in order to deceive. An immutable God, therefore, unless we suppose immutability consistent with a continual change of conduct, cannot but be a God of truth.

IV. *The excellency of truth, and the turpitude of falsehood, furnish an infinite motive to the Creator to speak truth only.*

We, limited as our faculties are, perfectly discern that truth is entirely honourable and glorious to the character of an intelligent being. Falsehood, on the other hand, we perceive with equal clearness to be odious, disgraceful, and contemptible. This, God sees, unquestionably, far more clearly and perfectly than we. Falsehood in him, we see beyond a possibility of doubt, would be disgrace and deformity, proportioned to the greatness of his character; and truth in an equal proportion, honour and glory. This also he discerns in a manner infinitely superior to ours. By the infinite glory therefore, with which he must be invested by truth, and the infinite disgrace in which he would be involved by falsehood, he is presented with infinite motives to truth, and infinite dissuasives from falsehood.

At the same time it appears to me evident, that the adoption of truth or falsehood by the Creator, must be followed by exactly the same effects which they produce in us. In the former case, he must regard himself with entire complacency or self-approbation; in the latter, with an irresistible consciousness of turpitude and unworthiness. These views, and the emotions with which they must be attended, must in an infinite mind be, in either case, boundless; an unlimited sense of excellence on the one hand, accompanied of course with unlimited happiness; on the other, a boundless sense of turpitude, accompanied, for ought that I can see, with boundless shame and wretchedness.

V. *He has so formed his intelligent creatures, that they irresistibly esteem and respect truth, and disesteem and despise falsehood.*

This respect for truth, and contempt for falsehood, is irresistible from two causes. It is, in the first place, the necessary dictate of the understanding, when employed in examining the nature of these subjects; and is perfectly independent of any feeling or influence of the heart. Knaves as truly, and as irresistibly, as honest men, despise knaves. No other dictate of the understanding was ever found in the present world, no other is capable of existing.

Secondly: He has made truth absolutely necessary to the happiness of mankind, and invariably productive of it; and falsehood utterly inconsistent with our happiness, and invariably productive of misery. In this great practical lesson, he has in his providence forced mankind to esteem and respect truth, without a possibility of it being otherwise; and to disesteem and despise falsehood.

This argument strongly proves the truth of God in two methods.

In the first place, by teaching us to respect truth, and despise falsehood, he has irresistibly led us to respect him, if a God of truth; and to despise him, if a God of falsehood. But, if he be not a God of truth, this fact is utterly irreconcilable with the only end, which he can be supposed to have had in view in creating intelligent beings.

Secondly, he has in this manner strongly impressed on the minds of his creatures his own character, as a God of truth. As a being perfectly independent, he could have no inducement to impress any character on their minds, except that which pleased him. That which pleased him more than any other, was unquestionably his own character. As an immutable Being, it cannot be supposed that he could disclose to them any character as his own, except his real character. If then the character actually disclosed by him as his own, is not his real character; it must have arisen from one of these sources; either he was afraid to disclose his own character, or by some other motive inconsistent with his independence, was inclined to disclose a character with which he was not pleased; or he preferred some other character to his own; or, in some strange moment and situation, incomprehensible by us, departed from his general disposition, and denying his nature, acted in a manner directly opposite to all his essential attributes, which irresistibly prove him to be immutable. Neither of these will be asserted. The character therefore which he has actually disclosed, is his true character.

To these arguments, presented to us by reason, I shall now add the scriptural exhibition of the truth of God. Before I proceed to a consideration of this subject, I shall, however, attempt to remove a prejudice against it, which may not improbably, nor unnaturally arise in the minds of some of my audience. It is this, that as the truth of God must be presupposed and admitted before we can admit the truth of his declarations; so it is absurd to bring those declarations to evince his truth, as it will be arguing in a circle. I acknowledge this objection to be specious, but still insist that it is unsound. It must undoubtedly be granted, that the mere declaration on the part of any being that he is sincere, furnishes by itself no evidence of his sincerity; since we well know, that insincere beings will as readily arrogate to themselves sincerity in this manner, as those who are sincere. But the uniform accordance of a man's declarations with facts is justly regarded by his fellow men, as the proper and satisfactory proof of his sincerity. In the same manner may God evince his sincerity by his own declarations; and this I shall attempt to show he has done in the Scriptures, in a manner which leaves no room for a reasonable doubt.

I will also farther observe, that the Scriptures contain all the known declarations made by God to mankind. As, therefore, truth can be directly made known only by declarations; it is reasonably presumed, that we shall find in those of the Scriptures, plain exhibitions of the truth of God, as, in the declarations of a sincere man, we usually find examples and evidences of his truth.

In the last place I shall farther premise, that we have other means of examining the truth of God, as manifested in his declarations, beside a mere appeal to his character. This will amply appear in the course of the following observations.

1. God has declared himself to be a God of truth. In this observation, I consider him only as claiming, and not at all as proving, this character.

2. He has made a vast multitude of declarations, all of which have accorded with the facts professedly declared. The Scriptural history is, even at this day, capable of being satisfactorily examined as to its accordance with facts. Some part of it is indeed beyond the reach of a direct examination. But as almost all of it can be thus examined, and has been, and can at any time be proved by sufficient evidence to be true; the truth of the rest cannot reasonably be questioned. In these declarations the same evidence is furnished us of the truth of God, which is furnished of the veracity of a man by the uniform accordance of his declarations with the real state of things.

3. God has in the Scriptures uttered a vast number of predictions, which have been exactly fulfilled. In this manner he has not only proved his omniscience, but his truth; especially in the exact accomplishment of such predictions as appeared, at the time when they were uttered, strange, perplexing, seemingly contradictory, and, independently of his truth, altogether unlikely to be fulfilled. Such, remarkably, were those which respected the advent, the character, and the mediation of the Messiah. Such also were those which respected his dispensations to the Jewish church and nation, and those which respected the establishment and progress of the Christian church. Of the fulfilment of these and other similar predictions no explanation can be given, which will not firmly establish the truth of God.

4. He has declared many doctrines concerning himself and mankind, concerning sin and holiness, and concerning many other subjects of less importance, all of which, so far as they are capable of being examined by us, are exactly true. These doctrines are God's own exhibition of the general state of the moral world, and of his pleasure concerning the beings of which it is composed. All of them are true, so far as they can be understood by us; and are accordingly, and perfectly consistent with each other. No reason can be alleged why he should thus disclose his pleasure to us, except that he is a God of truth.

5. He has in the Scriptures threatened punishments, and promised blessings to men in this world; and has, as the same Scriptures satisfactorily inform us, exactly inflicted those punishments, and bestowed those blessings, in the course of his providence.

6. He has in the Scriptures also entered into particular covenants with different persons, which in every instance he has completely fulfilled.

7. He has in the moral law required truth, and forbidden falsehood in man, by the most solemn possible sanctions; viz. endless life, and endless death.

8. He has strongly exemplified his love of truth, and

his hatred of falsehood, by rewarding the former, and awfully punishing the latter, in various instances recorded in the Scriptures.

9. He has required the worship and obedience of mankind to himself only as a God of truth.

In these considerations, supported as they are in the fullest manner by the character of the Redeemer, there is ample proof of the truth of God: such proof, that no one who has believed the Scriptures to be a revelation from God, has ever called this doctrine in question.

REMARKS.

1. How gloriously and perfectly is God qualified by this attribute to be the moral governor of intelligent creatures.

Moral government is a government by laws, whose nature and sanctions are the great inducements to obedience, and the great means of order, peace, and happiness, to subjects; and of honour and reverence to the ruler. In other words, it is a government by motives, addressed to the understanding and affections of rational subjects, and operating on their minds as inducements to voluntary obedience. No other government is worthy of God, there being indeed no other beside that of mere force and coercion. Obedience to this can never be voluntary, virtuous, amiable, praiseworthy, or rewardable; whereas voluntary obedience sustains all these characteristics; and renders the subjects of it excellent and lovely in the sight of a virtuous or benevolent ruler. This government then, is, on the one hand suited to the dignity and glory of the infinite mind; and on the other, to the character, state, and wants, of rational beings. Without obedience to such a government they cannot be virtuous, and without virtue they cannot be happy.

To the existence of such a government, it is absolutely necessary that the character of the ruler should be such, as that it can and ought to be approved by wise and good subjects; and of course a character in which they can safely and rationally confide. But it is impossible that a ruler, unpossessed of truth, should be approved at all. Falsehood is not only a vice, a defect, a deformity, but a most odious and contemptible vice, involving every other kind of turpitude. A liar is preeminently odious and contemptible in the view of mankind; and the finished depravity of the worst of all beings is exhibited to us by God himself in the memorable declaration, 'He was a liar from the beginning, and the father of it.' A god of falsehood would be a monster, whose depravity no mind less than infinite could comprehend; and who would of necessity be regarded with absolute detestation and horror.

But how could obedience be voluntary to a ruler, whose character, instead of being esteemed and reverenced, was only disapproved, hated, and despised? Who could love either him or his commands? Who could voluntarily yield obedience to falsehood? Who could ever be pleased with subjection to a ruler, whose character he could not respect? The very supposition is an absurdity.

In a still more striking manner would it be impossible for rational beings voluntarily to obey a ruler in whom they could not confide, or for such a ruler to exercise a moral government over them. Should he make laws, and in them promise rewards to obedience, and threaten punishments to disobedience; how could it be known that he would fulfill his promises, or execute his threatenings? How could it be known that his declarations were true, or his character sincere? Certainly, neither his words nor actions could be the foundation of such knowledge. Both might as easily and as naturally be supposed intentionally to disguise, conceal, or deceive, as to explain and satisfy.

God, we are ever to remember, is the last appeal, resort, and hope of intelligent beings. By whomsoever else the soul is deceived or disappointed, it rests on him with perfect reliance; because it considers his truth as the great mountains, and his faithfulness as enduring for ever. If no confidence could be placed in him, none could be placed elsewhere. Every thought, purpose, interest, consolation, and hope, would be afloat on the waves of a boundless and perpetually disturbed ocean, where rest and safety could never be found. All beings would distrust all; and the universe, filled as it is with inhabitants, would become a solitude. Suspicion and jealousy would make all beings strangers and enemies to each other. Suspense would fill every mind, and hang over every enjoyment; a state always wretched and deplorable, but here supremely and finally wretched, because the suspense would be endless as well as unceasing. The mind, stretching its view through eternity and immensity, would discern no pole-star by which it might steer its course, no haven whither it might betake itself for safety and repose. The truth of God hushes this restless and stormy ocean to peace. All his creatures know, or may know, that his purposes, declarations, and promises, are eternal and immutable; and that therefore he cannot deceive their confidence, nor disappoint their reasonable hopes; that he is 'the Rock,' on which is founded the great building of the universe: the foundation and the building both eternal. However uncertain, therefore, however fluctuating may be the state of the soul with respect to creatures; on him it rests with perfect reliance and final safety. Were these facts reversed, he could present no motives to voluntary obedience, nor act as the moral governor of rational beings. Now he is seen to be divinely excellent; 'the fortress, the high tower,' the unchangeable safety of such beings; and their obedience to his laws is a voluntary and cheerful effort of the mind, begun here to continue for ever.

2. We learn from these considerations how necessary faith is to acceptance with God.

St Paul declares, that 'without faith it is impossible to please God; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him.' Faith, in its first and simple sense, is assent to probable evidence. Few of the propositions to which we assent, are known to us either by intuition or demonstration. This is especially true of moral propositions; almost all of which, although they are in many instances spoken of as known by us, are in fact only believed; the evidence by which they are supported being merely probable evidence. Yet on these propositions is dependent all our duty, and ultimately all our happiness. Wherever the probability is clear and unimpeachable, reason demands that we should readily assent to it, as being the best evidence which the case will admit. In the same manner reason requires that our conduct should be regulated by it, as being the best rule of which we are, or in our present circumstances can be, possessed. A reasonable disposition will there-

fore, in every such case, yield its assent to every proposition, and conform its conduct to every rule thus evidenced; while a proud and obstinate spirit will refuse both, and choose rather to take refuge in scepticism and disobedience, than to conform to the only principles of assent and rectitude which have been furnished to us by our Maker.

The faith of the Gospel is the assent of the heart, as well as of the understanding, to the declarations contained in the Scriptures; the belief of a man who regards them with good-will, and who is pleased with such truths as they present to the mind. The foundation of faith in these declarations is a similar faith in the character, especially the moral character of God, exhibited in them, and evidenced both by them, and by other extraneous proof. This character, discerned to be glorious, great, and lovely, by a mind possessed of a suitable disposition, is not in the strict sense demonstrated to us; but is evinced with high and unexceptionable probability. To the ready and cheerful admission of it, a good and honest heart is wholly prepared, and is the only thing necessary.

The truth or veracity of God is especially that part of his moral character, on which the faith or confidence, which is termed evangelical, ultimately rests. On this attribute all his declarations, promises, and covenants, entirely depend for their truth and certainty; and therefore all the confidence which creatures can place in his character, designs, or conduct. It is indispensable in order to our exercising any regard towards him at all, that we 'believe that he is.' This however we may do by the aid of arguments furnished by the light of nature. To 'believe that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him,' is indispensable to the exercise of any virtuous regard to him; but this we cannot do without confidence in the truth of his promises, and in the veracity of himself as the promiser.

But for these promises, we could not know that he thought of bestowing such rewards; unless we believed him sincere in promising, we could not believe that he would bestow them. Between confidence in the truth of God, and distrust of his truth, there is no alternative. It is metaphysically, as well as scripturally, true, that 'he who believeth not God, hath made him a liar.' Let me then ask every person in this assembly, whether this distrust of God, this attribution to him of so odious and contemptible a character, this last insult (as mankind estimate insults), can, in his own view, possibly be pleasing to God? Yet this is a fair description of all unbelief, or, as it ought rather to be termed, disbelief or distrust. As this conduct can never be pleasing in his sight, so it is certain that he who is the subject of it can never be accepted of God: for nothing is more evident than that God will never accept *him*, with whom he is not pleased. As then there is no medium between this character and confidence or faith; it is, I think, past all doubt, that faith is indispensably necessary to acceptance with God.

At the same time, distrust is an entire separation of an intelligent being from his Maker. We cannot possibly coincide voluntarily with the designs of a being, unless we confide in his truth and benevolence, and of course in the rectitude of those designs. No virtuous obedience can be yielded to laws, of whose rectitude we are not satisfied; no complacency exercised towards a character, in which we do not confide; no gratitude rendered for benefits conferred by a suspected benefactor; no reliance placed on promises made by a being of doubted veracity; and no praiseworthy efforts made to promote designs regarded as suspicious and unworthy. Without confidence, the soul is separated, of course, from its Creator. Distrust is in its own nature enmity against him, not subject to his law, 'neither indeed can be.' How then can God be pleased with this character, or accept him in whom it exists?

3. How greatly ought this attribute of God to terrify deceitful men.

By deceitful men I intend not only liars of every description, perjured persons and slanderers, but fraudulent men of every class; hypocrites, cheats, seducers, flatterers, sophists, and all other men guilty of intentional deception. From the character of God, as exhibited by the light of nature only, these men have every thing to fear, and nothing to hope. That God can be pleased with a moral character opposite to his own, or that he will bless men with whom he is not pleased, cannot be imagined for a moment. But there is no moral character more absolutely opposed to God, or more remote from his pleasure, than that of falsehood; falsehood in every form, whether of looks, declarations, arguments, or actions; and in every degree from the humble pretence, to the palpable lie. Nor is any immoral conduct adopted against clearer evidence and more absolute conviction. Truth is a thing perfectly definite. We always know when we speak it, and equally well know when we utter falsehood. It is therefore a sin against noonday light, and is always committed in the sunshine. How then must the Being, invested with the glorious and eminently divine attribute of truth, as with a garment, regard this base and vile character so opposed to his own, and so hostile to the virtue and happiness of his intelligent kingdom? Miserable indeed must be the expectations and the lot if all wilful deceivers, even if there were no Scriptures; or if they were not the word of God.

But there are Scriptures; and they are the word of God. In them, as we could not fail to expect, most terrible additions are made to the alarms rung in the ears of these transgressors by the voice of nature. There, his determinations to inflict signal vengeance on these men, are announced in every awful form by the 'God who cannot lie.' There he has declared, that into the holy city, the heaven of heavens, the mansion of everlasting joy, 'there shall in nowise enter any one who loveth or maketh a lie.' There he has declared that, 'every liar shall have his part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone.' Let every deceitful man 'hear and fear, and do no more so wickedly.'

4. What a source of comfort, joy, and quickening, to good men is the truth of God.

When we think on the character even of the best men, when we call to mind how often they backslide and sin; how cold and stupid they are in their affections, and how dull and slothful in their obedience; with what eagerness they cleave to the world, and with what ease they guide to temptation, how frequently they wound religion, and how greatly they dishonour God; we cannot but feel, that all the truth and faithfulness of God are indispensably necessary to prevent him from forsaking such beings as they are,

and incline him to conduct them safe y to his eternal kingdom. Here created faithfulness would not suffice, nor prove to them a solid ground of unshaken confidence, nor of lively and supporting hope. A higher perfection of character seems plainly necessary in the blessed God, to enable his patience to bear with all their faults, and his mercy to triumph over all their trangressions.

In his holy word he has given them promises of infinite extent and value. In these promises are contained blessings temporal and spiritual, blessings present and eternal, blessings of the first magnitude and of the most delightful nature, extending alike to the soul and the body, to all times and all places, to every want and every situation. Whatever can be useful to them, honourable to himself, or beneficial to the universe, he freely proffers from his unlimited bounty. Finally, himself, the sum of all good, the overflowing fountain, the inexhaustible ocean, whence every stream of happiness flows, he engages to them as their everlasting possession.

What can secure the boundless good contained in these promises, to beings of such a character? The unchangeable truth of God. On this they repose with perfect safety, with a hope which can never make them ashamed, with a faith which cannot be broken down. Under 'the shadow of this great rock in a weary land,' they sit down with unspeakable delight: and see all these promises advancing to a regular, constant, and certain fulfilment, throughout the progress of never-ending being.

Here, too, they find the most persuasive inducement to faithfulness in his service. They know, that he 'cometh in clouds,' and that 'his reward is with him.' 'The bruised reed,' they are assured, 'he will never break; the smoking flax he will not quench, until he shall have brought forth judgment unto final victory.' Hence 'they wait on the Lord unceasingly, and renew their strength.' Hence 'they mount up with wings as eagles;' they run in the Christian course, and are not weary; they walk, and faint not, in the 'strait and narrow way which leads to life.'

In the mission, life, and death of the Redeemer, in his resurrection, intercession, and kingdom, the truth of God has set its seal on all his promises. The covenant of grace is here seen to be an unchangeable and 'everlasting covenant.' In the solemn ordinance * immediately before us, a living, unchanging, and most affecting memorial, we may discern a hand, which, testifying infinitely better things than those which were disclosed to Belshazzar, writes before our eyes, that notwithstanding all our infirmities, if we indeed believe in him, we are, when 'weighed in the balance, not found wanting.'

* The Eucharist.

SERMON XII

ON THE MERCY OF GOD.

The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.—Psalm ciii. 8

In this beautiful and interesting psalm, David, with a piety and zeal highly becoming, calls upon his soul and all that is within him to bless the Lord for the manifestations of his mercy. A multitude of these, remarkable in their nature, and of vast importance to mankind, he recites in the happiest language of poetry. In this language God is exhibited as 'forgiving all his iniquities, healing all his diseases, redeeming his life from destruction, crowning him with loving kindness and tender mercies, satisfying his mouth with good things, and renewing his youth like the eagle's.' Nor does he confine his views to his own blessings merely; but, like a good man, deeply affected with the concerns of his fellow-creatures, casts his eye abroad to the general dispensations of providence, and rejoices in the exemplifications of this glorious attribute to the human race. With supreme delight he here beholds God 'executing righteousness and judgment for the oppressed; unwilling always to chide, or to keep his anger for ever; not dealing with mankind according to their sins, nor rewarding them according to their iniquities.' The mercy of God he sees extended and exalted as the heavens; 'removing our transgressions from us, as far as the east is removed from the west; and pitying those who fear him, as a father pitieth his children.' This divine perfection he farther teaches us, is an inherent and essential part of the character of God, and is accordingly 'from everlasting to everlasting.' Nor is it confined to any place, nor limited by any opposing power or obstacle: for 'the Lord hath prepared his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom ruleth over all.' With this delightful subject in such full and strong view, he finally and most forcibly calls upon 'angels, who excel in strength, upon his hosts the ministers who do his pleasure,' and upon all the works formed in his boundless dominion, to bless Jehovah for this transcendent perfection, so illustriously manifested, in so many forms, towards an apostate and ruined world.

The text is the theme of the whole psalm, and is a strong and ample assertion, reiterated in various forms according to the manner of the inspired writers, when labouring to impart to others their own vivid emotions of this

DOCTRINE:

That God is a God of mercy.

Mercy is the exercise of good-will towards those who have not merited it, and especially towards those who have merited anger and punishment. In its most important sense it denotes the communication of forgiveness, and consequent blessings, to such as have

been guilty of crimes; particularly as exercised by God to those who have transgressed his most holy law, provoked his anger, and forfeited every claim to his favour.

In canvassing this doctrine, I shall pursue the same method which I have adopted in discussing the other attributes of the divine character, and consider the manner in which it is exhibited; first, by reason; and secondly, by revelation.

I. Reason naturally leads us to conclude that God is merciful, because,

1. He is benevolent.

Mercy is a modification of benevolence. It is therefore reasonably concluded concerning any benevolent being, that his disposition will, in certain cases at least be mercifully exercised; or that when certain objects are presented to his view, and solicit his interference, he will extend his benevolence to them, although their character is such as not to merit this interference at his hands, or even such as to deserve in some degree his anger, rejection, or punishment. But God is boundlessly benevolent. Mercy in the abstract, and extending to every degree which propriety and justice will admit, must therefore be acknowledged by reason to be an essential part of the divine benevolence. What and how great this extent is; what objects it will reach, and what crimes it will forgive; cannot, I confess, be at all determined by us; nor upon what terms it will be extended to such objects as it will actually reach. An angel, who had transgressed the divine law, or Adam, after he had fallen, might satisfactorily determine by rational arguments that God was merciful; and yet neither would be able at all to decide whether that mercy would be extended to him; or if it were thus extended, upon what terms, in what manner, and to what degree.

2. Because he exercises patience and forbearance towards mankind.

That men are opposed to the character and government of God; that they continually dishonour his name, violate his laws, so far as they know them, and are guilty of manifold iniquities towards each other, cannot be rationally questioned. The conduct which strict justice on the part of God would dictate as the proper retribution of these crimes, can be no other than severe and immediate punishment. This punishment, however, we do not find executed. On the contrary, he continues them in life, notwithstanding all their provocations, and surrounds them with an endless multitude of blessings. In this part of divine providence, therefore, we find a direct exercise of mercy; that is, of kindness to guilty beings; and this repeated in instances innumerable, instances so multiplied, and so constantly recurring, as to constitute a primary and essential characteristic of the government of God over mankind

3. Because he has formed the human mind in such a manner, that it necessarily considers mercy as high excellence of character.

This argument, largely considered in my Discourse on the Benevolence of God, is applicable to the peculiar exercise of benevolence, in almost the same manner as to benevolence in the abstract. It is not indeed true, that a benevolent being, destitute of mercy, would be therefore destitute of amiableness; because benevolence in every form and exercise, is unquestionably amiable. But it is the necessary dictate of the human understanding, that mercy is the noblest possible exercise of benevolence, and that this attribute is indispensable to a character of absolute perfection. Such is the decision of the mind, as God has formed it; and the invariable result of the understanding, when employed on this subject without passion or prejudice. In the meantime, this attribute is indispensable to the happiness, and even to the comfort, nay, to the tolerable existence, of mankind in the present world. Both crimes and sufferings are here so numerous, and constitute so great a part of the character, and of the lot of all men, that all continually need, and vast numbers in the most absolute manner, the exercise of this disposition. Our circumstances, therefore, continually elucidate and enforce upon us, the justice of this dictate of the understanding.

In this manner God has, of his own choice, rendered this attribute, in our view, absolutely necessary to a perfect, and therefore to his own, character. If, then, mercy constitute not a part of his character, he has necessitated us, of his own choice, to consider his real character as destitute of perfection.

After the application of this argument in former Discourses to the other moral attributes of God, it will be unnecessary any farther to insist on it here.

From these considerations it may, I think, be fairly concluded by reason, that God is merciful. Accordingly, mankind appear to have generally regarded this as the true character of God. Such, at least, seems to be the apprehension which men have formed of the object of their worship, as is evident from the very act of rendering worship. I see not how men can be supposed to pray to any being, of whose favour they could not entertain either belief or hope. But all favour from God to guilty beings must be merciful. In worshipping him therefore they have, I think, plainly expressed their hope at least, that he would regard them with mercy in some indefinite degree; and this hope they have probably derived from one or other of these considerations.

II. But whether the mercy of God will extend to the final forgiveness of sin, and the communication of future happiness to man; or, if this were to be granted, upon what terms these blessings will be communicated; cannot be determined by reason, from any considerations within its power. What conduct is proper for the Infinite Mind to pursue towards such rebellious and guilty creatures as we are, and whether that conduct shall include any future favour to us, can never be decided by the human understanding. Socrates doubted whether it were possible for God to forgive sin, and, in my view, expressed the real ultimatum of reason on this subject. The sins of men are so causeless, so numerous, and so great, as to leave to a sober man, solemnly considering this subject, little else beside 'a fearful looking for of judgment.' To relieve the distress and despondency to which we are thus exposed, the Bible comes to our aid; and holds out to our view the most unequivocal proofs, not only of the existence, but also of the extent of this divine attribute. These are found,

1. In the numerous declarations which assert this character of God.

These declarations are found everywhere, and are so familiarly known, that they need not now be repeated.

They are also given to us in every form, in the most forcible language, and with the strongest images; and defy all doubt, as well as all denial, concerning this subject. The text is as direct and ample a declaration of this character of God as can be desired or formed, and the context as beautiful and forcible an illustration.

2. In the precepts of the Bible.

These require men to exercise mercy to each other, and assure them of peculiar divine approbation, and an eminently glorious reward for the performance of this duty. At the same time they threaten the most awful penalties, final condemnation, and absolute rejection, to all the unmerciful. Nay, they forbid us to hope, and even to ask for the forgiveness of our sins, unless we heartily forgive the trespasses of our fellow men. The 'merciful' only are entitled by the Scriptures to the 'attainment of mercy,' while those of a contrary character are uniformly threatened with a terrible retribution.

This species of proof is exhibited with the strongest possible force in the account given us by Christ of the last judgment. In this account, recorded in the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew, our Saviour mentions no other ground of the final acceptance of mankind, but the exercise of mercy towards their fellow men; and no other ground of their final rejection, but their destitution of this attribute and its exercises. We know, indeed, from numerous declarations made by himself, that mercy is not the only thing required of men by the will of God, nor the only thing regarded by the Judge in the acceptance or rejection of men at the great day. But we are clearly taught in this account, that mercy holds the foremost place in human excellence, and in the divine estimation, and that the contrary character is the most odious depravity, and pre-eminently the object of the divine abhorrence.

3. In testimonies of the divine approbation given to such as have exercised this disposition; and of the divine disapprobation of such as have exhibited the contrary character.

In the instances of Rahab, Ruth, Boaz, David towards Saul and his house, Obadiah towards the prophets of God, Ebed-melech the Ethiopian (or Cushite) towards Jeremiah, &c., God was pleased to give direct and important testimonies of his favour and approbation in blessing those who had showed mercy to their fellow men. On the other hand, he manifested in the most awful manner his displeasure against Saul and his house, for his cruelty towards the Gibeonites; against Ahab, Jezebel, Athaliah, Pashur, Herod, and many others, for their cruelty. These are all direct proofs that mercy is highly acceptable to God, and that the implacable and unmerciful are an abomination in his sight.

4. In requiring all our homage and obedience to himself as a merciful God.

On this argument, although unanswerable in its import, I shall not insist, because it will be easily understood from the application already made of it to the moral attributes of God, considered in former Discourses.

5. In the mediation of Christ.

Christ is to us the channel through which the divine mercy flows, and his mediation the procuring cause for which it is exercised towards mankind. All the preceding arguments, therefore, so far as they are furnished by the Scriptures, have a reference to him, and are supremely illustrated by his mediation. This great subject claims, of course, a distinct consideration, more extended and more particular than the present occasion will permit. Such a minute examination will, however, be the less necessary at the present time, because the subject will recur in many forms during the progress of these Discourses, and because it is the commanding theme in every desk, and the principal subject of information to every religious audience. I shall now briefly consider the mercy of God, as illustrated by the incarnation, life, and death of the Redeemer.

At this time the divinity of Christ will not be at all insisted on, as it will be, of course, the subject of a future investigation. It is sufficient for my purpose that he was, what he cannot with decency be denied to be, 'the beloved Son of God, in whom he is ever well pleased; the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person; as much better than the angels, as he has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they; the first born of every creature,' and the glory of God in the heavens, as well as in the earth.

When this great and wonderful Person, great and wonderful beyond any possible estimation of such minds as ours, became incarnate; 'he who was rich' in the best of all possessions, the unqualified love of his Father, 'for our sakes became poor, that we through him might become rich.' He allied himself in a manner intimate, eternal, and inseparable to flesh and blood, to sinners and worms of the dust; and was not unwilling, nor 'ashamed to call them his brethren.' The strength and intenseness of the purpose for which he interfered, the greatness of his tenderness and compassion for mankind, are exhibited with the utmost possible force, in the greatness of the condescension and humiliation which he thus voluntarily assumed. It ought here to be remembered, that he not only became man, but man in the humblest circumstances; was the son of a poor virgin, married to a poor man; and was born in a stable, wrapped in swaddling-clothes, and laid in a manger.

In the life of the Son of God the same character was exhibited in a great variety of forms. Throughout almost all his residence in the world, that is, during his minority, and about twelve years afterward, this glorious Person was entirely subjected to the commands and government of his humble parents, and wrought patiently in the business of a carpenter, laboriously earning his own bread, and theirs, by the sweat of his brow. After he began his public ministry, 'he went about doing good,' particularly to those who were sick, blind, deaf, dumb, halt, maimed, and possessed of devils. To the poor, to publicans, and to sinners, he also preached the gospel; and with supreme patience, labour, and benignity, invited them to eternal life, Samaritans, hated by the Jews beyond example, he brought into the divine kingdom; and after warning, instructing, and exhorting Jerusalem, to the last limits of hope, he wept with the deepest compassion over its unbelief and ruin.

In his death the same glorious attribute was still more wonderfully manifested. His death, like his incarnation and life, was wholly voluntarily; for he who drove the money-changers and their companions out of the temple; at whose presence the guards fell back-

ward to the ground; whose voice, diseases, demons, and elements obeyed; and who re-summoned life to the breathless corpses of others; could undoubtedly have prolonged his own life, prevented every assault upon his person, and forbidden by his power the approach of danger and harm. Accordingly, he informs us, that 'he laid down his life for his sheep, and that no man took it from him, but that he laid it down of himself.'

At the same time, his death was the most humiliating which can be conceived, or suffered. It was the death of a malefactor, and that of the most scandalous kind; a death also pronounced by the voice of God to be accursed; and preceded and attended by every circumstance of contempt, abuse, and shame, which a furious rabble, and their more malignant masters, could devise or inflict. Nor was it less distressing than humiliating. The clear foresight of it in the garden of Gethsemane, threw even him, with all his lion-like fortitude, into 'an agony;' and forced 'sweat' from his body in the form of 'great drops of blood.' The sufferance of it on the cross extorted from him that bitter cry, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' It is however to be remembered, that 'he made his soul an offering for sin,' and that, in his soul, his peculiar distresses were chiefly suffered. This death, together with all the anguish which it involved, he perfectly foresaw and predicted; and in the full sight of this anguish devoted himself to the suffering. In the midst of his agonies also he prayed for the forgiveness of his murderers; and with such efficacy, that within fifty days from his crucifixion several thousands of them believed on his name, through the preaching of St Peter; and are now in the heaven of heavens, celebrating with songs of transport the divine compassion of their Redeemer.

The incarnation, life, and death of Christ, were undertaken and accomplished by him, with a complete knowledge, not only of the distresses which he was to undergo, but also of the character of those for whom they were to be undergone. He knew perfectly that they were sinners, rebels, and apostates, condemned and ruined; utterly indisposed to believe his testimony, to accept his person, or to become interested in his mediation. He perfectly knew, that to make them even reconciled to him, or grateful for the immense benefits which he proffered, it would be necessary, after all he had done, to send the Spirit of grace into the world, to give them a new heart and a better mind. Of course he engaged in this wonderful employment, from compassion only, to the miserable beings whom he came to redeem. As his own character and conduct are therefore the strongest possible exhibition of mercy, so God, who gave him up to all these sufferings for this end, and to whom he was plainly the dearest object in the universe, has in this transaction equally exhibited mercy as his own character.

From these summary considerations on this subject, I remark,

1. The glory of this divine attribute.

No moral characteristic has ever been esteemed so lovely as this, or so honourable to an intelligent being. To love virtue, and the virtuous, is undoubtedly excellent and commendable; and includes all which we intend by justice, candour, or complacency, as exercised towards the character of others. In those who exercise this disposition, it is both honourable and lovely; and to those who are thus loved, it is an eminent ingredient of happiness.

To love those whose character has not been exhibited to us as either virtuous or sinful; to love, for example, absolute strangers, merely because they are rational beings; seems plainly to be a still higher exercise of a virtuous and amiable character. But to love those who are known to be enemies to us, as well as vile and hateful in themselves; and to endeavour, with peculiar self denial, or with great efforts, to render them virtuous and happy, is a still nobler exercise of goodness than either of the former. This, as mankind in the calm exercise of reason have ever determined, and as the Scriptures have abundantly declared, is the crown, the splendour, the glory of moral excellence.

In considering this subject, it is difficult to refrain from calling to mind the views of it which angels have formed and expressed. At the birth of the Redeemer these exalted and benevolent beings left their happy residence, and directed their flight immediately to this sinful world. Here, for four thousand years, they had in the course of their ministry witnessed little else in the conduct of men beside rebellion against God, injustice to each other, and the debasement of themselves. Still, with a divine sympathy, they rejoiced in the prospect of seeing the guilty mind renewed, the impious and deformed life purified from its stains, and the salvation of the ruined children of Adam certainly accomplished. Eagerly they hastened to proclaim 'the glad tidings of great joy,' that 'a Saviour was born unto men in the city of David.' One soul animated them all; and with one voice, inspired by the same exalted benevolence, they sang, 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will towards men.'

How different have been the feelings of mankind, for whom this mediation has been accomplished! Mankind, when Christ appeared in the world, rejected, persecuted, and slew him. From that day to the present, they have discovered the same disposition, with evidence which cannot be questioned, in their unbelief and rejection of the Redeemer. We, as well as others, possess and prove this character. Were Christ now to be born, there is but too much reason to fear that we, like the Jews, should leave him in a stable, consign him to a manger, persecute him through life, and compel him to a violent death. The Jews began their warfare against him with disbelieving and rejecting him, and ended it with his crucifixion. Our disbelief and rejection of Christ are but too fearful indications that, were our circumstances the same with theirs, we should unite with them in nailing him to the cross. In the single act of refusing to commemorate his death, how many, here present, declare that even in their own view they are not his friends. Let every such person remember the declaration of Christ himself, that 'he who is not for him is against him.'

Let us all remember, also, that Christ was infinitely rich in all good, before he became poor for our sakes. Of course, he needed not us, nor any thing which is ours. With infinite ease, and by the mere exercise of his will, he could have blotted us out of being, and then have raised up millions of virtuous, obedient, and glorious creatures; all of whom would, throughout eternity, have employed themselves in his service with unchanging faithfulness and joy. Whence, then, and let reason answer the question, did he choose to be-

come man; to suffer, and to die, for the lost race of Adam; for you, and for me? The only answer he himself has long since given; 'God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believed on him should not perish, but have everlasting life.' God was so benevolent, so disposed to show kindness, so full of long-suffering and tender mercy, that even this exertion was not too great for him to make.

2. From these considerations we also learn the absolute necessity of divine revelation to mankind.

On the question, Whether God will forgive sin, and accept sinners? evidently depends every hope of happiness beyond the grave. The question is therefore infinitely important to us, and needs in the highest degree to be satisfactorily answered. The doctrine, that God is merciful, is, I think, in the view of reason, sufficiently probable to command our faith. But that it is, or can be, proper for God to forgive sin in any case, reason is utterly unable to evince. In what manner this conduct on the part of God would affect the government and welfare of the universe, man without revelation is utterly unable to determine. It is one thing to discern that God is merciful, and wholly another to know the objects to which the divine mercy can with propriety be extended, or the cases in which it can with propriety interfere.

If reason can know that God will forgive the sins of men, it must derive this knowledge either from the nature of this attribute, or from the fact that he has, in some one instance, at least, forgiven sin, or from some declaration that he will forgive it, or from some argument founded on analogy.

(1.) From the nature of the divine mercy we cannot conclude, that God can or will forgive the sins of mankind. Whatever is best, and on the whole most proper to be done, we are warranted to conclude he will certainly do; but what this is, can never be determined by our minds. Two things place this assertion beyond debate. The one is, the extent of the divine kingdom, and of all its immense and eternal concerns, which must, of course, demand far other measures than such as we are able to comprehend or devise; the other is, that God, in fact, does innumerable things, utterly contrary to all that we should expect, and wholly removed beyond the limits of our understanding. These furnish the most ample proofs, that he will do innumerable other things, equally contrary to our expectation and decision; and, of course, that we cannot pre-determine what he will do.

(2.) Revelation apart, we know no instance in which he has forgiven, and possess no declaration that he will forgive, the sins of men.

(3.) Equally destitute are we of any analogy, from which this conclusion can be rationally derived. The only ground even of hope, furnished by his providence, is the patience with which he endures, and the blessings with which he surrounds us, notwithstanding our provocations. But this conduct seems to be connected by necessity with a state of trial, and furnishes no solid argument of a future and favourable reward. The gloomy and distressing circumstances which attend our removal from this world by death, exhibit, on the contrary, awful premonitions of an unhappy allotment to us beyond the grave.

Independently of revelation, man is left to the sentence of mere justice and rigid laws. By these he is of course condemned. He is, in fact, a sinner, and must therefore be pronounced guilty in the day of trial. In this situation, reason finds and leaves him; and to this situation infidelity conducts him again. Without the mediation of Christ, there is no escape from the sentence of the divine law; and revelation itself furnishes no other way in which mercy can be extended to sinning man.

According to the most comfortable scheme of infidelity, you must go to the judgment on the footing of your own righteousness, and be tried by your own obedience. If you have faithfully obeyed God, you will be acquitted; if not, you must be condemned. If then justification, acceptance, and future happiness; if deliverance from wrath, and escape from ruin, are necessary to you; the mediation of Christ, and the revelation which alone brings this mediation to your knowledge, or furnishes you with a hope of sharing in its blessings, are equally necessary.

3. These considerations strongly enforce the guilt and danger of cruelty.

A merciful God, who esteems this attribute as the glory and consummation of his own excellence, cannot fail to detest supremely the opposite character, wherever it is found. These are the two extremes of the moral nature: the former supremely lovely, the latter supremely hateful. Thus, God has declared in the Scriptures, and thus mankind have also testified in all ages and nations. The awful parable of the 'servant who owed ten thousand talents,' brings this subject home to the heart, with the greatest force of which language is capable. His debt to his Lord, great as it was, was freely forgiven. But for his cruelty to his fellow servant, he was 'thrust into prison, and delivered over to the tormentors, until he should pay' the ten thousand talents which he owed. In what an affecting manner does this story exhibit the indignation of God against unkindness and oppression? How plainly does he here teach us, that this sin is pre-eminently provoking in his sight, and beyond most, if not all others, the cause of absolute rejection and endless suffering. Let every cruel, every unfeeling man, tremble at this terrible exhibition of the views entertained by a merciful God concerning his odious and detestable character.

4. These considerations furnish the strongest inducements to the exercise of mercy.

In the great kingdom of providence, how many blessings are continually provided by the hand of God for the evil and unthankful race of Adam? In spite of all their innumerable provocations; in spite of their impiety, idolatry, lewdness, falsehood, oppressions, wars, and devastations; notwithstanding this great world has been from the beginning a temple of idols, a house of pollution, and a field of blood; the sun continually rises, the rain descends, the fields blossom, the harvests ripen, the seasons are fruitful, and the hearts of men are filled with food and gladness. In the divine precepts the same glorious disposition reigns; and mankind are required, with infinite obligation, to imitate and assume this exalted character; 'to be merciful, as their Father who is in heaven is merciful.' In the promises of the gospel we are allured to this most amiable of all conduct by the reward of immortal life and glory, and hear God himself declaring, 'Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.' In the

threatenings, we are deterred from the contrary conduct by the fearful denunciations of eternal woe.

In the mediation of our Redeemer we are presented with a perfect example of the nature and effects of this most lovely attribute; furnished by a life, of which this attribute was the soul and spirit; a life pure and excellent beyond all precedent, and all praise; and closed by a death full of shame and agony, voluntarily undergone from mere compassion to this perishing world, and beautified and adorned with this consummation of benevolence in its most divine form. In this we indeed behold 'the glory of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.' Here we are drawn with cords of love, that we may run after him.

With these motives, with this example before us, can we fail to 'forgive men their trespasses against us,' and 'be kind to the evil and unthankful?' Can we fail to 'deal our bread to the hungry,' and 'to bring the poor that are cast out, into our houses?' When we see the naked, must we not be willing to 'cover him,' must we not be unable to 'hide ourselves from our own flesh?'

When this importunate and seductive world intrudes itself into the mind, and is insidiously busy in establishing its ascendency over the heart; when wealth is riveting its chains, to fasten us in bondage; when ambition invites us to the high places of power and distinction, and promises that we shall be as gods in grandeur and glory; when pleasure informs us, that we have 'much goods laid up for many years,' and bids us 'take our ease, eat, drink, and be merry;' in a word, when temptation, sense, and sin, crowd around us, and prepare us to absorb all our affections in selfish gratification; let us look to the table of Christ, and remember and behold there, what he has done for us. If we are not hardened indeed, if we are not literally 'dead in trespasses and sins,' we shall find it difficult, and I hope impossible, not to go, and in some measure, do likewise. We shall, like him, 'love our enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again:' we shall 'bless them that curse us, and pray for them who despitefully use us and persecute us.' 'Then shall we indeed be the children of our Father who is in heaven, who maketh his sun to rise on the evil as well as on the good. Then shall our light break forth as the morning, and our health spring forth speedily: our righteousness shall go before us, and the glory of the Lord shall be our rear-ward

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SERMON XIII.

ON THE WISDOM OF GOD.

Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory, for ever and ever. Amen.—1 Tim. i. 17.

In this passage of Scripture, glory and honour are ascribed to God, in the character of the 'eternal, immortal, and invisible' Ruler of all things, and also in that of 'God the only wise;' with a solemn amen subjoined to the ascription. When God is called 'the only wise,' it is not intended that there is no other wisdom besides that which is inherent in him; but that he is the source of all wisdom, and wise to such a degree, as to render all other wisdom nothing in comparison with his. The wisdom of God is, in other words, infinite; and shall now be the subject of our consideration.

The word *wisdom* is applied indifferently to the character, and to the conduct of an intelligent being. As applied to the latter, it denotes the choice of good ends, and the selection and adoption of good means for the accomplishment of them. As applied to the former, it denotes that attribute which thus chooses, selects, and adopts.

Wisdom is therefore a compound attribute, being made up of the knowledge to discern, and the disposition to choose, the ends and means which I have mentioned. The wisdom of God is formed therefore of his omniscience and benevolence, united in planning and accomplishing all real good, in the progress of his immense and eternal kingdom.

It will not unnaturally be supposed, that, as the omniscience and benevolence of God have already been separately discussed, an examination of them, when combined in the attribute of wisdom, must be superfluous. I have at times adopted this opinion: but, upon considering the propensity of our minds to dwell on these attributes, in this combination; a propensity encouraged abundantly by the Scriptures; and the frequency with which the divine wisdom recurs, in forms very various and interesting, both in the conversation and writings of men, and the word of God; I have concluded that a particular discussion of this subject would, if properly conducted, hold a useful place in this system of Discourses.

After the arguments adduced to prove the existence of these attributes, separately considered, it must, I presume, be unnecessary to allege any proofs of their existence in this combination. This discourse will, therefore, be employed only in illustrating this dignified subject, as it is exhibited in the various conduct of the Most High. From this vast field, also, a few examples only will be selected; it being neither necessary nor possible on this occasion, to extend such an investigation to any great length. The scheme of discourse which I propose to pursue, is to mention,

I. *Summarily, such exemplifications of the divine wisdom as are commonly insisted on;* and,

II. *More particularly, some others which have been less the objects of public attention; or which, at least, I have seen either very little, or not at all, discussed by others.*

I. *I shall mention summarily such exemplifications of the divine wisdom, as are commonly insisted on.*

Among the numerous subjects included under this head, the heavens by their magnificence undoubtedly strike the eye with the greatest force and splendour. In all ages, contemplative men have regarded the illustrious objects presented to us in this great field of observation, as eminently indicating the wisdom of God. 'O give thanks,' says the psalmist, 'unto Him who alone doeth great wonders; who by wisdom made the heavens; who made great lights, the sun to rule by day, and the moon and stars to rule by night; for his mercy endureth for ever.' 'The Lord by wisdom,' saith Solomon, 'hath founded the earth; by understanding hath he established the heavens.' 'When he prepared the heavens,' says Wisdom itself, speaking by the voice of the same writer, 'I was there, when he set a compass on the face of the deep.'

To us, whose views are enlarged and rectified by the modern astronomy, this subject is presented with an importance which it could not have assumed in the mind of the ancients. To them, the size, proportions, distances, and uses of the heavenly bodies were in a great measure unknown; and where this was not the fact, were so partially known as to leave the mind in many respects perplexed and lost. With our superior advantages we discern the sun to be a vast luminous world, astonishingly greater than all the others united, which compose the solar system. All these we behold arranged around this glorious world as their common centre. To them the sun communicates motion, light, regularity, and harmony; and to their inhabitants, life, and the means of sustaining it; food, raiment, warmth, and activity; and their consequences, usefulness and enjoyment. This amazing scene of wonders, we have the most satisfactory reason to believe, is in a sense endlessly repeated in the stellary systems, diffused throughout the boundless expansion, and repeated with a similar display of divine wisdom in their regularity, harmony, and beauty. Even an atheist must be compelled to confess, that in this scene there is a perfect and glorious accomplishment of just such things, as, in the view of the human mind, appear to be suited to the most perfect operations of the most perfect wisdom.

In the revolution of the seasons, intimately connected with this subject, we behold an inferior, but still a splendid, display of the same glorious attribute. From the present position of the earth are derived, in the different parts of its annual circuit, summer and winter, seed-time and harvest. It cannot be necessary for me to attempt a detail of the various methods in which the divine hand provides, through the instrumentality of the seasons, for the supply of our wants, the relief of our distresses, and the uninterrupted succession of our enjoyments. A child needs not to be informed, that 'all creatures wait upon God, that he may give them their meat in due season; and that he opens his hand, and satisfies the wants of every living thing.'

Nearly allied to the revolutions of the seasons, is that by which the world enjoys the vicissitudes of day and night. The diurnal rotation of the earth, connected with the position of its axis, furnishes to all its parts an equal enjoyment of these two great affections of our globe; just as its annual revolution, connected with the same positions, distributes the seasons alternately, in a regular succession, over all the regions from the equator to the poles. By the day, man is enabled to pursue successively all the business of life; and by the night is, at the necessary and most proper intervals, furnished with seasons of refreshment and rest. It ought to be remarked, that by means of the refrangibility of light, and the refractive power of the atmosphere, a portion of day is added to us every morning and every evening; and the light of the sun conveyed to us, and withdrawn from us, in that gradual manner, which, while it is eminently beautiful and delightful, is at the same time the only manner in which it could be comfortable, or perhaps tolerable to our eyes.

A philosopher has made it an argument of the wisdom of God, and in my view justly, that the earth is clothed in green, a colour eminently easy, refreshing, and delightful to the eye.

In the provision made for the wants of men and animals, there are innumerable, as well as wonderful proofs of the wisdom of God. The means by which an ample supply of all these wants is continually furnished, were they not the objects of our daily inspection, and thus rendered so familiar as to be in a great measure unregarded, would awaken in our minds, not approbation merely, but amazement. A single plant produces yearly a great number of seeds; so many, as to furnish, in the ordinary course of providence, abundant assurance that that kind of plant shall be continued throughout the successive ages of the world. As a farther security, these seeds are, to a great extent at least, and in all probability universally, incorruptible, when lodged below the depth, within which vegetation springs; notwithstanding they are so easily dissoluble above that limit. By the latter circumstance, an easy, certain, and abundant vegetation is secured; by the former, seeds are treasured in the earth for long periods of time; whence by deep ploughing, digging, and other means, they are brought again within the region of vegetation, and spring in the same manner as fresh seeds. I have been satisfactorily informed of the vegetation of seeds, which had in this manner been certainly kept in the earth no less than two hundred years. The diffusion of these seeds over the face of the earth is accomplished by means, which are perhaps still more wonderful. Such seeds as are heavy and immovable by more obvious means; such for instance as the stones and seeds of fruits, are commonly swallowed both by birds and beasts, and conveyed in their stomachs whithersoever they rove, and are ultimately planted, not only in the neighbouring fields and countries, but also in more distant regions. Others of considerable weight are lodged permanently in a large and light husk, which, together with the seed contained in it, is easily separated, after the seed has become ripe, and blown by the wind over extensive tracts. Others still are winged and feathered in such a manner as to be easily wafted in the breeze, and spread through all the surrounding country. A young gentleman once in my presence examined a seed of a particular kind of grass, and finding a beautiful feather thus adhering to it, was so struck with this contrivance for the dispersion of such seeds over the earth, that he exclaimed, 'The man must be a brute, who does not believe in the existence of God.'

The most necessary and useful things are also, with the most perfect wisdom, generally diffused; while those which are less interesting to human happiness

are more rare and solitary.' Food, raiment, drink, and fuel, are spread everywhere. Gold and gems, wines and spices, are found only in particular places. Wheat and grass, the most useful of all vegetables, grow in more soils and climates than any other. Water and air exist throughout the world, and are placed beyond the control of man. Could any one of our race command either of these elements, he would possess an absolute dominion over every inhabitant of those regions to which this command extended. Animals useful for food, or other important purposes of man are multiplied easily to any extent. Fish, which furnish so considerable a part of human sustenance, multiply, in a sense, endlessly. Other animals of inferior use are, by various causes, limited to a very moderate increase. The clothing of animals changes with the change of climate. When removed to a cold latitude it becomes thick, soft, and warm; when to a hot latitude, it becomes thin, coarse, and cool. Without these changes, the animals thus removed would be unable to live.

Both the body and mind of man are astonishing exhibitions of wisdom, and that in ten thousand different ways. As I have dwelt upon this subject for a purpose somewhat different, in a former Discourse; and as it is so often insisted on by others, I shall dismiss it with only two or three observations. The eye, says Nicholson, were all other arguments for the existence of God unknown or lost, would remain an unanswerable proof of the wisdom of God. The self-restoring power of our bodies, when diseased or wounded, is among the most extraordinary evidences of this attribute.

II. *I shall now mention some other exhibitions of the wisdom of God, less frequently insisted on than those already specified.*

1. A wonderful exhibition of this nature is found in the accomplishment of many ends by few and simple means.

The great principle of gravitation, for example, unites and holds together the corpuscles, which constitute worlds; combines in one vast union the worlds which compose a system, generates the motions of the planets and comets round the sun, and of their satellites round the planets; and governs, universally, their regularity and harmony; levels the surface of the ocean, and prevents it from overflowing the land; produces, as one cause at least, the ascent of vapour, and the descent of rain; gives birth to the continuance of all bodies on the surface of the earth; regulates the motions of animals and of mankind, together with all mechanical powers and operations; and thus extends a governing, necessary, and most useful influence over all worlds, and all their inhabitants. The mean here is one, the ends are innumerable, and the influence of the mean is every where necessary, and all that is necessary.

Water, in the ocean, is the great storehouse of vapour. Hence are formed mists and clouds; which, beside presenting the eye with innumerable, ever-varying, and delightful prospects; sheltering, in intense heats, the bodies of men and animals from the blaze of the sun; pointing out various approaching changes of weather; and thus warning mankind, both on the land and on the sea, of approaching danger, or announcing the arrival of safety; become the sources of rain, dews, hail, and snow, and the origin of fountains, brooks, lakes, and rivers. By these the earth is watered, enriched, and beautified; and man supplied with food and drink, with raiment and fuel. By these, also, all animals are supplied with sustenance and enjoyment. Water also is not only the general nourishment, but the chief component part of all vegetables, and a principal one of all animal bodies. At the same time it moves innumerable machines of different kinds, abridges in a wonderful degree the labour of man, and performs a vast variety of important purposes which without it would be impossible. In the ocean it is moreover a menstruum, in which salt, being dissolved, is raised to the surface, and thereby crystalizing becomes a part of the food of men and animals, without which their sustenance would be uncomfortable and precarious, if not impossible. Water is also an indispensable material in a vast multitude of chemical, medical, economical, and other artificial processes; and has in this way wonderfully enlarged, and is still in this way daily enlarging, the comfort and the knowledge of mankind. Finally, it is the basis of all navigation; and thus the chief medium of the commerce, and of the geographical and natural, as well as much other knowledge, possessed by men.

The same doctrine might be extensively illustrated by the almost innumerable purposes of which fire, air, and light, are the means; as well as by a great multitude of other subjects. Generally it may be observed, that the few elements to which all material substances have been already reduced, constitute all the bodies, and are the causes of all the immensely numerous operations which exist in the material world; and in their combination and their efficacy, gloriously display the wisdom and the goodness of their Creator.

2. The unceasing and universal variety introduced into the works of creation and providence, is a strong exemplification of the wisdom of the Creator.

The creation of a single being, or the production of a single event, furnishes a complete exhibition of the ideas existing in the creating mind, of which either is a copy, and in conformity to which, each was brought into existence. A repetition of the same event, or the existence of a second being exactly resembling the first, would barely exhibit the same ideas a second time, and discover nothing new concerning the Creator. Hence were two or more beings or events exactly like each other to be brought into existence, none, except the first, would at all enlarge our conceptions of the mind by which they were effectuated. Every variety in beings or events is a new disclosure of the character, skill, and contrivance of the Creator; and, where we understand the end for which it exists, of his goodness also. For this, as one great reason, God undoubtedly has formed and conducted all things on the plan of universal variety. No two beings or events appear precisely alike. The leaves of trees, the blades of grass, and the particles of sand, as well as other more important and more complicated objects, exhibit even to the naked eye, an endless diversity. This characteristic extends through the mineral, vegetable, animal, and rational kingdoms, and throughout the whole progress of events.

In every one of the individuals composing these, may be seen something which is peculiar; and which, in a peculiar manner, unfolds the ideas, the contrivance, the wisdom of the infinite mind. As the diversity is literally boundless, so we are presented by it with a picture of the endlessly diversified views and concep-

tions of him, in whose mind all existed from the beginning.

By this scheme of things, a field is opened to intelligent beings for learning and understanding this glorious part of the divine character. By the love of variety and novelty, which he has implanted in the minds of rational creatures, he has with the same wisdom prompted them voluntarily to an unceasing, unwearied, and delightful study of his works, which are only displays of himself. Thus an effectual and most wise provision is made for our knowledge of the divine character, on which alone is ultimately founded our admiration, reverence, love, and obedience. A virtuous mind, surveying this wonderful subject, can scarcely fail to exclaim, 'O Lord! how manifold are thy works! In wisdom hast thou made them all.'

Farther: Variety is the foundation of all discernment and discrimination in rational beings, and this again is the directory of all our various conduct. For example, if the features of the human face, and the figure of the human person, were not perpetually various, we could not know one man from another, nor distinguish our parents, children, friends, neighbours, or enemies. The judge would not be able to discriminate between the criminal and his innocent neighbour, nor between the witness and a stranger. The parties would become twins. The right of the judge himself to sit upon the bench would be safely doubted and denied, and the child of a beggar or a foreigner might successfully dispute the title to a throne with the lawful heir. Were the varieties even of the human voice to cease, a great part of the important concerns of mankind would be immediately so perplexed and disturbed as to be necessarily given up. Nor could any clue be found to guide us out of the labyrinth, in which we should be lost. Nay, if the hand-writing of men were to become uniform, there would be an end of all certainty in our correspondence, in our instruments of conveyance and obligation, in signatures of testimony, agency, and office; in public and private records, and, in a word, in every thing which was the work of the pen. From these few instances we learn, what indeed might be illustrated by thousands of others, the supreme wisdom with which this variety has been introduced into the creation of God.

3. The divine wisdom is eminently conspicuous, in spreading over the creation certain kinds and degrees of resemblance and uniformity.

Under the last head I have observed, that all things differ from each other. It is still true, and a truth of immense importance, that there is an extensive series of resemblances everywhere diffused, and not less wonderful than the variety which I have specified. These resemblances are the foundation of what logicians term the genera and species, or the kinds and sorts, under which all the objects of our perception are arranged. Were there no such resemblance, there could be no such arrangement, and were there no such arrangement, we should scarcely know any thing beyond the present object. Our knowledge is composed almost entirely of general truths; and every such truth is a proposition, declaring what is true concerning a vast number of individuals. One general truth therefore contains all the knowledge which would be conveyed by a number of propositions, declaring the same thing equal to the whole number of the individuals included. But if we could not arrange individuals into such classes or sorts, every proposition which we formed must be of the kind which logicians call singular, or must respect one individual only; and nothing would be communicated or learned by means of it, but what respected merely that individual. Of course every attribute of every other individual must still be learned anew. The multitude of such propositions which would be necessary to express what is now declared by one general truth, would in a short time over-burden the memory, patience, and strength of the mind, and fatigue it to listlessness and despair. Men would in this case always be children, necessarily ignorant of the nature, qualities, and uses, of almost every thing with which they were concerned. But if there were no such resemblance or uniformity, there could, as I have remarked, be no such arrangement made by the mind. The ideas of kinds and sorts would never be formed. No general propositions could be made, and no general truths exist: for every such truth is merely a declaration concerning resemblance or uniformity. Of course men, as to their knowledge, would be infants for ever.

As therefore by the variety found in all things, and the differences which they everywhere exhibit, God has opened his character boundlessly to our view, and prompted us to study it for ever; so by their uniformity and resemblance he has enabled us to know it, and prepared us for an everlasting progress in intellectual improvement. In both united, he has displayed consummate wisdom.

4. The wisdom of God is strongly conspicuous in the communication of language to mankind.

Language is the medium by which we convey our thoughts to each other, and record them for personal and common use. If we could not convey our thoughts to each other, they must of course be confined to our own bosoms; and each man would know nothing except what he gained from his own observations. His character and situation in such a case, can be very imperfectly imagined by us. But it is perfectly clear that he must be sunk far below the state of a savage, and dwindle into a character incapable of existing, except in that rude wilderness fancifully styled a state of nature. Even the acquisitions which he would make in this situation, he could not leave behind him; but however inclined, must carry them with him to the grave. Every generation, if successive generations could exist, would begin exactly where their fathers began; and not an improvement would be made in the affairs of men. Bacon and Newton, Locke and Berkeley, Addison and Johnson, would then be distinguished, if distinguished at all, as we now mark a shrewder ape, or a more sagacious dog.

By the communication of language to mankind, God has enabled us to unfold to each other all our thoughts, emotions, and designs; to treasure up what we know for the benefit of our posterity, to diffuse the knowledge of common danger and suffering, of common safety and happiness; to spread the same sentiments and improvements over a country, a continent, or a world; to embark in a single, useful, and great design, all whose labours are necessary to the accomplishment; to publish systems of laws for the preservation of the common rights, and the effectuation of the common duties; to unite nations in the great purposes of internal and external defence, to control the vast concerns of empires, to preserve and enlarge the science of preceding ages, to spread the gospel of salvation through the habitable

world, to advance knowledge and virtue on this earth towards the millennial standard, and to prepare endless multitudes of mankind for immortal happiness and glory. In the promotion of these mighty purposes, language is a principal and indispensable ingredient. How strong an impression does it bear of the wisdom of God!

By the contrivance of the same wisdom which communicated it, is language so formed as to be easily learned in very early childhood; the period in which necessity most demands that it should be learned. Nay, it is obviously acquired at this period with far less difficulty than at a more advanced age. At the same time the great body of words is so formed, that they possess an appellative or common nature, so as to denote the kinds and sorts of things above mentioned, and to include all individual beings and events comprised by a sort or kind under one common name. Thus the noun, *man*, denotes all men; the adjective, *good*, denotes that which is good in every instance; the participle, *loving*, signifies the exercise of that affection in every case; the verb, *hate*, includes all exertions of hatred; and the adverb, *swiftly*, indicates a rapid progress wherever it exists. Hence, as in the former case, we are enabled to conceive clearly of things, so by the correspondence of language with our conceptions, we are enabled to speak of them clearly. A few words in this manner are sufficient to express an immense multitude of beings and events, without any perplexity or confusion. Were this not the structure of language, words must be multiplied to such a degree, for the purposes of communication even to a moderate extent, as to render it impossible that they should be either learned or remembered. Nothing but the familiarity of this object can prevent us from admiring the wonderful wisdom which it displays.

5. The wisdom of God is gloriously seen in constituting one great class of his creatures moral agents.

By the term, moral agent, I wish it to be understood, that I intend a real agent, a being whose thoughts, affections, and actions, are his own. Of such agents the divine kingdom is eminently composed.

By forming such agents in innumerable multitudes, God has made beings capable, with intelligence and choice, of coinciding and co-operating with him, in his own infinitely desirable and excellent purposes. They, with a distant, but real resemblance to himself, can know, love, hate, choose, reject, design, and act; and all this to great and good ends. Particularly, they are capable of understanding in some good degree his character, designs, dispensations, law, and government; and the glory and excellence discovered in them all. These also, and him as the Author of them, they are capable of regarding with wonder, veneration, and love. Him they are capable of worshipping and obeying. To each other, at the same time, they are able to extend every useful thought, every amiable affection, and every beneficent action: and can thus become the means of mutual improvement, worth, and happiness. In forming these beings, the wisdom of God is in many respects gloriously manifested. Particularly as they are capable of being the subjects of real, though finite benevolence, and of directing this disposition by their understanding to an unceasing variety of desirable and useful purposes; as they are capable of promoting their own excellence and enjoyment, and that of each other; as they are capable of knowing, loving, and glorifying him, and of possessing the exalted worth and expansive happiness which result from all these as causes; and as immense multitudes of them actually do all the things which I have mentioned; so they can become, and do in fact become, delightful objects both of the benevolence and complacency of God. All these things also they can and will do, in a never-ceasing progress throughout eternity. In forming such agents, therefore, God has made for himself a kingdom supremely glorious and divine; composed of subjects whom his eye regards with infinite complacency, to whom his hand is stretched out with eternal bounty; who, as a vast mirror, reflect as the ocean reflects the splendour of the sun, the boundless beauty and glory of their Creator; and whom his voice with awful but delightful accents pronounces to be a work worthy of Jehovah.

My audience will undoubtedly observe, that there are two great manifestations of divine wisdom, which have usually been alleged by preachers, but which have been omitted in this discussion; the redemption of mankind, and the word of God. These are beyond a question, the prime exhibitions of this attribute. The word of God is called by itself 'the word of wisdom;' the gospel is justly declared to be 'the wisdom of God.' By the same illustrious title is Christ known in the Scriptures; and to disclose the 'manifold wisdom' of God in the most wonderful work of redemption, is expressly asserted to be the end for which all things are created. But there is no opportunity at this time to exhibit either of these subjects, in such a light as they both indispensably demand. On a future occasion, should Providence permit, I may consider them at large.

The illustrations which have been produced in this Discourse, although a very few out of an endless multitude, actually and daily existing, are, it is presumed, amply sufficient to impress upon the mind a full conviction, an affecting sense, of the wisdom of God.

A single remark, intended as a general comment on the several Discourses concerning this most sublime and wonderful of all subjects, the existence and character of the Creator, shall conclude this Sermon.

When we call to mind even those views of the subject which have been here succinctly and imperfectly given; we cannot, I think, fail to exclaim, How great and glorious a being is God!

I have now finished the observations which I proposed to make on the existence and perfections of God, and considered this vast subject as it is presented to us both by reason and revelation. What an amazing character is here manifested to our view! Jehovah, the self-existent, eternal, immutable, omnipresent, omniscient, almighty, and independent; the only good, just, faithful, true, merciful, and wise; the Maker, the Preserver, the Benefactor, and the Ruler of all things; 'to whom be glory for ever and ever.' What a character, what a being, is this! How do all creatures in his presence, and in comparison with his greatness and perfection, shrink into nothing, and become justly 'counted to him as less than nothing and vanity!' How truly, how suitably to his character, does he say, 'I am, and there is none else.' How wonderful a Cause must he be, from whom all things are derived! How divine an architect must he be, who with 'his finger laid the foundation of the earth, and built his stories in the heavens!' How amazing a Ruler, 'who

doth according to his will in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; whose hand none can stay, and to whom no being may say, What doest thou?" How exalted a Benefactor, 'who giveth unto all life, and breath, and all things.' How perfect a God, who conducts his immense kingdom along the ages of eternity, with ever-increasing glory, happiness, and perfection!

How infinitely different is the Jehovah of the Scriptures from the gods of the heathen, of philosophy, and of infidelity. How many weaknesses disgrace, how many passions pollute, how many vices deform, these objects of man's device, applause, and homage. 'All of them are vanity and a lie; and they that make them are like unto them, and so is every one that putteth his trust in them. There is none of them that considereth in his heart; in none of them is there knowledge or understanding. They feed on ashes; a deceived heart hath turned them aside, that they cannot deliver their souls, nor say, Is there not a lie in our right hands? Lift up your eyes on high, and behold, Who hath created these things? Who bringeth out their host by number? Who calleth them all by names? Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with a span? Who hath comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure; and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance?'

But thou, 'O Zion, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice; and rejoice with joy and singing. Thou shalt see the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of thy God. He shall come with a strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him. Behold his reward is with him, and his work before him. He shall feed his flock like a shepherd; he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom. For thus saith the High and Lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy, I dwell in the high and holy place; with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit; to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite. For I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth; for the spirit should fail before me, and the souls which I have made.'

Seraphim and cherubim, thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers, feel no employment, no honour, no happiness so great, as to worship, serve, and glorify God for ever and ever. With wonder, awe, adoration, and transports they surround his throne, 'veil their faces, cast their crowns at his feet, and cease not day nor night, crying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who wast, and who art, and who art to come.'

If men possessed the disposition of angels, their employments, their views, and their happiness would in substance be the same. No polytheists, no atheists, no infidels, would ever have disgraced the human name. To this end, no enlargement of our understanding is necessary. A mere change of disposition would convert this world into one great temple of Jehovah, in which one faith would command and control, and one worship ascend as the odour of sweet incense, 'from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same.' 'Holiness to the Lord' would be written on the hearts, the lips, the employments, and the pleasures of the great family of Adam. Every heart would glow with love and rapture, and every hill and valley become vocal with praise. In all his wonderful works, God would be sought and seen, acknowledged and glorified. Every being and event would be viewed only as a manifestation of God; and the universe contemplated as a vast picture, exhibiting, in forms and varieties innumerable, the wisdom and power, the benevolence and amiableness, the beauty and glory of Jehovah.

SERMON XIV.

THE DECREES OF GOD.

But he is in one mind, and who can turn him? And, what his soul desireth, even that he doeth.—Job xxiii. 13.

In this passage of Scripture Job asserts, that the mind and will of God is one and unchangeable, or incapable of being turned; and that all its dictates, or desires, are carried by him into execution. As God does whatsoever he chooses, it is hardly necessary to observe that he does nothing but what he chooses. As his mind is unchangeable and but one; so, this being admitted, it is intuitively certain that it has always been but one. As all things were originated, are preserved, directed, and controlled by God; so it is plain that they all come to pass exactly according to his pleasure. This doctrine is therefore clearly contained in the text:—

That all things, both beings and events, exist in exact accordance with the purpose, pleasure, or what is commonly called, the decrees of God.

Before I begin the direct discussion of this doctrine, I shall make a few preliminary observations.

It is well known to the Christian world at large, that no subject has been the foundation of more, or more strenuous, controversy than this. By various classes of Christians, and some of them very numerous, it has been roundly and steadily denied in form. The things which have been written concerning it with heat and obstinacy, would fill many volumes. It has been asserted to be injurious to the divine character, and destructive of all finite moral agency. Those who have holden the doctrine, have been charged by their antagonists with denying the free agency of God himself; and with introducing into the Christian system the stoical doctrine of fate, and making an iron handed necessity, or blind destiny, the ultimate and irresistible disposer of all things. At the same time it has been alleged, that they shroud all human hopes in midnight darkness, and prevent or destroy every effort of man to become finally virtuous and happy.

Such things as these certainly prove, that there is

in the human mind a strong bias against the doctrine. This appears often in the conduct of those who believe it, many of whom seem desirous that it should either rarely or never be brought into the desk. Multitudes appear utterly unwilling even to converse concerning it, and perhaps equal multitudes decline to make it a subject of contemplation.

It must be acknowledged that this doctrine has been indiscreetly handled, both in sermons and in other discourses. As many things pertaining to it are in their nature very abstruse, and many others lie without the reach of the human understanding; so it will be easily believed, that in the ardour of investigation, disputants will of course be in danger of asserting many things which are neither satisfactorily evinced, maturely considered, nor well understood by themselves; and extend their inquiries to many other things, about which inquisition is fruitless, because discovery is impracticable. The bounds of the human mind, as well as of the human race, are fixed; and beyond them it cannot pass. They are, however, distant enough from each other to leave a field of investigation so ample as to allow of the utmost employment of the greatest talents. Every attempt to push our inquiries beyond them is unwise, both because it is vain, and because it is a waste of that time which might be usefully employed on things within our reach.

But if the doctrine which I have stated is true; if it is a doctrine revealed in the Scriptures; it cannot fail to be a proper subject of thought, of conversation, and of preaching; 'for all Scripture is given by inspiration of God; and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness.' Perhaps it is unnecessary, and would not be useful, to make it a subject of very frequent discussion in the pulpit. A considerable number of persons in every congregation must be regarded as being imperfectly competent to judge advantageously of such a subject from such discussions. Such persons, to say the least, would fail of being instructed; and if not instructed, would probably be bewildered. At the same time, though frequently asserted, it is very little discussed in the Scriptures: and the Apostle Paul, alluding to it, breaks out into this exclamation; 'O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!

No occasion can be more proper for the introduction of this doctrine into the desk than the present. I have just finished a series of Sermons on the Being and Perfections of God. His decrees, or counsels, are the next subject of inquiry in a system professedly comprising all the important doctrines of theology. That the doctrine concerning this subject which is true and scriptural, whatever it may be, is one and a very important one, of such a system, will not be questioned, either by those who believe or those who disbelieve the doctrine advanced, as the principal subject of the present Discourse. The controversies about it, and the sentiments expressed by the several disputants, prove this point beyond any necessity of debate.

In considering this doctrine, I shall attempt, first, to explain it; secondly, to prove it; and thirdly, to answer the objections commonly made against it.

1. I shall attempt to explain this doctrine.

This is peculiarly necessary; because if I mistake not, both its friends and enemies have perplexed it not a little, by the manner in which they have represented the doctrine, and each other's opinions.

It has been frequently said, that the decrees of God are the consequence of his knowledge, and that his foreknowledge is in consequence of his decrees: and it is asked, How is it possible that God should foreknow the existence of any thing, until he has decreed that it should exist? This phraseology, if applied to men or other finite beings, might be correct. Such beings usually consider, then determine, and then, so far as is applicable to their nature and circumstances, foresee or foreknow the event. But when applied to God, it is necessarily erroneous. In the Divine Mind, succession is impossible. There is not, there cannot be, one act, by which God knows any or all things; another following it, by which he determines their existence; and then another, by which he foreknows that they will exist. Whatever exists in the Divine Mind exists co-etaneously and co-eternally, with all other things which exist in it. God in this respect is no more the subject of 'variableness, or any shadow of turning,' than in other respects. Whatever is intended by knowledge, foreknowledge, or decrees, all is simultaneous, or absolutely co-existent. St Paul exhibits this subject in a happier manner. 'Whom he foreknew,' says this apostle, 'he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son.' By this declaration we are not to understand that the predestination spoken of followed the foreknowledge, any more than that the foreknowledge followed the predestination. The apostle says, 'Whom he foreknew,' not after he had foreknown them.

Should it be said that this phraseology is adopted merely in condescension to human infirmity, and that it is intended to express these things as they exist in the order of nature, and not in the order of time; I answer, that the language is still dangerous, because it is incorrect in itself; and so liable to be misunderstood, that it leads both those who use it and those to whom it is used, into very serious errors. The act or state of the Divine Mind, which gave birth to the existence of all things, is one; and there never was a period in duration, nor even an indivisible moment, in which it was not absolutely and inseparably one.

The decrees of God are often said to be general and special; the special decrees being those which respect the acceptance or rejection of mankind, and the general decrees those which respect other things. This language is also in my view erroneous, and leads those who adopt it into mischievous consequences. There is no metaphysical or real distinction in the nature of the several decrees of God. Nor are they distinguishable from each other, except either numerically, or by means of the objects which they respect. Nor is there any more speciality pertaining to one of them than to another. God wills or chooses the existence, conversion, or salvation of a man, the fall of a sparrow, or the descent of rain, with a volition in every sense metaphysically, or in its own nature, the same. The strict truth is, that one indivisible act, perhaps it might be as properly called state of the Divine Mind, gave birth to the existence of all things.

The decrees of God are frequently styled eternal. They are truly eternal in the same sense in which God is eternal: viz. they are eternally present, and incapa-

ble of being compared, metaphysically, with a successive state of being. In this sense they are always, like God himself, possessed of an existence eternally present; being no other than an unchangeable state of the Divine Mind.

Farther, the decrees of God are said to be sovereign. In explaining this term, some persons speak of God as willing, decreeing, &c., because he wills, chooses, or pleases, &c.; while others on the contrary suppose that the decrees of God, in whatever sense understood, must, if they exist, be arbitrary, and therefore unreasonable; and hence they conclude, that there are no such decrees. Both, in my view, think and speak erroneously. To say that God wills a thing, because he wills it, is to speak without meaning. It is impossible that any thing should be the cause of itself, nor can an act be any more the cause of its own existence than a being. This doctrine, it is to be observed, is equally true of the final, as of the efficient cause. Nothing can be the end for which itself exists. The assertion is also injurious to God; because it exhibits him as choosing, or decreeing, without any reason, and to no end. This conduct in men, if we suppose it possible, would be folly in the extreme: it can therefore never be imputable to 'the only wise God.' The decrees and the conduct of God are sovereign, in the true and scriptural sense; *viz.* that he does according to his will, independently and irresistibly; and that he gives no account of any of his matters, any further than he pleases. Still it is equally true, that he wills nothing without the best reason, whether the reason be disclosed to his creatures or not. Real glory to himself, and real good to his creation, not otherwise attainable, furnish the reason of the divine choice, whether it respects the existence or motions of an insect, or the conversion and salvation of a man. The kind, the degree, the manner, and many other things, are either wholly or partially unknown to us; but the good is always in view, and always the reason of the divine determination.

It is observable, that the Scriptures rarely speak of this subject under the name decree. This word, and others derived from it, are used in the Old Testament twelve times with a reference to God. In each of these instances, a particular determination or sentence, concerning a particular thing is spoken of; and in no instance, that general determination, or system of determinations, usually denoted by this term in theological discussions. In the New Testament the word, as referring to God, is not used at all. Whenever the subject of this doctrine is mentioned in the Scriptures, the words counsel, purpose, choice, pleasure, will, or some other equivalent words, are employed to express it. These words are in my view more adapted, in the exact metaphysical sense, to the subject, than the word decrees; and naturally lead the mind to more just conceptions of its nature. In accordance with this fact, I shall express my own views of it in this manner. What is commonly intended by the decrees of God is, that choice, or pleasure, of the Divine Mind, eternally and unchangeably inherent in it, by which all things are brought into being.

Having thus explained my views of the doctrine, I shall now attempt,

II. *To prove it.*

Under this head I shall first allege several direct arguments in support of the doctrine; and secondly, suggest several difficulties which result from denying it.

I. I shall allege several direct arguments in support of the doctrine.

It will be admited by all persons, besides atheists, that there was a time when created or finite beings began to exist; and of course, that, antecedently to this time, there was nothing except God. It will also be admitted that God was the cause of their existence, or that all originally derived their being from him in some manner or other. With these things in view, I observe,

(1.) That all things, both beings and events, were eternally perfectly known to God. By this I intend alike to all things possible as well as actual, and the nature, qualities, and operations of all; together with all supposable connections, dependencies, and relations. I mean also that these were seen with one single view, and that completely comprehensive and perfectly clear, by the Divine Mind: so that nothing pertaining to them in any respect was, in any degree, unperceived in this perfect manner. This view I consider also as being absolutely one, invariable, and eternal. It never began, it will never terminate. It never has been, it never will be, in the least degree changed. All this is involved in the omniscience of God; and has, I flatter myself, been proved to be a part of the divine character.

(2.) In the nature and operations of things there is, inherent, a foundation for preference or choice. By this I intend, that some of the things which were thus known by the Divine Mind, were better, or upon the whole more desirable; and that others were less desirable. This, I presume, cannot be denied. It will not be denied, that a multitude of those things which we can imagine, and which God, if he pleased, could create, are much less desirable, and certainly so, even in the view of such minds as ours, than other things which he has actually created. Beyond this it will, I presume, be admitted without a question, that many things which we can imagine, are absolutely undesirable; and that others still would, if brought into existence, be incalculably noxious to the universe. That an individual man, for example, should possess the strength of an elephant, the ferocity of a tiger, the sight and wings of an eagle, and the sagacity of a fiend; or that another individual should possess the power of controlling the elements with the spirit and invulnerability of a fiend; would be things absolutely fatal to the inhabitants of this world. That the apostles, when employed to publish the gospel, and erect the Christian church, should have possessed the fraudulent and impious spirit of Voltaire, would, as every sober man must necessarily see, have been a fact incalculably injurious to mankind. These three instances may serve as representatives of millions more, imaginable even by the limited faculties of the human mind.

Should it be said, that in the multitude of possible things, there were many equally desirable; and that between these there is no foundation for a choice; I answer, that this is said gratuitously, and cannot be known to be true. Should the person who says it, intend that the things specified are in all respects exactly alike, and only numerically different; it will be necessary to inquire whether the object of choice proposed, is to create only one of these similar things, and for that end to select one only. If this be the thing in-

tended, I answer, that he amuses himself with words; for, as the things differ only numerically, one of them when created, is equally the archetype of each of these images, and no more of one than of any other; and whatever is included in the nature and operations of them all, is completely realized in the existence of one. But if the object intended be, whether only one, or more than one, of these similar beings shall be created; then I answer, that the objector has himself furnished a complete foundation for a preference; the cases now differing from each other, as a unit differs from two, three, or more; or a single man from many: a difference not only perceptible, but capable of being important, to any supposable degree. Should it be said, that things may differ in some minute particulars, and yet furnish no solid foundation for a preference: I reply, that it cannot be wisely or warrantably said. We indeed may not, and usually do not perceive why things differing very little admit of such a preference; but to the intuitive and all-comprehensive view of God, a little difference between two things may, in the eternal progress of his dispensations, be such as to produce an influence on the universe so diverse, as to render one entirely beneficial, and the other wholly noxious. Few differences can be more minute or trifling to the human eye, than the existence of one hair more, or one less, on the human head; yet God has informed us, that these are all numbered by him; and that he sees a reason for preferring the number actually existing.

But should it be granted, that things, materially differing, existing in any numbers, and making up, in several instances, complete and diverse systems, or universes, may yet be equally desirable in the view of God; I answer further, that in this case the object of choice would be to create one of these systems, and carry it into complete execution; and it being perfectly indifferent which of them should be brought into being, there would nothing remain to be resolved on, but the act of creating. That which was begun in pursuance of this determination, would thenceforth for this very reason be preferable to the others, and be the most perfect, possible system.

(3.) This foundation for choice cannot but be perfectly known to God. As this position will not be questioned by any person, who admits the doctrine under the preceding head, and plainly cannot, but in defiance of reason; I proceed to observe,

(4.) That God cannot but have chosen the existence of all those things, whose existence was on the whole desirable, and of no others. The benevolence of the divine character furnishes complete evidence of the truth of this position. The benevolence of God is boundless and perfect. It is the nature of benevolence to desire and delight in the existence of good; of perfect benevolence, to desire the existence of perfect good; and of boundless benevolence, to desire the existence of infinite good, or, in other words, of all which upon the whole is good. If therefore the existence of any thing is desirable, God cannot but have chosen it, because its existence was necessary to this perfect good; which is the supreme object, and delight of his benevolence. The existence of any being or event, is desirable upon the whole, only because it is necessary to the perfect good which I have mentioned, either by contributing to the existence, or by being itself a part, of that good. It is therefore completely evident, that God cannot but have chosen the existence of every thing, whose existence is upon the whole desirable.

(5.) This choice of God, that things should exist, is the only divine energy, and the only cause of existence. The energy of a mind is its will; and this is synonymous with its choice, generally understood; each act of the will being no other than an act of choice. What is thus true of every finite mind, is eminently true of the Infinite Mind. In the Infinite Mind there are no successive acts of choice; but one universal and unchangeable pleasure, which gives birth to every thing. It is metaphysically proper to say, that God wills all things into existence, or that they are produced by his choice in the full sense in which any effect is said to be produced by its efficient cause. This I suppose will not be denied so far as the existence of beings is concerned. The only question will probably respect events; and particularly those which are called the actions of moral or voluntary creatures. With respect to these I observe, that it makes no difference as to the truth of this doctrine, whatever difference it may make as to others, whether we suppose God to will the existence of these beings, furnished with those faculties which enable them to act in any given manner, and in the possession of which they will really act in that manner; or whether we suppose him to will the existence of their actions immediately. The pleasure or choice of God in the former case, is the productive cause of the existence of these beings, and of their faculties. With these faculties, these beings of course will certainly, although without any necessity except what is attributable to inclination, act in a given manner in every case. All the actions of which they will thus be the subjects were antecedently to the existence of the beings in question, perfectly discerned by the omniscience of God; and so far as they will ever have existence, were objects of his choice or preference. He therefore willed into existence such beings, possessed of such faculties as he knew would certainly give birth to the existence of their actions. Although therefore he may have chosen that their actions should be the result of their energy, without a direct exertion of his own; it is clear, that he chose the existence of such beings, possessed of such faculties, with a perfect knowledge that they would be the authors of such actions, and that the actions would exist. As therefore he chose, that beings who he certainly knew would perform these actions, should exist; it is evident that he also chose, upon the whole, the existence of the actions themselves.

It may perhaps be objected, that this doctrine makes God the author of sin; I answer for the present, that it makes God the author of a universe in which he knew that sin would exist. A farther answer will be given, when this subject comes to be particularly considered under the third head.

(6.) The Scriptures directly assert the doctrine of this Discourse. The text is a strong example of this nature. As it has been sufficiently illustrated already, I shall leave it to your consideration. In Isa. xlv. 10, God says, 'My counsel shall stand; and I will do all my pleasure.' This will be admitted to be a complete assertion of the doctrine, unless it should be supposed that there are things done and existing in the universe, which are without and beyond the counsel of God. According to this supposition it must be admitted, that a part of the system of things in the universe was not

contrived by him, was not agreeable to his pleasure, nor accomplished with his permission. In Isa. xliii. 13, God says, 'I will work, and who shall let it?' And in Dan. iv. 35, it is declared, 'He doth according to his will in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth, and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?'

In both these passages it is asserted, that there is no possible opposition or hindrance to the universal agency of God, which operates alike in heaven and in earth; and in both according to his will or pleasure. In Rev. iv. 11, 'The four and twenty elders, falling down before him that sitteth on the throne in the heavens, say, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.' In this passage it is asserted that all things were created, and exist, for the pleasure of God. It is irresistibly inferred, therefore, that they exist according to his pleasure. In Acts xv. 18, it is said, 'Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world:' and in Psal. civ. 31, 'The Lord shall rejoice in his works.' It cannot be true that God will rejoice in his works, unless they are agreeable to his pleasure, nor any farther than they are agreeable to his pleasure; for this would be to suppose, that he takes pleasure in that which is not agreeable to his pleasure, or is pleased with that which does not please him. As 'all his works were known to him from the beginning;' so they were certainly agreeable to his pleasure from the beginning: else it could not be foreknown and foretold, that he will rejoice in them.

That the actions of moral beings are foreknown by God, is unanswerably evident from the fact, that almost all the prophecies in the Scriptures are either predictions of the voluntary acts of such beings; or of events accomplished by their voluntary actions: or of events which, without these actions, could never exist. The deluge was absolutely predicted by Noah, one hundred and twenty years before it took place; but had mankind repented in that period, the deluge would not have existed. If then God had not certainly foreknown that men would not repent, he could not have certainly foretold the deluge. God predicted the apostasy of the Edomites, the sojourning of the Israelites in Egypt, the refusal of Pharaoh to let them go, their return to the land of Canaan, the revolt of ten tribes from Solomon, the ruin of their empire by Nebuchadnezzar, their captivity, their return, and their final destruction by the Romans; the life and death of Christ, the erection and progress of the Christian church, and a vast multitude of other events which cannot now be mentioned. These events were not only the voluntary actions of men, or the result of them, but involved thousands of millions of such actions which preceded them, and were necessary to their existence. All these must have been perfectly foreknown by God, or the events could not, with either truth or certainty, have been foretold. These actions thus foreknown, were either agreeable or contrary to the pleasure of God; that is, upon the whole. If they were contrary to his pleasure, it was contrary to his pleasure that they should exist. Either then the cause of their existence was sufficiently powerful to bring them into being, when he chose that they should not exist; or he chose that they should exist, contrary to his own pleasure, or, in other words, his own choice.

Christ is said by St Peter to have been 'delivered' to the Jews 'by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God.' If this declaration can need proof, it is found abundantly in the numerous predictions of this event, contained in the Old Testament. Christ is said to have been 'slain,' that is, in the purpose of God, 'from the foundation of the world.' The calling, sanctification, conversion, and salvation of the Christian church are said to be 'according to the eternal purpose of God.' A vast multitude of declarations, importing the same things generally, might be added to these, were it necessary. But I shall only observe farther under this head, that the works of creation and providence are exhibited in the Scriptures as parts of one great plan, universally devised and conducted according to the good pleasure of God; extending to the clothing of grass and the falling of sparrows, the government of this world and the regulation of the heavens.

2. I shall now consider some of the difficulties which result from a denial of this doctrine.

That God made all beings will not here be questioned. When he made them, he either made them with or without a design. If he acted without design, he acted without wisdom; and was therefore originally unwise, or unpossessed of wisdom: for nothing is more absolute folly, or indicates more an entire destitution of wisdom, than to act without design or without an end; and especially to do such great and wonderful things, for so long a period, without an end in view.

If God acted with design in the creation of all things, he either provided for the certain accomplishment of the end which he had in view, or he did not. If he did not, it was because he was either unable, or unwilling to do it. If he was unable, it was either because he knew not the means of doing it, or because he had not power to bring them to pass. In the former case we deny his omniscience; in the latter, his omnipotence. When we behold the wonderful contrivance of the endless multitude of things in creation and providence, we cannot, in the exercise of reason, doubt his omniscience. When we call to mind, that they were brought into existence by his power, we cannot doubt his omnipotence. He who contrived the universe, plainly knows all things. He who made it, can plainly do all things which in their nature are possible.

If God was unwilling to provide for the accomplishment of the end which he proposed in the creation of all things, it was either because that the end was not sufficiently dear to him, or because the accomplishment of it required more labour and self-denial than its importance would justify. The end could not but be sufficiently dear to him. God certainly could propose to himself an end of infinite value; *viz.* the promotion of infinite good. If he did not propose this end, it was not because he was unable to propose it, but because he was unwilling. If he was unwilling to propose this end, when it was in full view before him, he was not only destitute of infinite benevolence; but, I apprehend, wholly destitute of all benevolence; since in this case he preferred a good which was comparatively nothing (as being finite) to that which was infinite. If he is infinitely benevolent, and did actually propose, as the end of creating and governing the universe, an infinite good, then to him this end was infinitely dear.

He was not prevented from providing for the accomplishment of this end because of the labour or self-

denial which it would require. To infinite benevolence, no effort of choice can be laborious or self-denying; to omniscience, no effort of contrivance, and to omnipotence, no effort of execution. The infinite Mind acts, of course, with perfect ease. 'The Creator of the ends of the earth fainteth not, neither is weary.'

If God did provide for the accomplishment of the end which he had in view, then it will either be accomplished, or it will not. If it will be accomplished, the means provided for this purpose are all of the proper nature, and will operate in the proper manner, for its accomplishment. In other words, they will sustain precisely that nature, and operate in that manner, which was intended by the Infinite Mind, when the end was proposed, and the means were selected for bringing it to pass. Of course, both the end and the means were from the beginning known, proposed, chosen, and determined by God.

He therefore who denies this doctrine, will, I think, find the denial followed by the immovable difficulty of being obliged, at the same time, to deny the absolute perfection and infinity of the divine power, knowledge, or goodness.

Farther; if the actions of voluntary beings are not, upon the whole, such as God originally chose they should be; it must be either because he did not know what they would be, or, knowing this, did not choose to prevent their existence. If he did not originally know what they would be, then his creatures communicate to him continually new ideas, and those in endless multitudes. Of course his views change daily; and instead of being omniscient originally and eternally, he is not now, nor will he ever be omniscient; but will, throughout eternity, receive continual and vast accessions of knowledge, communicated to him by his voluntary creatures; who in this case devise what before he did not know, and act what before he never conceived. In this case also his knowledge must, like ours, be successive and mutable. Nay, as his mind is the greatest of all minds, and must, according to this supposition, continually imbibe knowledge; so, from its extent, and comprehension, it must imbibe knowledge incalculably faster, and be more rapidly mutable, than that of any other being whatever.

Farther; as the views of God continually enlarge and change, so it is plain, that, together with his views, his disposition must change with respect to particular things, and ultimately with respect to his whole system; and that his administrations, and his measures, must in the same manner also change. New objects sustain new characters and new relations, and infer new proprieties of conduct, and of consequence new measures. The conduct which it would be proper for God to adopt towards a being whose character and actions are unknown to him, must be also unknown. Every creature whose character and actions are new, and different from any thing before known or conceived, must, if he be properly treated, receive a treatment different from one before exhibited or contrived. As voluntary beings are, in a sense, endlessly numerous, and exist throughout eternity; so their actions being, according to the supposition, unknown to God before they exist, must in a multitude of instances, literally endless, demand a new treatment or new measures, repeated in a manner also literally endless. Of course, not only in his views, but also in his disposition and conduct, God must, according to this supposition, be the most unceasingly and absolutely changeable of all beings.

A being whose conduct is and must be regulated by the actions of others, is plainly dependent on others with respect to this prime part of his character. He cannot act as he would originally and absolutely choose to act, but must act as their conduct requires him to act. God, therefore, being intimately and inseparably connected with all voluntary beings, is in this respect more dependent, according to this supposition, than any other being whatever.

But if God did know originally all the actions of voluntary beings, and did not choose to prevent their existence in any case: then they were, upon the whole, agreeable to his pleasure; or he chose that they should exist, when, upon the whole, they were contrary to his pleasure. That he could have prevented the existence of any actions whatever, if he pleased, we certainly know; because he could have prevented the existence of the beings whose actions they were. If they were upon the whole contrary to his pleasure, and he yet chose that they should exist; then he chose that actions should exist, whose existence was upon the whole contrary to his choice; which is no other than a self-contradiction.

Again: If God proposed infinite good as the end of all his conduct, and this end was infinitely dear to him, and is yet not certainly and completely accomplished; it must be because he is not able to accomplish it. This will not be pretended. But if God does not foreknow the actions of voluntary beings, he cannot be certain of the accomplishment of this end. To the accomplishment of perfect and infinite good, it is plainly necessary that every thing pertaining to the system should be in time, place, nature, and operations, exactly that, and only that, which contributes directly, as well as ultimately, its own proper efficacy, to the promotion of this end. A perfect system plainly demands that every part of it be necessary, and entirely fitted for the place and operations assigned to it; and that there be nothing contrary to, or aside from, the general purpose; nothing out of place or time, nothing superfluous, and nothing defective; in a word, that there be just such means, and so many of them, as will perfectly accomplish the end, and that there be nothing more. But in the case supposed, the actions of voluntary beings, unless accordant with the pleasure of God, can in nowise sustain the character of proper parts of a perfect system. Just so far as they vary from this pleasure, they vary from the character specified. It will not be denied, that God is both able and disposed to plan a perfect system of good. It follows, therefore, that he certainly has planned such a system. Whatever accords not with his pleasure, upon the whole, accords not with this system; this being the thing which is agreeable to his pleasure; but must be defective or superfluous; out of place, or out of time; aside from or contrary to, the perfection of the system. Consequently, if the actions of voluntary beings be not upon the whole accordant with the pleasure of God, he was not only unassured of the accomplishment of the end which he proposed in creating and governing the universe, but he entered upon this great work without knowing that it would be accomplished; and was originally certain, that the perfect good which he proposed would never exist.

Those who deny this doctrine are, therefore, unless I

am deceived, forced by their denial to acknowledge that God is a limited, mutable, and dependent being; and that he originally was, and ever must be, uncertain of the accomplishment of the great end proposed in his works; or rather, that he ever was and will be certain that it can never be accomplished. The magnitude of these difficulties I need not explain.

SERMON XV.

THE DECREES OF GOD.

But he is in one mind; and who can turn him? And what his soul desireth, even that he doeth.—Job xxiii. 13.

In my last Discourse I asserted, from these words, the following doctrine:—That all things, both beings and events, exist in exact accordance with the purpose, pleasure, or what is commonly called, the decrees of God.

In discussing this doctrine I mentioned that I should attempt, first, to explain it; secondly, to prove it; and thirdly, to answer the objections commonly made against it.

Under the first head, after having mentioned several erroneous opinions and forms of phraseology, frequently adopted concerning this subject, I expressed my own views of it in this manner: What is commonly intended by the decrees of God is, that choice or pleasure of the Divine Mind, eternally and unchangeably inherent in it, by which all things are brought into being.

Under the second head, I alleged several direct arguments in support of the doctrine, and then suggested several difficulties which result from denying it. These, by proving the converse of the doctrine to be false, indirectly proved the doctrine to be true: according to the general axiom, that every proposition, or its converse, is true.

I shall now, as I proposed, attempt,

Thirdly, *to answer the objections commonly made against this doctrine.*

These, I think, may be reduced to the following:—

1. That it is equivalent to the stoical doctrine of fate, or destiny.

2. That it exhibits God as the author of sin.

3. That it destroys the free agency of rational creatures.

4. That it discourages all the efforts of mankind towards reformation.

I will not say that no other objections are brought against this doctrine; but I think of no others which appear to be regarded as material by those who allege them, or which, if these be fairly obviated, would be supposed sensibly to affect the question in debate. These, therefore, I shall now proceed to consider in the order proposed.

1. It is objected, that the general doctrine of this Discourse is equivalent to the stoical doctrine of fate, or destiny.

The fate of the Stoics, as explained by Cicero, was of this nature. These philosophers supposed a series, and it would seem an eternal one, in which each link of the vast chain was the effect of the preceding, and the cause of the succeeding one: every link being alternately a cause and effect. These causes, so far as I understand the subject (for it is not very clear that we understand precisely what was the stoical doctrine, nor that the Stoics understood or united in it themselves), were not considered by them as either intelligent or voluntary; but as merely coerced by those which preceded, and as coercing those which followed. In other words, the doctrine was substantially the same with that of atheists concerning an eternal series, which was exploded in a former Discourse.* To the irresistible efficacy of this series of causes, the gods acknowledged by the Stoics, were absolutely subjected; and Jupiter himself, their supreme ruler, was utterly unable to resist, divert, or at all change the order of things, brought to pass by the compulsion of this fate or destiny.

He who can find any resemblance between this doctrine, and that on which the present Discourse is founded, must find it by the aid of an ingenuity to which I can make no claim. I freely own, that I cannot perceive any similarity between an unintelligent and involuntary series of causes, compelling by natural necessity or coercion, the existence of their consequent effects, and controlling by inevitable necessity the actions of both gods and men; and the free, wise, and voluntary agency of the infinitely intelligent and benevolent Mind, originally planning, and steadily executing a system of infinite good, according to the dictates of his boundless wisdom and perfect pleasure. I cannot perceive a similarity, sufficient to enable me to discern in what the professed difficulty lies, or what the real objection is which I am required to answer. I shall take the liberty therefore of waiting until I shall find the objection so stated as either to induce me to acknowledge its force, or enable me to attempt a refutation.

2. It is objected, that this doctrine exhibits God as the author of sin.

To the phrase, author of sin, very different meanings are annexed by different persons. In order to meet this objection therefore with any hope of success, it will be necessary in the first place to determine the true meaning of the phraseology. Some persons understand by it the immediate and efficient cause of sinful volitions: others not only mean the efficient, but the guilty cause of such volitions: others still, such a cause as in any manner, however remote, lays a foundation for the existence of sin: and others, a cause supposed to be intelligent, which when possessed of sufficient power to prevent the existence of sin, did not interfere to prevent it. When it is said that this doctrine exhibits God as

* See Sermon II.

the author of sin, I shall for the present consider the phrase as used in one or both of the two first of these senses; and regard the objector as intending, that, according to this doctrine, God is either the guilty or guiltless, immediate and efficient cause of sinful volitions in his creatures: in other words, that he constrains or compels them to sin. That the doctrine which I have defended involves this consequence, I cannot perceive nor admit.

To support the objection, it must be shown that God cannot will and accomplish the existence of voluntary agents, who, acting freely, shall nevertheless act in exact accordance with what is upon the whole his pleasure; and who, in the circumstances in which they are severally placed, and with the attributes which they severally possess, will with perfect freedom contribute each his proper part and efficiency towards the promotion of the infinite good, originally proposed as the end of the divine system. But this, I apprehend, has never been and never will be shown. It must be proved, that in the infinite multitude of possible free agents, present to the view of the Divine Mind, there were none possessed of such attributes, and capable of being placed in such circumstances, as while they acted with perfect freedom, would also perfectly accomplish the purposes of the divine pleasure. No man will, I presume, attempt to prove this position. If it be granted that such agents were possible, and that the Infinite Mind discerned their nature and character; it must, in order to support the objection, be proved, that God having these agents in full view, chose not to select them, and bring them into existence. But this, I presume, will not be admitted by the objector himself. Till this can be done, however, the objection cannot be maintained.

That sin is in the world, and that the world, with all which it contains, is under the government of God, in some sense or other, must be acknowledged by the objector himself; unless, on the one hand, he denies the divine government absolutely, or on the other, the distinction between moral good and evil. Sin has therefore entered the world in some manner or other, while it was under the divine government. There are three ways in which men have attempted to explain the difficulty involved in this fact. Some persons assert, that by his direct efficiency God caused, others that he permitted, and others still that he could not prevent its existence.

That God could not prevent the existence of sin cannot be maintained. He has prevented it in the angels 'who kept their first estate.' He prevented it in the person of Christ, who in his human nature 'knew no sin.' He has promised that he will prevent it, and he will therefore certainly prevent it in 'the spirits of just men made perfect' in the heavens. Should it be said, that these beings, by their own voluntary agency, and without any interference or influence on the part of God, continue in a state of holiness; I answer, that this supposition affects not the point at all; for God plainly could have created every moral agent with exactly the same attributes, and placed them in exactly the same circumstances, with those several virtuous beings who persist in holiness. Whatever we suppose to be the means by which they are preserved from sin, those very means he certainly could have used to preserve in the same effectual manner all others.

Beyond this, he has not only continued holiness in the minds of many of his creatures, but has restored it to vast multitudes who had fallen into a state of hopeless guilt and pollution. This fact is a proof, that he could have continued it in the minds of these creatures, if he had judged this conduct to be, upon the whole, wise and good for him to pursue.

That God, by an immediate agency of his own, creates the sinful volitions of mankind, is a doctrine not warranted, in my view, either by reason or revelation. There are, I know, many respectable men in modern times, and particularly in our own country, as there have been at other times and in other countries, who have thought this the easiest way of arriving at satisfaction concerning this abstruse subject. I cannot, as some persons have thought it proper to do, attribute to these men evil designs. In many instances at least, they appear to give as unquestionable proofs of piety and virtue as are given by any others, and to devote their labours as cheerfully and faithfully to the promotion of truth and righteousness in the world. Still, I cannot accord with this doctrine: nor hesitate to believe, that they have in several instances 'darkened counsel by words without knowledge.' There is a bound, as I have remarked before, beyond which the mind cannot pass; and it is as easily found in investigating this subject as in any course of human inquiry. The metaphysical nature of moral agency, both in God and his creatures, is a subject perhaps as tenuous, as difficult to be fastened upon, and as easily evanescent from the mind as any which we attempt to examine. This I think is unanswerably evident from the fact, that no attempt thoroughly to explain it has given extensive satisfaction, even to philosophical men, for any length of time.

The theology of a part of this country appears to me to be verging, insensibly perhaps to those who are chiefly concerned, but with no very gradual step, towards a Pantheism, differing materially in one particular only from that of Spinosa. He held 'that the universe, which he supposed to be matter, and which he divided into cogitative, or intelligent, and incogitative, was God; and that the several parts of it were no other than separate parts of the same great and universal Being.' Thus he excluded the existence of all creatures, and of any work of creation, as well as all that which is usually meant by the providence and government of the Creator. The theology to which I have referred, teaches, 'that God is immaterial, intelligent, and infinite; but denies with Spinosa, the existence of finite, intelligent beings, as well as of those which we call bodies; declaring that what men usually call minds or spirits, are no other than continued chains, or successions of ideas and exercises, created immediately and successively by the Infinite Mind.' The same reason is alleged by this system for the exclusion of finite agents from existence, which was alleged by Spinosa for excluding the existence of such agents, as well as an infinite, immaterial one, from his system; viz. that mankind cannot conceive of such things, nor comprehend their nature: a reason, which, if admitted, will indeed exclude from our belief and reception almost every doctrine. Particularly, on this ground we ought certainly to deny the existence of the Infinite Agent.

As I propose to consider the principal subject of these remarks in a Discourse devoted to it, it will be improper to anticipate here, the things which I design

to include in that Discourse. It will be sufficient for the present purpose to observe, that the Scriptures directly inform us, that God is the author of holiness, and this in many forms, and with great emphasis; that they nowhere assert that he is the author of sin, in the sense now under consideration; and that they everywhere attribute blame to man, as the guilty, and in my view the efficient cause, of his own sins. A plain man reading the Scriptures, never, I presume, derived from them the doctrine, that God creates the sins of men. Nor can he, without great pains-taking, and previous perplexity, be induced to admit it as a part of his creed. And let it be remembered, as a very just and very important remark of Doddridge, that the plain sense of the Scriptures, or that which naturally strikes the minds of plain men as the real meaning, is almost of course the true sense.

The existence of finite agents is at least as conceivable and admissible as that of an infinite agent, and certainly involves no greater difficulties. Accordingly, this has been the universal doctrine of the human mind, as well as the only obvious exhibition of the Scriptures concerning this subject. The common objection concerning this doctrine is certainly trifling and groundless; viz. that it makes creatures independent of their Creator. Can he be independent, whose existence, attributes, and consequently actions, depend absolutely on the will of another, and who can be and do nothing but what the other is pleased to permit?

Satisfied with this view of the subject, on which however I mean to dwell more particularly hereafter, I adopt without hesitation the second of these methods of explaining the introduction of sin into the world; and unite with those who assert, that God permitted the existence of sin; or in the scriptural language, 'that he has in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways.' It has not ever been proved that these ways are not their own, in the most absolute sense; nor in the strictest metaphysical language, that God has not suffered all nations to walk in them; nor that this, connected with such a superintendence and control, as invariably directs their conduct to ultimate good, and prevents it from terminating in ultimate evil, is not the whole of the immediate agency of God, so far as sin is concerned. That this scheme does not in any degree exhibit God as the author of sin, in either of the two first senses, must I think be acknowledged by every man who believes in the perfections and government of God. That he has permitted sin, and has not prevented its existence, are facts so evident, that they cannot become the subject of serious debate. At the same time I cannot but observe, that those who, when they speak of God as the author of sin, mean to indicate these facts as the import of this phrase, use language in an unwarrantable, and in my view, dangerous and mischievous manner.

3. It is objected, that this doctrine destroys the free agency of rational creatures.

It will be easily perceived, that many of the observations made under the last head, materially affect this also. Indeed these two objections are so connected in their nature, that it is impossible to consider one of them to any extent, without anticipating in some degree the consideration of the other. To the observations which I have already made, I shall however add several others, peculiarly referring to this objection.

There are but two ways in which the agency of God can be supposed by the objectors to lessen or destroy the free agency of his creatures. One is by compelling or constraining their actions: the other by rendering the existence of their actions certain, before they take place. That God compels or constrains the actions of his creatures (of men for example), certainly cannot be shown, nor even pretended, unless the compulsion exists in his decrees. Nor can it be shown to exist in his decrees, unless it is involved in the nature of his decrees as such; or in other words, unless the doctrine of this Discourse is inconsistent with the nature of free agency in creatures. This, I presume, is the real opinion of those who bring the objection now under consideration. They regard the supposition, that God has planned a certain system of things according to his own pleasure, and that he has made and placed men in such a manner as that they will certainly do those things, and those only which will accord with that pleasure, as inconsistent with the doctrine, that they are free agents.

To this objection, to which I have intended to give its true import and full force, it is commonly answered, that the doctrine which I have attempted to support, is capable of being clearly proved both from reason and revelation; and that men are intuitively conscious of their own free agency, being irresistibly sensible that they act spontaneously, and without any coercion or constraint. Both doctrines being therefore true and certain, it is justly alleged that they are of course consistent with each other.

It would seem that this answer might as well satisfy the mind in the present case as in numerous others, in which we perceive propositions to be true, but are unable to discern the nature of their mutual connexion. But as the objection is still insisted on, and seems to have no small weight in the minds of many persons, it will not be improper for me to offer some farther considerations on the subject.

All those who make the objection agree, as well as others, that it is possible for a finite agent, possessed of certain supposable attributes, and placed in certain supposable circumstances, to be free in the absolute sense. I shall take this for granted; because, otherwise, the objection itself, and the debate founded on it, can have neither place nor meaning. We will suppose, then, such an agent to exist, and to act, while he lived in a manner perfectly free: while at the same time no being knew at all in what manner he would act in any case whatever, until his actions had existed. In this case he would undoubtedly be allowed to possess all possible advantages for acting with perfect freedom. Lest I should not be thought to be sufficiently particular, I will suppose his actions to be all absolutely contingent; because some philosophers suppose contingency to be an indispensable and inseparable attribute of a free action. We will now, in the second place, suppose this agent, without any change in his powers or his circumstances in any other respect, to have all his actions, which, according to the former supposition are the freest possible, foreknown by God or some other being. I ask whether they would be at all the less free, in consequence of being thus foreknown? The powers, the circumstances, and the actions of this agent remain exactly the same as before; the agent himself (for that is included in the supposition) being perfectly ignorant that his actions are thus foreknown. Can it be per-

ceived, that this foreknowledge affects the nature of the actions in any manner, or the freedom of the agent? To me it is clear, that it cannot; because, in the case supposed, the foreknowledge has not the remotest influence on the agent, nor on his actions: both he and they continuing to be exactly the same, in every respect whatever. On the contrary, all the possible influence of this foreknowledge is confined to the bosom of him by whom it is possessed.

But if this agent would thus continue free, and his actions would still be perfectly free, notwithstanding they were foreknown; then it is clear that a preceding certainty that the actions of a voluntary agent will exist, does not at all of itself lessen or affect their freedom. Foreknowledge renders the future existence of that which is foreknown, certain; therefore the actions of the agent supposed are all rendered certain, and will of course exist: yet it is, I think, unquestionably clear from this statement, that their freedom will not be affected. Lest I should be thought guilty of an absurdity in supposing events absolutely contingent to be capable of being foreknown, I shall justify myself by observing that Dr Gregory has asserted, 'that the voluntary actions of mankind are foreknown as mere contingencies,' and is declared by a writer of respectability to have merited the thanks of the learned world for this discovery. For myself, I confess, that I not only discern no indispensable connexion between contingency and freedom of action, but no connexion at all; nor any possibility that human actions, or any thing else, should be contingent. So far as I can see, the admission of casual or contingent existence must, if we would make our principles consistent, be by consequence the admission of it in all cases whatever.

Again, we will suppose that the actions of the agent already specified, which are thus foreknown by God, are perceived by him also to be exactly agreeable to his pleasure. Will this circumstance affect the freedom of agency? Surely it will not be asserted nor believed, that actions, in order to be free, must contravene the pleasure of God. As I presume this proposition never was advanced by any man, and as it is an obvious absurdity in itself, I shall take the liberty to consider it as being an absurdity. It is therefore clear, that the actions of a voluntary agent may be certainly foreknown by God, to be exactly agreeable to his pleasure, and yet be attended with the highest possible freedom.

That God knows all things, the knowledge of which involves not a contradiction, and that the foreknowledge of human actions does not involve a contradiction, I here consider as undisputed.

I have, I flatter myself, made it sufficiently evident, that God's foreknowledge of voluntary actions does in no respect lessen or affect their freedom, although it renders their future existence absolutely certain. But it will be said, by some persons at least, that the difficulty does not lie here, but in the fact, that God has willed the existence of human agents, and their actions; and that it is his formation of them in such a manner as to accomplish certain purposes of his own, which prevents or destroys the freedom in question.

To remove the difficulty presented by this observation, I will suppose, once more, a voluntary agent either self-existent or existing casually, possessing powers of understanding, similar in their extent to those of angels or of men, and at the same time free in the highest sense annexed to that term. Let him be also supposed to be known and comprehended by God in the same perfect manner, in which any angel or man is known by him; so that God can foresee with an omniscient survey, and absolute certainty, all his future actions. At the same time let it be supposed, that God exercises over him no government or influence whatever. This being will undoubtedly be acknowledged to be free, even by those who make this objection; because he was neither brought into existence by the will of God, nor is controlled, nor influenced, in any manner whatever, by any will beside his own. Let me farther suppose, what, as it must be granted, cannot lessen nor affect his freedom, that all his actions thus foreseen are agreeable to the divine pleasure. Now let me ask whether the divine omniscience could not contrive, and the divine power create, a being exactly resembling this which I have here supposed, in every respect, except that he was not self-existent, nor casually existent; and so perfect a copy, that he would differ from this supposed being numerically only; would possess the same attributes, be in the same circumstances, and perform, both in substance and mode, exactly the same actions. Were this supposed being, for example, to be placed by God in his kingdom, in certain circumstances, and acting a certain part in the system which was exactly agreeable to the divine pleasure; would not the created being, who was his perfect counterpart, if substituted in his place, perform precisely the same actions, with the same faculties, and the same freedom? The only difference between them would be, that he who was casually existent, would perform these actions in consequence of possessing such and such attributes, without having been created for this purpose; while the other would perform them, in consequence of having been thus created with the very same attributes. In their origin, I grant, these beings differ: in their nature, character, and attributes, they are precisely the same. But their origin, it is plain, cannot, even in the most distant manner, affect their attributes or their actions. These, by the supposition are exactly alike. If therefore the former of these beings is free, the latter is equally free. If the actions of the latter are foreknown by God, equally so are those of the former, and they both alike fulfil his pleasure.

With these things in view, it must I think be evident, that God can create a free agent, whose actions shall be all foreknown by him, and shall exactly accomplish what is, upon the whole, his pleasure.

If these things are just and true, the doctrine of this Discourse does not destroy, lessen, nor affect, in any manner, the free agency of rational creatures; unless it can be shown, as I am well assured it never can be, that God has not created agents, whose attributes are agreeable to this representation. There was not, indeed present to his eye a self-existent nor a casually existent agent, such as I have supposed; but there were present to the view of his omniscience all the attributes and circumstances, which can enter into the existence and character of such an agent. If then he did not create beings of such a character, it was solely because he did not choose to create them.

4. It is objected, that this doctrine discourages all the efforts of mankind towards reformation.

That this doctrine has often been used to discourage such efforts I readily acknowledge. This is not unfre-

quently the tenor of books and of conversation; nor is it an uncommon thing for persons to make it the source of discouragement to themselves, and to entertain gloomy and distressing apprehensions concerning their own final condition, when referred in their minds to the decrees of God. Still I cannot see that this conduct is wise, rational, or defensible; nor that the doctrine includes in itself any discouragement, which will not with as good reason flow from that which is opposed to it. It cannot result from the consideration, that the pleasure of God controls this subject, rather than our own pleasure. On the one hand, the pleasure of God is more wisely and benevolently formed than our own; more disposed to promote our salvation, and more able to contrive the best means by which it may be accomplished. This we never could have done ourselves; nor, if we were able, should we be willing; as is clearly proved by the fact, that after the wonderful and difficult things which have been done to provide salvation for us, and while it is proffered to us freely on the easiest of all terms, we are not willing to accept it. How much less willing should we have been to go through the labour and sufferings, could we have gone through them, which were necessary to procure it for ourselves.

On the other hand, if we please to be saved, we shall now be saved. This is one great part of the divine pleasure. There is nothing which prevents us from being saved, but our own inclination; and this would as effectually prevent us in any supposable circumstances. Nor could we in any circumstances possess a greater freedom of choice or action, with respect to this or any other subject, than we now possess. Nor is there, so far as I know, any influence from God which at all hinders us from choosing salvation with all that freedom of action which moral beings can possess. It will be observed, I speak not here of persons, for their incorrigible obstinacy, punished with judicial blindness and hardness of heart; though it is to be questioned whether, even in this case, God does any thing more than leave them to themselves. The language of God to every sinner is, 'As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the sinner; but would rather that he would return, and live.' His invitations to sinners are, 'Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; yea, come, buy wine and milk, without money, and without price;' and, 'Whosoever will, let him come, and take the water of life freely.' This language is perfectly sincere, and exactly descriptive of the disposition of God.

This discouragement cannot arise from the certainty of the event, as established by this doctrine. The event is equally certain, if the doctrine is given up. It is equally certain in fact, with what Mr Locke calls certainty of truth, in distinction from certainty of knowledge, concerning any man, that he either will or will not be saved, whether it be foreknown or not. One of these assertions, either that he will, or that he will not be saved, is now certainly true. Which of them is true, I grant, does not appear; and will not, until time shall disclose it. Still, one of the events will take place, whether decreed or foreknown, or not. God will then judge and punish the wicked, and will punish them for exactly the same reasons, on either supposition; *viz.* for their impenitence, unbelief, and disobedience. A person may therefore, with exactly the same propriety, whether he admits the decrees of God or not, or whether God has or has not formed any decrees, say, 'If I shall be saved, I shall be saved, whether I try to obtain salvation or not; and however earnestly I may try, if I am to perish, I shall perish.' The certainty in either case is the same, and equally absolute. Even the foreknowledge of God will not alter this fact at all; for though it affects him, it affects not the certainty of the event. All that can be truly said is that an event, which would otherwise take place, is now foreseen by him. To us in both cases also it is equally unknown. The causes which will bring it to pass, will in both cases be exactly the same. The language in both cases therefore may be adopted with exactly the same propriety. But the truth is, the language cannot be proper in either case. In my apprehension it is never true, that the attempts of the man concerned, towards the attainment of salvation, make no difference as to the event. On the contrary it is clear, that of those who are saved, few, very few indeed, can be found, who have not made such attempts; nor is there any satisfactory reason to believe, that those who make them with persevering earnestness and zeal, ultimately fail. I know no reason why the same language should not be used, with the same propriety and force, concerning our secular as concerning our spiritual business. But the farmer who should loiter at home and say, 'If I am to have a crop the present year, I shall have one; and if I am not to have a crop, I shall not have one, whether I plough, and sow, and reap, or lie down in my bed:' the student, who should spend his time in dress, sports, and gaming, and say, 'If I am to be a scholar, or to get my lesson, I shall accomplish it; and if I am not, it will never be accomplished, whether I study diligently, or lose my time in idleness;' would be pronounced, and justly, a fool or a madman. But the decree of God extends to each of these subjects as absolutely as to our salvation. Men are as really chosen to be farmers and scholars as Christians, and learning and harvest are as truly appointed as holiness, although from the comparative unimportance of the former, and the amazing moment of the latter, we are apt to apply the doctrine to one of the cases, and not to the other.

The kingdom of God, as established by his pleasure, is a kingdom of means, regularly connected with their ends. I do not perceive that this is less true when applied to spiritual, than to natural things. The real discouragement which men generally labour under with respect to their spiritual concerns, is their indisposition to make any efforts for the attainment of salvation. In truth, this indisposition itself suggests the discouragement which I have obviated, and then admits it. To a dispassionate, unbiased mind, it would never gain admission. By sober reason it was never devised, and can never be supported.

Were God really unwilling that men should strive; had he discountenanced efforts, had he established no means of grace; or had those means, when anxiously and perseveringly used, failed of success; there would indeed be ample room for well founded discouragement. But when we find, as in my view we do in fact find, all these things reversed in the good pleasure and providence of God, we have every inducement to hope and to labour; much more, it would seem, than from any supposable situation, in which all things were left to fluctuation and casualty. Stupid sinners have indeed according to this and every other scheme, the most

fearful reason for discouragement and terror. But such as are awakened, anxious, and engaged to seek eternal life, have solid and abundant reason for hope.

Mankind seem in many instances to suppose, that the decrees of God produce the event without means, according to the Mohammedan doctrine of predestination. Whereas, if they believed, that the pleasure of God formed the system, and selected the means and agents by which all events are accomplished; if they believed those agents to be endued with all the powers of the freest possible agency, and to be selected and formed, so that they might act with perfect freedom; if they believed that God always furnishes them with the necessary means of obedience, and with motives to obedience more and greater than any which they can find to disobey; if they believed that God, by a direct agency of his own, does not constrain them to any act whatever, but leaves them in all instances to act with perfect freedom, just as they please; I think they would also believe, that there is no more difficulty attending the fact that he has chosen and formed such agents as he knew would unitedly do all his pleasure, than would attend his choice and formation of such agents as would act in any other manner whatever. But all this, for ought that appears, is true. The contrary doctrine has never been evinced to be true, at least in my apprehension, and I fully believe never will be.

On the other hand, it will be proper for a moment to turn our thoughts to the influence of the supposition that God has not fixed the system of things according to his pleasure. It cannot but be acknowledged, that he knew what system was upon the whole most desirable, wisest, and best. If he did not resolve on it, it was plainly because he did not desire or choose to bring it to pass. In plain English, then, he did not desire the chief good of his creation, or the supreme glory of himself, with sufficient good-will to resolve on it. Can this be infinite good-will? Can it be moral perfection? It was certainly as easy for him to accomplish it, as to accomplish an inferior system of good. If then he did not resolve on the superior system, it was plainly because he loved the inferior system better, and chose to do less good rather than greater. His disposition therefore is, on this scheme, imperfectly good in itself; how imperfectly, it is impossible, according to this supposition, to determine.

According to this supposition it is farther to be observed, all things are left by God in a state of absolute uncertainty. The whole happiness of his intelligent creatures is committed to the casual influence and efficacy of their own views, feelings, and conduct. God cannot, in the nature of the case, interfere, either by determination or influence, without destroying the free agency or discouraging the efforts of his intelligent creatures, for the attainment of happiness. The whole system of the universe, so far as these creatures are concerned, must of course be regulated wholly by them. Does not this scheme evidently set all their interests afloat, and leave them eternally to the uncertain and hazardous direction of finite wisdom and goodness? From the experience which we have had of the character and conduct of such creatures, is there a person in this assembly who would willingly commit his eternal interests to this perilous direction, and trust his all to the disposal of beings so weak and often so wicked? Can this be safe for creatures? Can it consist with the perfect character of God? To the wisdom and forecast of his own mind, a man might, through overweening self-confidence, be willing perhaps to commit the guidance of any interest, and feel that his soul itself would be safe in his own hands. But would the same person trust himself to the final direction of others? Would he venture his eternal welfare upon the wisdom and benevolence of any or all of those by whom he is encircled? Their fitness for this mighty trust is however not inferior to his own, and they would as justly refuse to confide their souls to his care, as he would refuse to intrust his soul to them. Were he not blinded therefore by an unwarrantable partiality for himself he would no sooner, no more willingly, trust himself in this mighty concern, than he would trust those around him. To do either, he would clearly discern, would be foolish and dangerous in the extreme. Wisdom, on the contrary, would teach both him and them to commit themselves, and their whole well-being implicitly to God.

On the connexion of prayer with this subject, I design to dwell particularly, when I shall come to the consideration of that duty. I have purposely omitted the examination of it at the present time, because several things relating to it belong to prayer only, and demand a separate discussion.

Whether the observations which I have made on the general doctrine of this discourse, will be viewed by others as possessing the importance which I have attached to them, I cannot determine. To me they have appeared to possess real weight. If they should contribute in any measure to remove difficulties, to settle doubtful opinions, to establish truth, and to communicate satisfactory views concerning a subject so often attended with perplexity and alarm, I shall esteem my labours amply rewarded.

SERMON XVI.

THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD.

O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh, to direct his steps.—JER. x. 23.

IN this passage of Scripture, the prophet, after uttering a variety of sublime declarations, concerning the perfections and providence of God, and the follies and sins of men, exhibits the progress of life as a way. In this way, all men are considered as travelling. We commence the journey at our birth, pass on through the

several stages of childhood, youth, manhood, and old age, and finish it when we enter eternity. The accommodations and the fare are greatly varied among the various travellers. Some find their entertainment plentiful and agreeable; and some, even luxurious and splendid. Others are slenderly provided with food, raiment, and lodging; are almost mere sufferers, and literally have not where to lay their heads.

In the meantime, sorrow and disease, dangers and accidents, like a band of marauders, lie in wait for the travellers; and harass and destroy a great proportion of their number. Of the vast multitude who continually walk in the path of life, almost all disappear long before they reach the goal at which it terminates. A very few arrive at the end. Of these, every one, dragging heavily his weary feet over the last division of the road, teaches us, that this part of his progress is only 'labour and sorrow.'

A remarkable fact, universally attendant on our journey, is recited in the text. 'O Lord,' says the deeply humbled prophet, 'I know that the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh, to direct his steps.' The enterprise is not contrived by ourselves. We are placed in it, and necessitated to accomplish it by a superior and irresistible hand. It cannot but seem strange, that in such a journey we should originally be prevented from the ability to direct ourselves; and that while we are compelled to the undertaking, we should be furnished for it in a manner so imperfect. Yet such is unquestionably the fact. Nor is the explanation so difficult, or so unsatisfactory, as we are prone to believe. God originally intended that all his creatures should be dependent on him for aid, guidance, and protection. Nor can it be rationally supposed, that such a dependence on his perfections and providence, is either unreasonable or undesirable.

The sovereignty of God, which is so clearly and strongly visible in this interesting subject, has ever been questioned, and very often denied by mankind. To establish this doctrine in the minds of my audience is the peculiar design of the present discourse. In a sermon lately delivered in this place on the Decrees of God, I explained what I intend by the Divine Sovereignty. It was then observed, that the conduct of God is sovereign in this sense; that he does according to his will, independently and irresistibly, without giving an account of any of his matters any farther than he pleases; but that he wills nothing without the best reason, whether that reason be disclosed to his creatures or not; that real glory to himself, and real good to his creation, not otherwise attainable, are universally the object to which his pleasure is directed, whether it respects the existence and motions of an insect, or the salvation of man. It was remarked also at that time, that in the ordinary sense of the word, God never acts arbitrarily; and that to say he wills a thing because he wills it, is to speak without meaning. All his pleasure, all his determinations are perfectly wise and good; founded on the best of all reasons, and directed to the best of all purposes. Were he to act in any other manner, his providence would be less wise and less desirable.

It will not be questioned that this doctrine is deeply interesting to man. On this life is suspended that which is to come. Consequences, eternal and incomprehensible, will flow from those doctrines which we adopt in the present world. All our conduct will then be examined, and will either be approved or condemned. If we have chosen the strait and narrow way prescribed to us, the termination will be happy. If we have preferred the broad and crooked road, it will be deplorable.

Few of this audience will probably deny the truth of a direct scriptural declaration. With as little reason can it be denied, that most of them apparently live in the very manner in which they would live, if the doctrine were false: or that they rely, chiefly at least, on their own sagacity, contrivance, and efforts, for success in this life, and that which is to come. As little can it be questioned that such self-confidence is a guide, eminently dangerous and deceitful. Safe as we may feel under its direction, our safety is imaginary. The folly of others in trusting to themselves we discern irresistibly. The same folly they perceive with equal evidence in us. Our true wisdom lies in willingly feeling, and cheerfully acknowledging our dependence on God, and in committing ourselves with humble reliance to his care and direction.

With these observations I will now proceed to illustrate the truth of the doctrine. The mode which I shall pursue, will probably be thought singular, I hope it will be useful. Metaphysical arguments, which are customarily employed for the purpose of establishing this and several other doctrines of theology, are, if I mistake not, less satisfactory to the minds of men at large, than the authors of them appear to believe. Facts, wherever they can be fairly adduced for this end, are attended with a superior power of conviction, and commonly leave little doubt behind them. On these therefore I shall at the present time rely for the accomplishment of my design.

I. *The doctrine of the text is evident from the great fact, that the birth and education of all men depend not on themselves.*

The succeeding events of life are derived, in a great measure at least, from our birth. By this event, it is in a prime degree determined whether men shall be princes or peasants, opulent or poor, learned or ignorant, honourable or despised; whether they shall be civilized or savage, freemen or slaves, Christians or Heathen, Mohammedans or Jews.

A child is born of Indian parents in the western wilderness. By his birth he is of course a savage. His friends, his mode of life, his habits, his knowledge, his opinions, and his conduct, all grow out of this single event. His first thoughts, his first instructions, and all the first objects with which he is conversant, the persons whom he loves, the life to which he addicts himself, and the character which he assumes, are all savage. He is an Indian from the cradle: he is an Indian to the grave. To say that he could not be otherwise, we are not warranted; but that he is not, is certain.

Another child is born of a Bedouin Arab. From this moment he begins to be an Arabian. 'His hand is against every man, and every man's hand is against him.' Before he can walk or speak, he is carried through pathless wastes in search of food; and roams in the arms of his mother, and on the back of a camel, from spring to spring, and from pasture to pasture. Even then he begins his conflict with hunger and thirst, is scorched by a vertical sun, shrivelled by the burning sand beneath, and poisoned by the breath of the si-

moom. Hardened thus through his infancy and childhood, both in body and mind, he becomes, under the exhortations and example of his father, a robber from his youth; attacks every stranger whom he is able to overcome, and plunders every valuable thing on which he can lay his hand.

A third receives his birth in the palace of a British nobleman, and is welcomed to the world as the heir-apparent of an ancient, honourable, and splendid family. As soon as he opens his eyes on the light, he is surrounded by all the enjoyments which opulence can furnish, ingenuity contrive, or fondness bestow. He is dandled on the knee of indulgence; encircled by attendants who watch and prevent alike his necessities and wishes; cradled on down, and charmed to sleep by the voice of tenderness and care. From the dangers and evils of life he is guarded with anxious solicitude. To its pleasures he is conducted by the ever-ready hand of maternal affection. His person is shaped and improved by a succession of masters; his mind is opened, invigorated, and refined by the assiduous superintendence of learning and wisdom. While a child he is served by a host of menials, and flattered by successive trains of visitors. When a youth he is regarded by a band of tenants with reverence and awe. His equals in age bow to his rank, and multitudes of superior years acknowledge his distinction by continual testimonies of marked respect. When a man he engages the regard of his sovereign, commands the esteem of the senate, and earns the love and applause of his country.

A fourth child, in the same kingdom, is begotten by a beggar and born under a hedge. From his birth he is trained to suffering and hardihood. He is nursed, if he can be said to be nursed at all, on a coarse, scanty, and precarious pittance; holds life only as a tenant at will, combats from the first dawnings of intellect with insolence, cold, and nakedness; is originally taught to beg and to steal, is driven from the doors of men by the porter or the house-dog, and is regarded as an alien from the family of Adam. Like his kindred worms he creeps through life in the dust, dies under the hedge where he was born, and is then perhaps cast into the ditch and covered with earth by some stranger, who remembers that, although a beggar, he was still a man.

A child enters the world in China; and unites, as a thing of course, with his sottish countrymen in the stupid worship of the idol Fo. Another prostrates himself before the Lama, in consequence of having received his being in Thibet, and of seeing the Lama worshipped by all around him.

A third, who begins his existence in Turkey, is carried early to the mosque; taught to lisp with profound reverence the name Mohammed; habituated to repeat the prayer and sentences of the Koran, as the means of eternal life; and induced, in a manner irresistibly, to complete his title to paradise by a pilgrimage to Mecca.

The Hindoo infant grows into a religious veneration for the cow; and perhaps never doubts that if he adds to this a solemn devotion to Juggernaut, the Gooroos and the Dewtahs, and performs carefully his ablutions in the Ganges, he shall wash away all his sins, and obtain by the favour of Brahma a seat among the blessed.

In our own favoured country, one child is born of parents devoted solely to this world. From his earliest moments of understanding he hears and sees nothing commended but hunting, horse-racing, visiting, dancing, dressing, riding, parties, gaming, acquiring money with eagerness and skill, and spending it in gayety, pleasure, and luxury. These things, he is taught by conversation and example, constitute all the good of man. His taste is formed, his habits are riveted, and the whole character of his soul is turned to them, before he is fairly sensible that there is any other good. The question whether virtue and piety are either duties or blessings, he probably never asks. In the dawn of life he sees them neglected and despised by those whom he most reverences, and learns only to neglect and despise them also. Of Jehovah he thinks as little, and for the same reason, as a Chinese or a Hindoo. They pay their devotions to Fo, and to Juggernaut; he, his to money and pleasure. Thus he lives and dies a mere animal, a stranger to intelligence and morality, to his duty and his God.

Another child comes into existence in the mansion of knowledge and virtue. From his infancy, his mind is fashioned to wisdom and piety. In his infancy he is taught and allured, to remember his Creator; and to unite, first in form, and then in affection, in the household devotions of the morning and evening. God he knows, almost as soon as he can know any thing. The presence of that glorious Being he is taught to realize almost from the cradle; and from the dawn of intelligence to understand the perfections, and government of his Creator. His own accountableness, as soon as he can comprehend it, he begins to feel habitually and alway. The way of life through the Redeemer is early and regularly explained to him by the voice of parental love, and enforced and endeared in the house of God. As soon as possible he is enabled to read, and persuaded to 'search the Scriptures.' Of the approach, the danger, and the mischiefs of temptation, he is tenderly warned. At the commencement of sin, he is kindly checked in his dangerous career. To God he was solemnly given in baptism. To God he was daily commended in fervent prayer. Under this happy cultivation he grows up, like an olive-tree in the courts of the Lord; and, green, beautiful, and flourishing, he blossoms, bears fruit, and is prepared to be transplanted by the divine hand to a kinder soil in the regions above.

How many and how great are the differences in these several children. How plainly do they all, in ordinary circumstances, arise out of their birth. From their birth is derived, of course, the education which I have ascribed to them; and from this education spring in a great measure both their character and their destiny. The place, the persons, the circumstances, are here evidently the great things, which in the ordinary course of providence appear chiefly to determine what the respective men shall be, and what shall be those allotments which regularly follow their respective characters. As then they are not at all concerned in contriving or accomplishing, either their birth or their education; it is certain that in these most important particulars, the way of man is not in himself. God only can determine what child shall spring from parents wise or foolish, virtuous or sinful, rich or poor, honourable or infamous, civilized or savage, christian or heathen.

I wish it to be distinctly understood, and carefully remembered, that in the moral conduct of all these individuals, no physical necessity operates. Every one of them is absolutely a free agent, as free as any created

agent can be. Whatever he does is the result of choice, absolutely unconstrained.

Let me add, that not one of them is placed in a situation in which, if he learns and performs his duty to the utmost of his power, he will fail of being finally accepted.

II. *The doctrine is strikingly evident from this great fact also, that the course of life which men usually pursue, is very different from that which they have intended.*

Human life is ordinarily little else than a collection of disappointments. Rarely is the life of man such as he designs it shall be. Often do we fail of pursuing at all the business originally in our view. The intentional farmer becomes a mechanic, a seaman, a merchant, a lawyer, a physician, or a divine. The very place of settlement and of residence through life, is often different and distant from that which was originally contemplated. Still more different is the success which follows our efforts.

All men intend to be rich and honourable, to enjoy ease, and to pursue pleasure. But how small is the number of those who compass these objects? In this country the great body of mankind are indeed possessed of competence, a safer and happier lot than that to which they aspire; yet few, very few are rich. Here also the great body of mankind possess a character generally reputable; but very limited is the number of those who arrive at the honour which they so ardently desire, and of which they feel assured. Almost all stop at the moderate level, where human efforts appear to have their boundary established in the determinations of God. Nay, far below this level, creep multitudes of such as began life with full confidence in the attainment of distinction and splendour.

The lawyer, emulating the eloquence, business, and fame, of Murray or Dunning, and secretly resolved not to slacken his efforts until all his rivals in the race of glory are outstripped, is often astonished, as well as broken-hearted, to find business and fame pass by his door, and stop at the more favoured mansion of some competitor, in his view less able and less discerning than himself.

The physician, devoted to medical science, and possessed of distinguished powers of discerning and removing diseases, is obliged to walk, while a more fortunate empiric, ignorant and worthless, rolls through the streets in his coach.

The legislator beholds with anguish and amazement, the suffrages of his countrymen given eagerly to a rival candidate, devoid of knowledge and integrity; but skilled in flattering the base passions of men, and deterred by no hesitations of conscience, and no fears of infamy, from saying and doing any thing which may secure his election.

The merchant often beholds with a despairing eye his own ships sunk in the ocean, his debtors fail, his goods unsold, his business cramped; and himself, and his family, and his hopes ruined; while a less skilful but more successful neighbour sees wealth blown to him by every wind, and floated on every wave.

The crops of the farmer are stinted, his cattle die, his markets are bad, and the purchaser of his commodities proves to be a cheat, who deceives his confidence, and runs away with his property.

Thus the darling schemes and fondest hopes of man are daily frustrated by time. While sagacity contrives, patience matures, and labour industriously executes; disappointment laughs at the curious fabric, formed by so many efforts, and gay with so many brilliant colours; and while the artists imagine the work arrived at the moment of completion, brushes away the beautiful web, and leaves nothing behind.

The designs of men however are, in many respects, not unfrequently successful. The lawyer and the physician acquire business and fame, the statesman votes, and the farmer wealth. But their real success, even in this case, is often substantially the same with that already recited. In all plans, and all labours, the supreme object is to become happy. Yet when men have actually acquired riches and honour, or secured to themselves popular favour, they still find the happiness which they expected eluding their grasp. Neither wealth, fame, office, nor sensual pleasure, can yield such good as we need. As these coveted objects are accumulated, the wishes of man always grow faster than his gratifications. Hence, whatever he acquires, he is usually as little satisfied, and often less than before.

A principal design of the mind in labouring for these things, is to become superior to others. But almost all rich men are obliged to see, and usually with no small anguish, others richer than themselves; honourable men, others more honourable; voluptuous men, others who enjoy more pleasure. The great end of the strife is therefore unobtained, and the happiness expected never found. Even the successful competitor in the race utterly misses his aim. The real enjoyment existed, although it was unperceived by him, in the mere strife for superiority. When he has outstripped all his rivals, the contest is at an end; and his spirits, which were invigorated only by contending, languish for want of a competitor.

Besides, the happiness in view was only the indulgence of pride, or mere animal pleasure. Neither of these can satisfy or endure. A rational mind may be, and often is, so narrow and grovelling, as not to aim at any higher good, to understand its nature, or to believe its existence. Still, in its original constitution, it was formed with a capacity for intellectual and moral good, and was destined to find in this good its only satisfaction. Hence no inferior good will fill its capacity, or its desires. Nor can this bent of its nature ever be altered. Whatever other enjoyment therefore it may attain; it will, without this, still crave and still be unhappy.

No view of the ever-varying character and success of mankind in their expectations of happiness, and their efforts to obtain it, can illustrate this doctrine more satisfactorily than that of the progress and end of a class of students in this seminary. At their first appearance here, they are all exactly on the same level. Their character, their hopes, and their destination, are the same. They are enrolled on one list, and enter upon a collegiate life with the same promise of success. At this moment they are plants, appearing just above the ground, all equally fair and flourishing. Within a short time, however, some begin to rise above others; indicating, by a more rapid growth, a structure of superior vigour, and promising both more early and more abundant fruit.

Some are studious, steadfast, patient of toil, resolved on distinction, in love with science, and determined, with unbroken ambition, never to be left behind by their companions. Of these a part are amiable, uniform in

their morals, excellent in their dispositions, and honourable by their piety. Another part, although less amiable, are still decent; pleasant in their temper, uncensurable in their conduct, and reputable in their character.

Others are thoughtless, volatile, fluttering from object to object, particularly from one scene of pleasure to another; alighting only for a moment, never settling, regardless of every thing, except the present gratification; and most regardless of their time, their talents, their duty, and their souls.

Others still, are openly vicious, idle, disorderly, gamblers, profane, apparently infidels, enemies to themselves, undutiful to their parents, corruptors of their companions, and disturbers of the collegiate peace.

When the class which these individuals originally constituted, leaves this seat of science, a number of them will always be missing. Some of these have been sent away by the mandate of law, some have voluntarily deserted their education, and some, not very unfrequently, have gone to the grave. Of those who remain, the character and the prospects have usually become widely different. The original level is broken, and broken for ever.

How different from all this were their parents' expectations, and their own!

Still, when they enter the world, they all intend to be rich, honourable, and happy. Could they look into futurity, and discern the events which it will shortly unfold, how changed would be their apprehensions.

One, almost at his entrance into life, knowing but inexperienced, discerning but not wise, urged by strong passions, and secure in self-confidence, pushes boldly forward to affluence and distinction; but marked as the prey of cunning, and the victim of temptation, is seduced from prudence and worth, to folly, vice, and ruin. His property is lost by bold speculation, his character by licentiousness, and the man himself by the disappointment of his hopes, and the breaking of his heart.

Another, timid, humble, reluctant to begin, and easily discouraged from pursuing, insensible to the charms of distinction, and a stranger to the inspiration of hope, without friends to sustain, and without prospects to animate, begins to flag, when he commences his connexion with the world; creeps through life, because he dares not attempt to climb; and lives and dies, scarcely known beyond the limits of his native village.

A third yields himself up a prey to sloth, and shrinks into insignificance for want of exertion.

A fourth, possessed of moderate wishes, and preferring safety to grandeur, steers by design between poverty and riches, obscurity and distinction; walks through life without envying those who ride; and finds perhaps in quiet and safety, in an even course of enjoyment, and in the pleasure of being beloved rather than admired, the happiness which his more restless companions seek from opulence, power, and splendour, in vain.

A fifth, cheerful, fraught with hope, and assured by the gayety and bustle which he sees around him, that the world is filled with good, moves onward to acquire it, without a suspicion of disappointment or danger. At once he is astonished to find, that men who look pleasantly on him, are not his friends; that a smile of approbation is no evidence of good-will, and that professions and promises convey to him no assurance of aid or comfort. To be dependent, he soon learns, is to be friendless; and to need assistance, a sufficient reason for having it refused. The business which he expected to court his acceptance, flies from him; the countenance on which he reposed, is withdrawn; and the hopes which he gaily cherished, begin early to wither. Alone, forgotten, unprepared for struggles, and never mistrusting that struggles would be necessary, he is overset by the suddenness and violence of the shock; and either falls into listlessness and stupor, or dies of a broken heart.

A sixth, from imbecility of constitution, or the malignant power of accident, sickens and expires, when he has scarcely begun to live.

A seventh, with vigorous industry, effort, and perseverance, goes steadily forward to wealth and distinction. Yet even he finds the void of his mind unsupplied by real good. *He* is rich and great, but not happy. That enchanting object, happiness, wrought into such elegance of form, and adorned with such brilliant colours, has ever fascinated his mind. Lost in wonder and delight, and gazing with an eager and bewildered eye, he never considered that in this world the rainbow, with all its splendour, was only painted on a cloud; and while he roves from field to field, and climbs from one height to another in pursuit of the fairy vision, is astonished to behold it still retreat from him, and finally vanish for ever.

Were I to ask the youths who are before me, what are their designs and expectations concerning their future life, and write down their several answers, what a vast difference would ultimately be found between those answers, and the events which would actually befall them! To how great a part of that difference would facts, over which they could have no control, give birth! How many of them will in all probability be less prosperous, rich, and honourable, than they now intend: how many, devoted to employments, of which at present they do not even dream; in circumstances, of which they never entertained even a thought; behind those, whom they expected to outrun; poor, sick, in sorrow, or in the grave!

III. *The doctrine is farther evident from the fact, that life does not depend upon man.*

All intend to live, and feel secure of many years: but how often does death frustrate this intention, and dissolve the charm of this security. How many leave the world at an immature age. How many, in the midst of bold projects, sanguine desires, and strenuous exertions. How many asterisks appear with a melancholy aspect even in the younger classes of the triennial catalogue, marking solemnly, to a considerate mind, the termination of parental hopes, and the vanity of youthful designs. Where now are multitudes of those, who a little while since lived, and studied, and worshipped here, with fond views of future eminence and prosperity, and with as fair a promise as can be found, of future success, usefulness, and honour?

As we are unable to assure ourselves even of a single day, much more of a long life, it is plain that our eternal state lies beyond our control. As death finds us, so the judgment will certainly find us. He therefore who 'kills,' as well as 'makes alive' at his pleasure, must of course hold in his hands only, all our allotments, which lie beyond the grave.

I have not called up this doctrine at the present time for the purpose of entering into any of those metaphysical disquisitions which restless curiosity, rather than

sound wisdom, has commonly founded on it; but on the one hand to give it its proper place in this system of discourses, and on the other to derive from it several practical observations, which there is reason to hope may, by the blessing of God, be useful to those who hear me, especially to those who are students in this seminary.

REMARKS.

1. You see here, my young friends, the most solid reasons for gratitude to your Creator.

God only directed that you should be born in this land, and in the midst of peace, plenty, civilization, freedom, learning, and religion; and that your existence should not commence in a Tartarian forest, or an African waste. God alone ordered that you should be born of parents who knew and worshipped him, the glorious and eternal Jehovah; and not of parents who bowed before the Lama, or the ox, an image of brass, or the stock of a tree. In the book of his counsels, your names, so far as we are able to judge, were written in the fair lines of mercy. It is of his overflowing goodness that you are now here surrounded with privileges, and beset with blessings; educated to knowledge, usefulness, and piety, and prepared to begin an endless course of happiness and glory. All these delightful things have been poured into your lap, and have come unbidden to solicit your acceptance. If these blessings awaken not gratitude, it cannot be awakened by blessings in the present world. If they are not thankfully felt by you, it is because you know not how to be thankful. Think what you are and where you are, and what and where you just as easily might have been. Remember that, instead of cherishing tender affections, imbibing refined sentiments, exploring the field of science, and assuming the name and character of the sons of God, you might as easily have been dozing in the smoke of a weekwam, brandishing a tomahawk, or dancing round an emboweled captive; or that you might yourselves have been emboweled by the hand of superstition, and burnt on the altars of Moloch. If you remember these things, you cannot but call to mind also, 'who made you to differ' from the miserable beings who have thus lived and died.

2. This doctrine forcibly demands of you moderate desires and expectations.

There are modes in which men seek happiness, in the enjoyments of the present world. Most persons freely indulge their wishes, and intend to find objects sufficient in number and value to satisfy them. A few aim at satisfaction by proportioning their desires to the number and measure of their probable gratifications. By the doctrine of the text the latter method is stamped with the name of wisdom, and on the former is inscribed the name of folly. Desires indulged, grow faster, and farther, than gratifications extend. Ungratified desire is misery. Expectations eagerly indulged, and terminated by disappointment, are often exquisite misery. But how frequently are expectations raised, only to be disappointed; and desires let loose, only to terminate in distress. The child pines for a toy. The moment he possesses it, he throws it by and cries for another. When they are piled up in heaps around him, he looks at them without pleasure, and leaves them without regret. He knew not that all the good which they could yield, lay in expectation; nor that his wishes for more would increase faster than toys could be multiplied; and is unhappy at last, for the same reason as at first: his wishes are ungratified. Still indulging them, and still believing that the gratification of them will furnish the enjoyment for which he pines, he goes on, only to be unhappy.

Men are merely taller children. Honour, wealth, and splendour, are the toys for which grown children pine; but which, however accumulated, leave them still disappointed and unhappy. God never designed that intelligent beings should be satisfied with these enjoyments. By his wisdom and goodness, they were formed to derive their happiness from virtue.

Moderated desires constitute a character, fitted to acquire all the good which this world can yield. He who is prepared, 'in whatever situation he is, therewith to be content,' has learned effectually the science of being happy; and possesses the alchymic stone which will change every metal into gold. Such a man will smile upon a stool, while Alexander at his side sits weeping on the throne of the world.

The doctrine of the text teaches you irresistibly, that since you cannot command gratifications, you should command your desires: and that, as the events of life do not accord with your wishes, your wishes should accord with them. Multiplied enjoyments fall but to few men, and are no more rationally expected than the highest prize in a lottery. But a well regulated mind, a dignified independence of the world, and a wise preparation to possess one's soul in patience, whatever circumstances may exist, is in the power of every man; and is greater wealth than that of both the Indies, and greater honour than Cæsar ever acquired.

3. As your course and your success through life, are not under your control, you are strongly urged to commit yourselves to God, who can control both.

That you cannot direct your course through the world, that your best concerted plans will often fail, that your sanguine expectations will be disappointed, and that your fondest worldly wishes will terminate in mortification, cannot admit of a momentary doubt. That God can direct you, that he actually controls all your concerns; and that, if you commit yourselves to his care, he will direct you kindly and safely, can be doubted only of choice. Why then do you hesitate to yield yourselves and your interests to the guidance of your Maker? There are two reasons which appear especially to govern mankind in this important concern; they do not and will not realize the agency of God in their affairs, and they do not choose to have them directed as they imagine he will direct them. The former is the result of stupidity, the latter of impiety. Both are foolish in the extreme, and not less sinful than foolish.

The infinitely wise, great, and glorious Benefactor of the universe, has offered to take men by the hand, lead them through the journey of life, and conduct them to his own house in the heavens. The proof of his sincerity in making this offer has been already produced. He has given his own Son, to live, and die, and rise, and reign, and intercede for our race. 'Herein is love,' if there ever was love; 'not that we have loved him, but that he has loved us.' That he who has done this should not be sincere, is impossible. St Paul therefore triumphantly asks what none can answer, 'He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all

things?' Trust then his word with undoubting confidence, take his hand with humble gratitude, and with all the heart obey his voice, which you will everywhere hear, saying, 'This is the way, walk ye in it.' In sickness and in health, by night and by day, at home and in crowds, he will watch over you with tenderness inexpressible. He will 'make you lie down in green pastures, lead you beside the still waters, and guide you in paths of righteousness, for his name's sake. He will prepare a table before you in the presence of your enemies, and cause your cup to run over with blessings.' 'When you pass through the waters' of affliction, 'he will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon you.' From their native heavens, he will commission those charming twin sisters, Goodness and Mercy, to descend, and 'follow you all your days.'

But if you wish God to be your guide and your friend, you must conform to his pleasure. Certainly you cannot wonder, that the infinitely Wise, should prefer his own wisdom to yours; and that he should choose for his children their allotments, rather than leave them to choose for themselves. That part of his pleasure which you are to obey, is all summed up in the single word duty; and is perfectly disclosed in the Scriptures. The whole scheme is so formed as to be plain, easy, profitable, and delightful; profitable in hand, delightful in the possession. Every part and precept of the whole is calculated for this end, and will make you only wise, good, and happy.

Life has been often styled an ocean, and our progress through it, a voyage. The ocean is tempestuous and billowy, overspread by a cloudy sky, and fraught beneath with shelves and quicksands. The voyage is eventful beyond comprehension, and at the same time full of uncertainty, and replete with danger. Every adventurer needs to be well prepared for whatever may befall him, and well secured against the manifold hazards of losing his course, sinking in the abyss, or of being wrecked against the shore.

These evils have existed at all times. The present, and that part of the past which is known to you by experience, has seen them multiplied beyond example. It has seen the ancient and acknowledged standards of thinking violently thrown down. Religion, morals, government, and the estimate formed by man of crimes and virtues, and of all the means of usefulness and enjoyment, have been questioned, attacked, and, in various places, and with respect to millions of the human race, finally overthrown. A licentiousness of opinion and conduct, daring, outrageous, and rending asunder every bond formed by God or man, has taken place of former good sense and sound morals, and has long threatened the destruction of human good. Industry, cunning, and fraud, have toiled with unrivalled exertions, to convert man into a savage, and the world into a desert. A wretched and hypocritical philanthropy, also, not less mischievous, has stalked forth as the companion of these ravages; a philanthropy born in a dream, bred in a novel, and living only in professions. This guardian genius of human interests, this friend of human rights, this redresser of human wrongs, is yet without a heart to feel, and without a hand to bless. But she is well furnished with lungs, with eyes, and a tongue. She can talk, and sigh, and weep at pleasure, but can neither pity nor give. The objects of her attachment are either knaves and villains at home, or unknown sufferers beyond her reach abroad. To the former, she ministers the sword and the dagger, that they may fight their way into place, and power, and profit. At the latter, she only looks through a telescope of fancy, as an astronomer searches for stars invisible to the eye. To every real object of charity within her reach, she complacently says, 'Be thou warmed, and be thou filled; depart in peace.'

By the daring spirit, the vigorous efforts, and the ingenious cunning so industriously exerted on the one hand, and the smooth and gentle benevolence so softly professed on the other, multitudes have been, and you easily may be, destroyed. The mischief has indeed been met, resisted, and overcome; but it has the heads, and the lives of the Hydra; and its 'wounds,' which at times have seemed 'deadly,' are much more readily 'healed' than any good man could wish, than any sober man could expect. Hope not to escape the assaults of this enemy: to feel that you are in danger will ever be a preparation for your safety. But it will be only such a preparation; your deliverance must ultimately and only flow from your Maker. Resolve then to commit yourselves to him, with a cordial reliance on his wisdom, power, and protection. Consider how much you have at stake; that you are bound to eternity, that your existence will be immortal, and that you will either rise to endless glory or be lost in absolute perdition. Heaven is your proper home. The path which I have recommended to you, will conduct you safely and certainly to that happy world. Fill up life therefore with obedience to God, with faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and repentance unto life, the obedience to the two great commands of the gospel; with supreme love to God, and universal good-will to men, the obedience to the two great commands of the law. On all your sincere endeavours to honour him and befriend your fellow men, he will smile; every virtuous attempt he will bless: every act of obedience he will reward. Life in this manner will be pleasant amid all its sorrows, and beams of hope will continually shine through the gloom, by which it is so often overcast. Virtue, the seed that cannot die, planted from heaven, and cultivated by the divine hand, will grow up in your hearts with increasing vigour, and blossom in your lives with supernal beauty. Your 'path will be that of the just,' and will gloriously resemble the dawning light; 'which shines brighter and brighter to the perfect day.' Peace will take you by the hand, and offer herself as the constant and delightful companion of your progress. Hope will walk before you, and with an unerring finger point out your course; and Joy, at the end of the journey, will open her arms to receive you. You will 'wait on the Lord, and renew your strength; will mount up with wings as eagles; will run, and not be weary; will walk, and not faint.'

SERMON XVII.

CREATION.—AIR; STARRY, AND SUPREME, HEAVENS.

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.—Gen. i. 1.

In the preceding Discourses I have considered the existence and perfections of God; his decrees, or that pleasure or choice, with which he willed the existence of all things; and the sovereignty with which he disposes of them. The next subject in such a system of discourses, is the works of God; which are no other than the execution of that pleasure. These are generally and justly distributed under two great heads, Creation and Providence. Under these heads I propose to consider them.

In the text it is asserted, that, 'In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.' The phrase, 'In the beginning,' is universally expressive, in the Scriptures, of the commencement of created or finite existence. Whether it is intended to be applied in the present case to both the heavens and the earth, with exactly the same meaning, is uncertain, as will be evident from the proper import of this phraseology. The word 'created,' denotes, brought into existence. 'The heaven and the earth,' is a Jewish phrase denoting the universe, and all things which it contains. As some of these things, particularly the souls of men, were not created at the same time with the earth, it is evident that the phrase, 'in the beginning,' cannot be particularly and strictly applied to every created being.

In the text, thus explained, the following doctrine is evidently asserted:—

That all things were brought into existence by God.

The truth of this doctrine has been already sufficiently evinced in the two first of these Discourses, so far as arguments from reason are concerned. That it is the real doctrine of the text, and that the word 'created' does not mean merely moulded, or fashioned, is completely evident from the explanation of Moses himself; who undoubtedly will be allowed to be his own commentator. In Gen. ii. 3, he says, 'And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work, which God created and made.' In the original language it is, 'which God created to make,' that is, which he created or brought into being first, and made or fashioned afterwards, into all the innumerable forms and beings with which the universe is, in a sense, endlessly replenished.

This truth has by various persons, of no small note in the world as men of science, been called in question. It seems so evident that all things which do not involve a contradiction, are possible with the omnipotent God, that a sober man can scarcely fail to wonder how these persons can hesitate to believe, that the act of creating or giving being, is within the limits of his power. The acts of preserving and governing the universe also seem to be equally evidential of omnipotence, and equally to demand its exertions. I cannot easily conceive how any man can admit that God governs the universe, and doubt whether he brought or was able to bring it into being. At the same time, the several modes adopted by these very men to account either for the existence, preservation, or government of all things, are attended with incomparably more difficulty, being indeed palpable absurdities, and involving evident contradictions. This, it is believed, has been proved in a former Discourse.*

But the formation of the human soul is itself a continual exhibition of creating power. It is, unquestionably, as difficult to create minds, as to create matter. But that God creates minds is certain, because matter, being unintelligent, cannot communicate intelligence; and therefore, even if admitted to possess active power, cannot bring into existence a mind. Nor ought it to be forgotten, that this opinion rests upon no evidence. On the contrary, it is a doubt or denial gratuitously assumed. The abettor of it merely doubts or denies the fact, that God created all things; and to justify himself alleges that he cannot conceive such an act to be possible. But he ought to show that he does see it to be impossible. That he cannot discern what omnipotence can do any farther than God discloses it, either by his acts or his declarations, is very obvious; but that this ignorance should be a foundation of doubt to himself, or of conviction, or even of attention to others, is I think explicable only by the supposition of extreme folly in either case.

As this amazing work is in the text divided into two great parts, 'the heaven and the earth;' I shall adopt this natural and pertinent division in my Discourses. I shall begin my consideration of it with the subject mentioned first in the text, *viz*, the heaven.

The word 'heaven,' in the text, is used to denote what is elsewhere called 'the heavens,' as is evident from the first verse of the following chapter, in which it is said, with a reference to exactly the same subject, 'Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them.' As the term is variously applied in the Scriptures, it will be proper in this place to mention the objects to which this application is made.

In the first place, 'heaven or heavens' (for the word is used indifferently in either the singular or plural number) is applied to God: 'until thou know that the heavens do rule.' Dan. iv. 26. Secondly, to angels: 'The heavens are not clean in his sight,' Job. xv. 15. Thirdly, to the church: 'There was war in heaven.' Rev. xii. 7. Fourthly, to a great height: 'Cities walled up to heaven,' Deut. i. 28. Fifthly, to distinguished glory: 'How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning!' Isa. xiv. 12.

All these are plainly figurative senses of this word. In a literal sense, it seems to have been used by the Jews to denote, first, the air. As when the scriptural writers speak of the dew, winds, and fowls of heaven. Secondly, the firmament, or expansion over our heads.

* See Sermon II.

Thus it is said in the context, verse 17, 'God set them,' that is, the sun, moon, and stars, 'in the firmament of heaven to give light upon the earth.' Thirdly, the supreme heaven, styled also, 'the heaven of heavens,' 'Behold the heaven, and the heaven of heavens, is the Lord's,' Deut. x. 14. God also is styled 'the God of heaven;' and St John 'behold a door opened in heaven,' and was directed by a voice to go up thither; and was 'immediately carried in the Spirit before the throne of God.'

From these and many other passages it is evident, that the Jews acknowledged three heavens; and considered all things, beside the earth and that which it contains, and the world of punishment, as being included under the word, heaven. As this is the common language of Scripture, I shall consider the subject in the same manner, and in the order already specified.

I. *The air, or atmosphere, by which the earth is surrounded, is replete with wonderful displays of the power and wisdom of God.*

Particularly, it has ever engaged the attention of wise and observant men, and merits our own attention.

1. As it is the immediate mean of life to mankind, and to the animal and vegetable kingdoms.

The nature of life, and the manner in which it is maintained, are both very imperfectly understood; nor will it be expected from me, that I should here attempt to give an account of such discoveries as have been made by inquisitive men concerning these mysterious subjects. The remarks of a minister of the gospel, and not those of an anatomist, the views of common sense, and not those of chemical or medical science, will be expected in the present discussion. All men know that living beings depend in this world, for the continuance of life, on respiration; and that the medium of respiration is air. Among the wonders which pertain to this subject, this is one; that although the air is a compound substance, made up of very diverse materials; one of them noxious, and a second by itself perfectly unproductive of life; yet these are so blended with the third, in which alone the power of maintaining life resides, that in their combination they are better fitted to continue life, than even the life-giving principle would be, if it existed pure and unmixed. Another is, that this combination is maintained in such a manner, that the proportional quantities of these materials are at all times substantially, if not exactly, the same. When we consider the innummerable revolutions of which the air is the subject, and the perpetual fluctuations, it seems scarcely less than a miracle, that this equability, so necessary for the continuance of life, should be always and everywhere preserved. Nothing less than the wisdom of God could have contrived the means, by which this fact is accomplished.

2. As it is the great instrument of dissolution.

The world is formed to be a theatre of successive existence. The beings which exist in it are intended to fulfill the end for which they exist, and then to leave the stage vacant to those who succeed them. Of course, they dissolve, and return to their original dust. Of this dissolution, air is acknowledged by philosophers to be the primary means. If we had never been witnesses of the fact, few things could seem more strange and improbable to us, than that the same element should be, at once, the chief means of preserving life, and the chief means of dissolution; and that both these processes should, without any confusion, go on from age to age in perfect harmony, and as indispensable parts of a complete system.

3. As it is a principal mean of heat and cold.

These great effects are both produced by different operations of the same element, hitherto inexplicably mysterious, but without any discord or confusion. The manner in which air withdraws heat from other objects, and again gives it out to those objects, must be confessed, familiar as the fact is, to be eminently wonderful, while at the same time the operation is absolutely necessary. On it depends a great part of the activity, comfort, and usefulness of mankind. From it spring, in a great degree, those changes of the seasons, those varieties of temperature which are so pleasing, necessary, and useful to the world. In a word, from this source in a great measure arise the growth and perfection of the vegetable world, the existence of a great part of the comforts and necessaries of life, and apparently the continuance of our being.

4. As it is the medium by which are conveyed to us rain, dew, hail, and snow, and as it is also the source of drought in its various degrees.

The attraction between air and vapour, existing in such a manner as to diffuse the vapour, in a sense equably, throughout the lower regions of the atmosphere, seems to be indispensable to that great and mysterious process in the natural world which is called evaporation. Every person knows that without this process, rain and dew, snow and hail, could not exist; and that without these there could be neither vegetation, food, raiment, nor even existence to mankind. At the same time, by a mysterious process of nature, respecting especially a peculiar state of the atmosphere, the seasons become dry; the 'rain,' in the emphatical language of the Scriptures, is changed into 'powder and dust; the heavens are as brass over our heads, and the earth as iron under our feet.' Drought and famine then spread their baleful influence over the world, and mankind are compelled by thousands to the grave.

5. As it is eminently the source of health and sickness.

Among the various exhalations, accomplished on the surface of the earth by means of the atmosphere, there are many which are impure, noxious, and fraught with poison and death. Of this nature, in an eminent degree, is that suffocating vapour, conveyed over the deserts of Nubia in the fatal blast which is called the Simoom. Of a similar nature are numerous other exhalations, not so immediately, but often more extensively destructive to human life, which arise from marshes, ponds, and other stagnations of water; as well as many more, ascending from decayed vegetables and other masses of putrefaction. All these, but for the atmosphere, would be confined to the surface, and fail of their malignant influence on human life. At the same time, air is the great source of health; and wherever it passes freely, contributes perhaps to the preservation or restoration of this essential blessing. In its purest state it seems, in the ordinary circumstances of man, to promote health only; and often restores such as are languishing and decayed, more than all other causes united.

6. As it is the seat, and in an important sense, the cause, of many highly magnificent displays of divine workmanship.

Storms, clouds, thunder, lightning, combustion, vol-

canoes, earthquakes, the magnificent rainbow, and the delightful breeze, are all dependent on air for their existence. All of them, also, are deeply interesting to man in many ways. Besides their obvious influence in promoting our daily health and comfort, our frequent delight and sorrow, the continuance of our life, and the arrival of death, they are in no small degree interesting to us as displays of the divine presence and character, eminently beautiful, various, awful, and majestic, and productive of important and extensive moral influence on mankind.

7. As it is in many respects an important aid to vision.

No small part of the beautiful, majestic, and interesting scenes of nature depend, for their peculiar appearance, upon the atmosphere. Such, in an eminent manner, is the twilight, which so usefully and beautifully returns every morning and every evening. Such also is the sky or firmament, that magnificent azure concave, which apparently bends in so glorious a manner over this great world. Such also are all those scenes in which the refraction of light is concerned. Without the aid of the atmosphere, none of these things would appear to us at all.

These summary hints will be sufficient to exhibit the importance of this wonderful subject, so far as is necessary for the present design. I proceed therefore to observe,

II. *That the starry heaven is a still more wonderful and magnificent part of the creation of God.*

To the most uninstructed mind, and the most vulgar eye, the firmament, with the innumerable and glorious bodies which it contains, has ever been far the most wonderful part of the visible creation; while minds of superior intelligence, especially when the subjects of piety, have ever regarded this amazing scene with study, admiration, and awe, as pre-eminently displaying the wisdom and greatness of God. 'When,' says David, 'I consider the heavens, the work of thy finger, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained; Lord! what is man, that thou art mindful of him; or the son of man, that thou visitest him?'

Of all material objects, the sun is beyond measure the most glorious and magnificent, and the noblest emblem of its Creator. This great world of light is, beyond every thing else, the most perfect symbol of the exaltation, unchangeableness, perpetuity, life-giving power, benevolent influence, omnipresence, omniscience, dominion, and greatness of God.

The moon, a softer but not less beautiful object, returns and communicates to mankind, the light of the sun in a gentle and delightful manner, exactly suited to the strength of the human eye; an illustrious and most beautiful emblem, in this and several other respects, of the divine Redeemer of mankind; who, softening the splendour of the Godhead, brings it to the eye of the understanding, in a manner fitted to the strength of the mind; so that, without being overwhelmed or distressed, it can thus behold 'the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.'

The stars, also, by their endless multitude, and the unceasing variety and beauty with which they everywhere replenish the vast expansion, astonish and delight the mind, while they manifest the greatness and wisdom of Jehovah. No stronger proof can be given of the nature or degree of the impressions, with which these marvellous objects have affected the mind of man, than the fact, that in very early ages of the world they began, and through every succeeding period have continued, to be objects of religious adoration; and, by a great proportion of our race, have been directly acknowledged as gods.

Such have been the views formed by the human mind, with the mere light of uninstructed reason, concerning this glorious part of the creation. But when the eye is permitted to look out of the window of science into this vast field, it assumes an entirely new and immensely nobler character. Instead of a great and splendid luminary, hung up in the heavens to communicate light and warmth to this world, and to measure the returns of day and night to its inhabitants, the sun is seen by the eye of the astronomer to be a vast world of itself; possessed of the wonderful power of emitting this equally wonderful element in immeasurable quantities to immeasurable distances; and the centre of many other worlds, which receive from this their light and warmth, their motion, regularity, and harmony. To the same eye, the planets no longer appear as gems of inherent and immortal lustre, adorning the concave with unrivalled elegance and beauty; but as vast worlds, resembling this globe in their various affections, and moving round the sun, with a rapid, regular, and mysterious circuit; surrounded by other inferior worlds, by which they are wonderfully beautified and adorned; and inhabited, in all probability, by endless multitudes of beings, rational and immortal. Of these inferior worlds, the moon is one; and to us, far the most interesting. How many important purposes which are known, does this beautiful attendant of our earth continually accomplish! How many more, in all probability, which are hitherto unknown, and which hereafter may be extensively disclosed to more enlightened, virtuous, and happy generations of men. At the same time, it is most rationally concluded, that intelligent beings in great multitudes inhabit her lucid regions, being probably far better and happier than ourselves.

The comets, of which the number already discovered is very great, are still more extraordinary parts of this amazing work. Man no longer beholds them as occasional and flaming meteors, wandering through the sky as mere omens to the human race of convulsions, famines, and pestilences; but sees them with unquestionable certainty, to be worlds, which, like the planets, regularly move round the sun in orbits of extreme eccentricity and inconceivable extent.

Concerning the stars, our views have undergone a still greater change. The mind no more regards them as feeble but beautiful tapers, twinkling merely for the gratification of mankind, with an innate and perpetual lustre. On the contrary, they are known with absolute certainty to be universally suns, resembling our own; and apparently so much less, only because they are removed to a distance incomprehensibly greater. The same science which has detected their nature, size, and distance, has also to a great extent disclosed their numbers. Instead of the comparatively small collection, visible to the naked eye in any given night, they are proved to be in a sense innumerable, and to fill with an immense army the immeasurable fields of ether.

It cannot be rationally believed, that worlds so great and glorious as the sun were made in vain. Yet of the

endless millions of stars, less than three thousand have been seen by the naked eye of man; and till within a few years, all the vast multitudes which have been since discovered had been secreted from every inhabitant of this globe. Herschel first detected almost all which are now known, or have ever been visible to the human eye. So far as mankind are concerned, then, the stars, ever since the creation, have, in far the greatest number of instances, existed in vain. Of course they were formed for other purposes than any in which we can be directly concerned. But for what purposes can we suppose such worlds of light were created! The only rational answer is, they were formed for the same purposes which are ccomplished by our own sun; to give light, and motion, and life, and comfort, to systems of worlds, of which each star severally is the common centre. Such worlds, herefore, are with the highest reason supposed to exist and to be, like the earth, the residence of intelligent beings, of incalculable numbers, and endless diversities of character; all supported, governed, and blessed, as the worlds which they inhabit are sustained, regulated, and moved, by the hand of that Almighty Being who created them, and 'whose kingdom ruleth over all.' Thus the universe is the immense and glorious empire of Jehovah; an empire formed of suns and systems; the families, cities, and provinces, of the vast kingdom ruled by him, 'who telleth the number of the stars, and calleth them all by their names.'

III. *The heaven of heavens is a still more edifying object of our attention.*

On this sublime subject I shall discourse only in a very summary manner at the present time, as I expect, God willing, to consider it more extensively at a future period.

The high superiority of this happy and glorious world is strongly marked, in the Scriptures whence alone we derive any knowledge of it, by that peculiar epithet, 'The heaven of heavens.' As 'the God of gods' is distinguished by this phrase above all other gods; so the heaven of heavens is, in a manner indefinitely similar, intentionally exhibited as wholly superior to all other heavens.

In the same Scriptures we are taught, that this glorious world is the house of God, or the peculiar and favourite place of his residence; the place where those manifestations of himself are seen, which he is pleased to make, as the most special displays of his presence and character. Present in all other places, he is peculiarly present here.

It is also, as we are farther informed by the same Scriptures, the throne of God, the seat of universal and endless dominion; where the divine authority is peculiarly exercised and made known, and the splendour of the divine government exhibited with singular effulgence and glory.

It is the residence of his most favoured creatures; of the saints, who are redeemed by the blood of his Son; and of the angels, who, innumerable in multitudes, 'stand round about his throne.'

It is the everlasting seat of consummate holiness, or virtue; where that divine principle shines without alloy, flourishes in immortal youth, and reigns and triumphs with eternal glory.

It is the place in which are seen all the finishings of divine workmanship; and in which the beauty and greatness of the Infinite Mind, and the endless diversities of omniscient skill, appear in all their most exquisite forms, and in the last degrees of refinement and perfection.

It is the centre of all divine communications; the city, in which all the paths of providence terminate; the ocean, from which all the streams of infinite wisdom and goodness proceed, and into which they return, to flow again and for ever.

It is the theatre in which an eternal providence of progressive knowledge, power, and love, rendered daily more and more beautiful and amiable, wonderful and majestic, is begun and carried on through ages, which will never approach towards an end.

It is the place where all the works of God are studied and understood, through an eternal progress of knowledge; where all the diversities of virtuous intelligence, all the forms and hues of moral beauty, brighten in an unceasing gradation; and where gratitude, love, enjoyment, and praise resound day and night, in a more and more perfect harmony throughout the immense of duration.

Thus have I finished the observations which I designed to make on this subject, and shall now conclude the Discourse with some practical

REMARKS.

1. With what entire propriety is God exhibited in the very first verse of the Scriptures, as the Creator of all things.

This verse may be regarded as an introduction, or preface to the whole Bible, and to the system of doctrines which it contains. Accordingly it announces to us in few and simple, but those most sublime and affecting terms, the two great subjects about which the Bible and its doctrines are employed: God, and his immense kingdom. Him it exhibits to us in the character of Creator, and all things else as created by him.

On the act of creating is founded a great part of that character, in which especially he calls for the obedience of intelligent beings. As the Creator of the universe he appears irresistibly to every eye, as a Being possessed of infinite power, wisdom, and greatness; and therefore able to preserve and govern the vast work which he was thus able to make; of power, which nothing can resist or escape; of wisdom, which nothing can circumvent or elude; and of greatness, with which nothing can be compared. As the Creator of the universe, he is exhibited as the absolute proprietor of the work which he has made. Creation is the highest ground of property which can exist. All is his; and his in a sense superior to that in which any thing can be ours. All therefore is rightfully required to be employed supremely and solely in his service, for his purposes, and according to his pleasure.

Intelligent creatures, particularly, have no property in any thing, except as he has given it; and on no terms, and for no uses, beside those which he has established. They themselves are as absolutely his property as any thing which he has made. Their faculties and their time are truly his; for they were made by him, and therefore are not their own. Of course, they are justly required by him, and ought to be devoted by themselves, to whatever services he is pleased to enjoin. Of course, also, to refuse or neglect to render to him

themselves, and whatever they do or possess, is plain and gross injustice, and refusing or neglecting to 'render to God the things which are God's.'

By his character of Creator also they are called upon, in the most solemn and affecting manner, to regard him with unceasing admiration, reverence, and awe. There is something singularly awful, something singularly fitted to inspire profound reverence in the character of God as our Creator, in the consideration of him as the Being by whom we were made. On this Being we cannot but feel, if we feel at all, that as we derived our existence from him, so we absolutely depend for our continuance in being, and for all which can render that being comfortable or desirable. In this view we can scarcely fail to realize that we are nothing, and that he is all.

At the same time, the amazing nature of the works themselves, their number, their variety, their beauty, their grandeur, their magnificence, the glory of the end for which they are made, and the astonishing fitness of the means by which it is accomplished, necessarily excite in every sober and contemplative mind the highest possible admiration, an admiration which will continue and increase for ever.

2. With what reason does God, as the Creator of all things, claim the entire confidence of his creatures.

He who is the Author of the creation, can do all things; he is every where, knows every thing, and controls the universe with an absolute and irresistible dominion. He who has made such various, rich, and abundant provision for the wants of his creatures, can provide for all their wants. He who was willing to provide in the bountiful manner which we actually see existing, is reasonably argued, and expected, to provide all other things which are either necessary or useful. If they please him, he cannot but be expected to give to them freely; if they obey him, they will certainly please him; and if they are willing to do that which their own minds, candidly employed and enlightened by his word, must of course declare to be right, they will certainly obey him. The path therefore which leads to the most ample supplies of all their real wants, and the attainment of all real good, is open, direct, and certain. Nor can any reason be given why they should refuse, or neglect to pursue this highway to the divine and eternal possession. How rich, how vast, how glorious a work is the visible creation. With what endless multitudes of creatures is it replenished. With what innumerable blessings is it stored! All these sprang from the mere goodness and bounty of the Creator. Who can limit such bounty, even in thought? Who can imagine a real want, which it is not able and willing to supply? How plainly then ought all those creatures, not only to wait on him, but to trust in him also, that he may give them all blessings in due season.

Particularly, when his children remember that he has created the heaven of heavens for their reception, and adorned and enriched it with every thing which can contribute to their happiness and glory; they cannot but discern and feel, that he claims from them, on the most solid grounds, all possible confidence, as well as reverence and love. In the Scriptures he has disclosed to them, that here there is made all the provision which they can need, and far more than they can ask or conceive; and that, however enlarged may be their faculties and views, they will through eternity receive all which they can ever desire. Of the power of God to fulfill these promises they are completely assured by the effects which it has produced in the visible creation. Of his willingness to perform them, and to satisfy every reasonable wish, they are furnished with no unhappy evidence in the provision which he so bountifully makes for rebels and apostates in the present world. When they add to this the gift of his own Son, whom 'he did not spare, but delivered him up for us all,' they are completely assured that 'he will also with him freely give them all things,'

3. How amazing and glorious a being does God appear in the character of Creator.

Of what power, knowledge, and goodness, must He be possessed, who has done all these things; who is, who lives, and who acts, through all the worlds in immensity; who contrived them, and brought them into being; who stored them with such abundant furniture, and filled them with such multitudes of inhabitants; who controls them with an omnipotent hand, and with an omniscient eye; and who will advance them for ever in their progress towards perfection. All these things are only displays of the Godhead. In them all, Jehovah is seen in forms of beauty, wisdom, goodness, life, joy, loveliness, and greatness, which transcend both in number and comprehension.

4. How ought this great and awful Being to be feared by his intelligent creatures.

How ought we, particularly, to realize his presence, agency, character, and will; the obligations which we are under to obey, and the supreme interest which we have in doing his pleasure. His right to dispose of us cannot be denied. The rectitude of his pleasure cannot be questioned. At the same time, on him our all depends. How indispensable is it, therefore, that we act in all things in such a manner as to secure his favour, and in this, the only possible manner, to obtain his blessing.

On the contrary, what madness must it be to forget, disobey, and provoke him. Think what it is to be 'found fighting against God.' 'Hast thou,' says Jehovah to Job, 'an arm like God; or canst thou thunder with a voice like him? Then I will confess unto thee, that thine own right hand can save thee.' What evil is not to be expected from his anger. What terrible proofs have been given of its dreadful efficacy, in his ancient dispensations, to the antediluvians, to Sodom and Gomorrah, to the Egyptians, and to the Israelites, both in the wilderness, and the land of Canaan. What awful specimens are even now continually seen of his displeasure against this polluted world, in the ravages of the storm, the earthquake, and the volcano, and the more extensive evils of pestilence and famine!

5. How miserable must be the condition of those who have no interest in the favour of God.

God is the source of all the good which is found, or will ever be found, in the universe. 'Every good gift, and every perfect gift, is from above; and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.' Wherever then he refuses to give, it is certain that no enjoyment can be found. How dreadful of course, how solitary, how friendless, how forlorn must the situation of a creature be, if he were banished for ever from the presence, favour, and love of God. Were the sun, as the heathen supposed, an intelligent being, capable of being pleased and dis-

pleased, and of communicating and withholding his light and warmth at pleasure; how lonely, dark, and wretched, would be the condition of men, if he should withdraw his beams from this world, and permit them never more to shine; of men consigned to everlasting night, and everlasting winter; who should yet live, in this cold and dreary solitude, and know and feel their wretched condition: while at they same time they also knew that other favoured and happy beings, in all other respects resembling themselves, were in full possession of the life-giving influence, and cheering splendour of this glorious luminary. God is the Sun of the intelligent and immortal world. Wherever he shines, there is light, and peace, and hope, and joy; wherever he withdraws his beams, all is darkness and desolation for ever.

On this subject I am apprehensive that Christians do not meditate nor converse, nor ministers preach, so frequently and so fervently as their interest and their duty plainly require. The apostles have dwelt often and extensively on the prospects, the joys, and the glories of heaven. In this respect they are obviously patterns to all succeeding preachers. Christians are in the Scriptures often invited to meditate on heavenly things; and presented with the most sublime, alluring, and delightful objects of a heavenly nature, to engage them in such meditations. They are directed also to 'set their affections on things above;' commanded to have 'their conversation in heaven, and not on the earth;' and reminded, that in an humble and figurative sense, they are already 'come to the New Jerusalem,' and to the glorious beings by whom it is inhabited, by entering the church of God in the present world. All these precepts they are bound implicitly to obey.

When we approach the table of Christ, we are by the strongest motives compelled to remember, that the exalted end of his mediation was to open this happy world for the reception of his followers: an end, purchased with tears and blood. This end is the most illustrious and delightful, of which we can form a conception; and the means by which it has been accomplished are the most sublime display of infinite good-will which the universe has ever beheld.

When Christians approach the table of their communion, they approach it to commemorate their Saviour. What do they commemorate? His life, and death, and resurrection, and exaltation; a life of humiliation, suffering, and sorrow; a death of shame and agony, a resurrection to endless life, an exaltation to infinite glory. Whither has he gone? To heaven. Whither are they going? To the same happy world. 'In my Father's house,' said this Divine Person, as he was advancing near to the grave, 'are many mansions. If it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.' Can Christians, then, fail to look often to that delightful world where their Saviour dwells, and where they are all finally to be assembled in his presence? Will not the remembrance of the fulness of joy, the pleasures which flow for ever in this region of immortality, awaken in the most ardent manner their admiration, their love, their gratitude, and their praise to him, who formed it in the beginning; who stored it with glory, life, and joy; who ascended the cross, that he might open its everlasting doors for their admission to its infinite blessings.

To enhance all these views and affections, let them remember also, that in the same wonderful manner he redeemed them from the deplorable character of sin, and the miseries of perdition. That Divine Spirit who renews them 'in righteousness, and true holiness, unto every good work,' entered upon this benevolent office, only in consequence of the mediation of Christ. But for this mediation, no child of Adam would ever have been renewed. Sin unmingled, unrestrained, and endless, would have prevailed throughout all the nations of men, and all the ages of time. The way to heaven would have been unknown. The only path from this world would have gone down to the chambers of death.

In how interesting a manner, then, is heaven now brought before our eyes, as the end of the great sacrifice of the cross. Here Christ dies again, in a figure pre-eminently affecting; and shows us his broken body and bleeding wounds, as the price which he paid to procure for us an inheritance in the kingdom prepared for his followers before the foundation of the world. No other hand could have opened the gates of life. No other atonement could have expiated our sins. No other means could have procured the sanctification of our souls by the Spirit of grace, and thus fitted us to enjoy the blessings of heaven, and made them blessings to us. But for him, the best of men would have gone down to the world of woe. By him, every good man will be raised to 'the glory which he had with the Father before the world was.'

SERMON XVIII.

CREATION.—THE ANGELS.

For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him. —Col. i. 16.

In my last Discourse, I began the examination of the works of God, with some considerations on the heavens. I shall now pursue the same subject, in several observations concerning those beings who were originally inhabitants of the highest heavens.

As all our knowledge concerning this subject is de-

rived from the Scriptures, I shall confine myself in this discussion to the information which they communicate; reserving such views as reason has been able to form of it, to the Discourse which I propose to devote to a consideration of the existence and character of fallen angels.

In the text it is asserted, 'that thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers,' names which are fairly supposed to denote different orders of the angelic host, and to indicate, in the words of St Paul, 'things in heaven;' were created by Jesus Christ, for his own use and purposes. Among other things conveyed to us by this assertion, the following doctrine is evidently one:—

That the angels are a part of the creation of God.

It is a fact worthy of observation, that the Scriptures teach us scarcely any thing concerning any of the worlds included under the general name of heavens, except the supreme heaven. The reason is, I think, not difficult to be divined. With other heavenly worlds we have no direct concern. Whatever knowledge therefore we might be supposed to attain about them, or their inhabitants, would be a mere gratification of curiosity, and incapable of being directed to any valuable end. Under the influence of this powerful principle, we should, in all probability, have been led away by such communications, if they had been made, from those things which we need and ought to know. Few affections of the human mind have more influence over its conduct than curiosity. Well directed, and carefully kept within proper bounds, it is eminently profitable to man, by prompting him unceasingly to useful inquiries and improvement in knowledge; but when suffered to wander without restraint, it conducts to mere gratification, and defrauds the soul of real good.

But with the heaven of heavens, we have a continual and most important concern. This glorious and delightful world is the place to which all our ultimate views are directed by our Maker; the home to which he invites us to look, as our final rest from every trouble; and the final seat of all the enjoyment, which we are capable of attaining. With its inhabitants we shall, if we are wise, become familiarly acquainted, and intimately united; and shall live in the midst of them, through ages which cannot end. Of this world, therefore, and those who dwell in it, we need information, various and extensive. Accordingly, God has in the Scriptures, to a considerable extent, opened heaven to our view; and furnished us, in many particulars, with an account of the happy beings who inhabit it; of the rank or station which they hold in his great kingdom, the attributes of which they are possessed, and the employments to which they are devoted.

Under these three heads, I propose to consider them at the present time. To an audience possessed of so many advantages for estimating the comparative importance of subjects of contemplation, and particularly the comparative worth of intelligent beings, it is reasonably hoped, that a subject of such inherent dignity cannot be indifferent. Especially, as this subject is scarcely at all introduced into the desk, and is but too unfrequently a topic of private contemplation; and as it will of course have in some degree the advantage of novelty, as well as of nobleness, it ought to be expected to gain at least the transient attention which such a discussion demands.

That angels are the beings intended by the phraseology of the text, will not be questioned. The four titles by which they are here denoted, probably indicate four different orders of these heavenly beings; or perhaps, may be used as a general representation of all the orders into which they are divided. Beside the general name of angels, or messengers, derived from their peculiar employment, they are called in the Scriptures by the following: Θρονοι, thrones; Κυριοτητες, dominions; Αρχαι, principalities, or governments; Δυναμεις, powers; Εξουσιαι, authorities; Ζωα, living ones; cherubim, knowing ones, or those in whom is fulness of knowledge; seraphim, or burning ones; elohim, gods; beside the name of princes, used by the angel in Dan. x. 13, and probably equivalent to one of the five first appellations. All these names, as will be evident to the slightest attention, are plainly and strongly significant of their great importance. With the greatest probability, however, they are names very imperfectly descriptive of their natures; although, without a doubt, they are the most suitable which human language contains. As words are, of necessity, expressive of such ideas as those who use them possess; and as men, from a want of correspondence with angels, have no direct or original ideas concerning them; it is plain that all words, chosen from human language, to describe the nature of these celestial beings, must exhibit them very inadequately and imperfectly. Still, these names are very forcible declarations of their supreme distinction among created intelligences, and the important character which they hold in the universe.

It is scarcely necessary to remark, that the names given to angels in the text are used metonymically; the adjunct being all along chosen to denote the subject; or the thing possessed, the possessor. Thus thrones are substituted for those who sit on them, dominions and principalities, for those who hold them; and powers and authorities, for those by whom they are exercised.

It ought to be observed, that angels are also called morning stars, to denote their peculiar beauty and splendour of character; and not improbably as harbingers of Christ, the Sun of righteousness; and sons of God, to teach us that they are nearly connected with the Creator, dwell in his house as children, and enjoy his parental presence, care, and love.

From all these observations united, it is evident that angels are possessed of pre-eminent dignity, importance, and distinction, in the divine kingdom; since all these names are given to them by God himself, and are used therefore to indicate their true and proper character. This character I shall now attempt summarily to exhibit, as it is presented to us by the Scriptures, and according to the scheme of Discourse which has been already mentioned.

I. *Angels are the highest order of intelligent creatures.*

The truth of this assertion is manifest, from a consideration of the several names given to them in the text, and in other parts of the Scriptures. As these names respect the kingdom of God at large, without a limitation to any particular part of that kingdom; so they are to be understood, as being thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers, in the immense and eternal empire of Jehovah. Angels, therefore, who are called by these names, are the beings who, under God the supreme Ruler, hold, throughout his dominion, authority and power: all other finite beings are therefore beneath them in diginity, and subordinate to them in station.

The same truth is also completely evident from the place assigned them for their residence. 'I am Ga-

briel,' said the angel who appeared to Zechariah in the temple; 'I am Gabriel, who stand in the presence of God.'—'And before the throne,' says St John, 'there was a sea of glass, like unto crystal; and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four living ones, full of eyes before and behind. And they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God almighty, who was, and who is, and who is to come,' Rev. iv. 6, 8. And again, Rev. vii. 11; 'All the angels stood round about the throne, and worshipped God, saying, Amen.'—'In the year that king Uzziah died,' says the prophet Isaiah, 'I saw also Jehovah sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphim; each one had six wings; and one cried to another, and said, Holy, Holy, Holy, is Jehovah of Hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory.' In the same manner is the same subject exhibited to us, and with a sublimity not inferior, by the prophet Ezekiel, concerning the cherubim; and by the prophet Daniel, concerning the myriads of the heavenly hosts. Angels then surround the throne of God, stand in the immediate and awful presence, and worship continually at his feet. What beings, let me ask, can we rationally suppose would be admitted to a communion so intimate with their Creator, an access to him so near, a distinction so wonderful? To this there can be but one answer. Every man will without hesitation say, None but those who sustain the first character and the highest station among created beings.

Nor is the same truth much less evident from the glory and splendour with which these celestial beings have customarily appeared in the present world. When the angel came to roll away the stone from the sepulchre of Christ, his 'countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow; and for fear of him, the keepers became as dead men.'—'And I saw,' says St John, 'another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud; and a rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire.' All these circumstances of splendour, greatness, and awfulness, surrounded these illustrious beings, while employed as the ministers of God in executing his commands. They were therefore the proper emblems of their character, and the proper accompaniments of their station But we cannot be at a loss concerning the suitableness of these circumstances, to beings of a character and station superior to every created thing which we are able to conceive. Beings, of whom this is the ordinary dress and characteristical splendour, must undoubtedly be exalted above all others, hitherto supposed by the mind of man.

II. *Angels are endowed with the noblest created attributes.*

1. They are endowed with wonderful power.

This perfection of angels is forcibly indicated by the fact, that the name *power*, or *might*, is in several places given to them in the gospel. No stronger testimony of their high possession of this attribute can be conveyed by a single word; for it is a direct declaration that their nature is power itself. In Psal. ciii. 20, David exclaims, 'Bless the Lord, ye his angels, who excel in strength.' A strong angel, and a mighty angel are also phrases, in the Apocalypse, expressive of the same character.

Proofs of the power with which these exalted beings are endowed, and of the amplest kind, are in several instances recorded in the Scriptures. An angel destroyed, in three days, threescore and ten thousand persons out of Judah and Israel, in consequence of the sin of David in numbering the people. An angel destroyed, in one night, of the army of Sennacherib, a hundred fourscore and five thousand men. Angels also are exhibited in the Revelation of St John, as holding the four winds of heaven; and as executing, in a long succession, the Judgments of God upon this evil world, with a series of efforts, demanding power utterly incomprehensible by us. In the twentieth chapter of this book particularly, one of them is exhibited as binding that fierce and strong spirit, 'the prince of the power of the air,' who has so extensively and dreadfully distressed this unhappy world; as 'casting him into the bottomless pit; and as setting a seal upon him, 'that he should deceive the nations no more, until the thousand years should be fulfilled.' In all these instances, angels are exhibited as endowed with might, to which other intelligent creatures can make no pretensions, and of which men cannot even form any adequate conception.

2. Angels are also possessed of activity equally wonderful.

In Psal. civ. 4, quoted Heb. i. 7, their nature, in this particular, is summarily described in this remarkable declaration: 'Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flaming fire.' The word here rendered 'spirits' most usually signifies winds. In either sense, the phraseology forcibly declares the eminent activity of the beings described by it, who are thus represented as moving with the swiftness of winds or spirits, and operating with the astonishing energy of flaming fire.

The same doctrine is also emphatically taught in the frequent attribution of many wings to the cherubim, seraphim, and other orders of angels. This we know is a representation merely symbolical, and the language of the symbol cannot be misconstrued.

But the following story in the prophet Daniel, exhibits this doctrine with unrivalled force, and will preclude the necessity of any farther illustration. Chap. ix. ver. 3, and 20—23: 'And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplication, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes. And while I was speaking and praying, and confessing my sin, and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the Lord my God, for the holy mountain of my God: yea, while I was speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation. and he informed me, and talked with me, and said, O Daniel, I am now come forth to give thee skill and understanding. At the beginning of thy supplications, the commandment came forth, and I am come to show thee: for thou art greatly beloved; therefore understand the matter, and consider the vision.'

From this remarkable story we learn, that some time in the day, 'Daniel set himself to seek the Lord in fasting and prayer;' that after his prayer was begun, 'the commandment' was given to Gabriel to explain to him the vision and the prophecy. In verses 20 and 21, we are told, that Gabriel came to him while he was speaking; that this was his evening prayer; and that during the time in which he was employed in uttering his prayer, Gabriel came from the supreme heaven to this world. This is a rapidity exceeding all the compre-

hension of the most active imagination; surpassing, beyond any comparison, the amazing swiftness of light. Light we know, is several years in coming from such fixed stars as are visible to the eye of man. But there is the best reason to believe, that the heaven of heavens is at a much greater distance than those stars; so as, not improbably, to be a heaven to them, as the starry firmament is to us. The poet therefore is justified by this wonderful fact, in that forcible expression,

'The speed of Gods (Angels), time counts not.'

No stronger exhibition, can be asked or given, of the activity of these celestial beings.

3. Angels are endowed with unfading and immortal youth.

Of this doctrine we have many most decisive testimonies in the Scriptures. Particularly, it is beautifully exhibited in the name, Ζωα, living ones, given them by St John in the Apocalypse, and by Ezekiel in the first chapter, and several other parts of his prophecy. By this name we are taught, that life is the proper nature, a pre-eminent and glorious characteristic, of angels; life in a peculiar and distinguished degree; the most perfect manifestation of that quickening energy which Christ attributes to the Father, and challenges to himself, as an exclusive, appropriate, and wonderful attribute of the Godhead.

The same doctrine is also beautifully exemplified in the angels who appeared to Mary in the tomb of our Saviour. These illustrious persons were then, at the least, four thousand years old. Still they appeared as young men, and in all that long succession of ages had undergone no decay. Their youth, a bright and beautiful blossom, still shone with all its lustre and fragrance; and directly indicated that it was superior both to accident and time; and would, after many such flights of years survive in all its vigour; being destined, as well as fitted for immortality. Even this is probably an imperfect representation of this glorious subject. The youth of angels is, like their other attributes, formed to refine, improve, and brighten for ever.

4. Angels are endowed with the greatest intellectual faculties, and are of course possessed of knowledge superior to that of any other created beings.

This character of these heavenly inhabitants is presented to us in the Scriptures in many forms. The Living Ones, mentioned by the apostle John in the book of Revelation, are declared to have been 'full of eyes within;' that is, to have been all sense, all intellect, all consciousness; turning their attention every way, beholding at once all things within the reach of their understanding, and discerning them with a clearness of perception, which is the most perfect created semblance of the intuitive and boundless views of the omniscient Mind.

'The face' also of a 'man,' attributed to one of these illustrious beings by St John, and to all those who appeared to Ezekiel by that prophet, is another ascription of this character to angels. The face of a man was, among the Jews and other eastern nations, the standing symbol of intelligence: and denotes here, the superior possession of this attribute by those to whom it is ascribed.

Angels were originally formed with an entire freedom from sin, the only source of prejudice, and the chief source of error. Their faculties were, at first, such as became the morning stars of the highest heavens; the sons of God, intended to surround the throne of Jehovah, and to hold the chief places of power, distinction, and glory, in his eternal kingdom. They were such as to become those, to whom in the beginning * was given by God himself the name Cherub, or fulness of knowledge. They were such, in a word, as to become their other transcendent attributes of power, youth, and activity; and the exalted stations which they were destined to fill for ever.

With the nature and extent of their faculties, has the place of their residence in this respect exactly accorded. They have ever dwelt in that world where truth reigns without opposition, where knowledge is the universal state and character, where all mysteries are continually disclosed, and where the nature and propriety of both the means and the ends of providence are more than in any part of the universe, unfolded. There, 'day and night,' for six thousand years, they have been unceasingly employed in studying the works of God. Weariness and decay they know not. Strength of understanding in them is incapable of being impaired. Every object of investigation is to them delightful; and every faculty, by its nature, susceptible of improvement. What then must be the extent of their attainments at the present time!

Beyond this, the favour of God is extended to them in a degree incomprehensible by such minds as ours. To communicate just and extensive views of his works to these glorious beings, is declared to be his especial 'intent in the creation of all things by Jesus Christ;† and peculiarly 'his manifold wisdom' in his dispensations to 'the church.' No communication on his part, and no attainment on theirs, can be imagined too great for this divine purpose, or the goodness by which it was formed.

In Mat. xxiv. 36, our Saviour declares that, 'of that day,' viz. the day of his coming to the destruction of Jerusalem, 'knoweth no one, not even the angels of heaven.' This appeal, if we understand the passage in the common acceptation, can have force and pertinence only on the supposition, that nothing which is known of the works and ways of God, is hidden from angels, and is therefore a complete proof of the entire superiority of their intellectual nature and attainments, to those of any other created being.

5. Angels are possessed of consummate holiness.

The evidence of this truth is so multiform and so abundant in the Scriptures, that no particular proof or illustration seems to be necessary. Their joy and praise at the creation, their divine transport at the birth of the Redeemer, and the union of 'glory to God in the highest, and good will towards men,' disclosed by that wonderful event, and their noble and disinterested exultations in the repentance of ruined sinners, are all sublime manifestations of the unalloyed holiness, of the pre-eminent beauty of mind, possessed by this dignified order of beings. The name Seraphim, or burning ones, is also a most forcible representation of this exalted character. In this name, the mind of an angel is exhibited as enkindled with one intense and eternal flame of divine love, burning with a clear, unceasing, perpetual ardency and splendour. Such a love, we cannot but see is entirely suited to the character of those who 'stand before God,' dwell in his house, enjoy his favour, and exercise

* See Gen. iii. 24. † See Eph. iii. 9, 10.

the glorious offices of his kingdom. In accordance with this character, the four living ones, who are exhibited as representatives of the angelic host in the heavens, manifest their exalted love to the great Author of their blessings, by celebrating, with an unceasing voice, his infinite holiness and excellency throughout the never-ending progress of their being. In this glorious employment also, all the innumerable company of angels are declared to unite with them, to be animated with the same perfect character, and to harmonize with them in their hearts, as well as in their songs.

REMARKS.

1. How delightful an object of contemplation is this glorious order of beings.

All things pertaining to this illustrious subject are cheering, luminous, animating, and sublime. The very names assigned to angels by their Creator, convey to us ideas pre-eminently pleasing, fitted to captivate the heart and exalt the imagination; ideas only cheerful, refined, and noble; ideas which dispel gloom, banish despondency, enliven hope, and awaken sincere and unmingled joy. They are living ones: beings in whom life is inherent and instinctive; who sprang up under the quickening influence of the Sun of righteousness, beneath the morning of everlasting day; who rose, expanded, and blossomed, in the uncreated beam, on the banks of the river of life, and were nourished by the waters of immortality. They are spirits, winged with activity, and formed with power, which no labour wearies, and no duration impairs: their faculties always fresh and young, their exertions unceasing and wonderful, and their destination noble and delightful, without example, and without end. They are burning ones, glowing with a pure and serene, with an intense and immortal flame of divine love; returning, without ceasing, the light and warmth which they have received from the great central Sun of the universe; reflecting with supreme beauty the image of that divine luminary; and universally glorious, although differing from each other in glory.

The place in which they dwell is perfectly suited to their illustrious character. It is no other than the heaven of heavens, the first and best world that will ever be created, the place where God himself delights peculiarly to dwell; the house where virtue, peace, and joy, dwelt in the beginning, and will dwell for ever; the throne of boundless dominion, the parent city of the great empire of Jehovah, the happy region where all things are verdant with life, and blossom with immortality.

The station which they hold, is of the same cheerful and elevated nature. It is the first station allotted to created existence. These sublime intelligences are the immediate attendants of Jehovah, the nobles and princes of the universe. All their employments, all their allotments, are honourable and happy; all their destiny, dignified and divine.

Angels, then, present us with an object of contemplation, replenished with inherent light, beauty, and greatness, with nothing to tarnish, nothing to impair its lustre; nothing to alloy the pleasure of the beholder; a vivid landscape, formed of all the fine varieties of novelty and greatness, without one misshapen, decayed, or lifeless object, to lessen its perfection: a morning of the spring, without a cloud to overcast it: a sun, without a spot, shining only with the various colours of unmingled light.

When we cast our eyes on this charming and transporting scene, we instinctively ask, What is the source of this unrivalled assemblage, this unmixed group of objects so delightful? The answer is at hand. Holiness is the well-spring, whence all these streams of beauty and pleasure are derived. If a single doubt arises in our minds concerning this truth, it may be removed in a moment. Fallen angels were once possessed of all these illustrious attributes, and held the exalted station which is now exclusively enjoyed by their fellows. Fallen angels are still possessed in an eminent degree of power, life, activity, and knowledge; but they yielded up their holiness, when they revolted from their Maker; and changed for ever their character, and their destiny, by sinning against God. Sin converted them into fiends, and made hell their habitation. From sin, that dark and dreadful world derives all its gloom, sorrow, and despair. Sin ushered it into being, raised its prison walls, barred its iron gates, shrouded its desolate regions in the blackness of darkness; kindled the fires, by which it is gloomily enlightened, and awakened all the cries, and groans, and curses, and blasphemies, which echo through its regions of sorrow. Sin changed angels, once surrounding the throne, and harmonizing in the praise of God, into liars, accusers, calumniators, adversaries, and destroyers. How amazing and dreadful the change. How loathsome, how detestable the spirit, by which it was accomplished!

2. How different from these glorious and unspotted beings are men.

Numerous are the ways in which we may, if we please, derive instruction, improvement, and delight from the contemplation of this illustrious race of beings. A comparison of ourselves with them, and of our circumstances with theirs, will particularly teach us our own littleness and depravity; and happily, as well as naturally, prepare us for humility, and reformation.

Man is of the lowest order of intelligent beings, kindred to animals, often raised very little above their level, possessed in the humblest degree of rational attributes, the subject of extreme weakness, sluggishness, and ignorance; hastening with a rapid tendency to decay, old age, and death; without love to God, or his fellow men; depraved throughout with sin, and voluntarily yielded by himself to final perdition.

What an affecting contrast is here presented to our view! Angels so great, virtuous, and happy: Man so little, sinful, and miserable. How deeply humbled ought we to be by the sight of this picture, presenting so just as well as forcible a delineation of our real character. How ashamed ought we to be of our impiety, deceit, injustice, unkindness, pride, and vanity. For in this humble state we are vain: possessed of this guilty character we are proud. Of what are we proud? Of what are we vain? Of our sin, our disgrace, our folly, our frailty, our diseases, or our death? What beside these things can we find to excite our pride?

Yet we are proud and vain: wonderfully proud, deplorably vain: we are proud of a body fattening for worms, and pampered for corruption and the grave; of clothes which we borrow from the sheep and the silkworm, of endowments given us by God, of wealth amassed by fraud and avarice, and of stations conferred by base favouritism, and popular frenzy. Nay, we are proud of profaneness, cursing, and blasphemy. We boast of bargains made only by the cunning of fraud, or

the violence of oppression. We glory in the infernal arts and infamous success of seduction. We murder our fellow-creatures in duels, and wreathe our temples with garlands dyed in blood. We slaughter thousands and millions in war; plant laurels amid the bones, and nourish them with the blood of those whom we have destroyed. We raise our thrones on the cemetery of buried nations; and mistake the groans and shrieks of surviving parents, widows, and orphans, for the trumpet of fame. In a word, all that ought to humble us in the dust, all that ought to clothe us in sackcloth, and cover us with ashes, all that blackens us with disgrace and guilt, all that makes us deformed and loathsome in the sight of God is converted by us into the means of pride and exaltation.

Angels, although so greatly exalted above men, are neither proud nor vain. The plain reason is, they are not sinful. Pride and vanity are derived from sin only; or rather sin is the root and stem of bitterness, of which they are the branches. To be proud or vain, then, is not to resemble the holy angels, but the fallen ones. Can this resemblance flatter any man; a resemblance to the worst and most odious of all the creatures of God? Who would not eagerly drop this wretched likeness, this tattered garb of guilt and shame, assume a resemblance to the glorious beings whom we have been contemplating, and adorn himself with the unspotted, spiritual, and never-fading robe of humility and righteousness? The faith, repentance, and love of the gospel, are 'the fine linen of the saints,' wrought and made white in the heavens; and with this best robe in his father's house, every repenting and returning prodigal will be clothed.

3. What a happy change would be accomplished in this world, if men would assume the spirit and conduct of angels.

Angels never indulge sloth, deceit, wrath, malice, envy, or impiety. Angels never cheat, corrupt, betray, nor oppress. Angels never profane the name of God, perjure themselves, ridicule sacred things, insult the Redeemer, resist the Holy Ghost, nor deny the being, the perfections, the word, or the government of God. Angels never consume their time in idle amusements, or guilty pleasures; never slander each other, never quarrel; never make wars, and never desire nor plunder each other's blessings. How miserable have men, by all this conduct, rendered this unhappy world! With what a prodigal hand do we waste the blessings given to us by God; pervert our talents, and frustrate the end of our being. With what rapacity and violence do we plunder the blessings, and destroy the lives, of our fellow-creatures! In an existence, naturally accompanied by many evils, we were impatient to create and multiply sufferings; to lessen the good which God has given, to shorten the period of life already so little, and to surround it with miseries of our own creation. In this manner, and by ourselves, the evils which we suffer have been immensely multiplied; and the world, destined for our habitation, which, if we were pious, just, sincere, and kind, would be a comfortable residence, has been converted into a region of sorrow and mourning. Private dwellings, the proper mansions of peace and love, have been disturbed by domestic broils; the father contending against his son, and the son against his father; the mother with parental unkindness provoking her daughter to wrath, and the daughter, with filial impiety, revolting from her mother. Brethren have become strangers to each other, and for such a length of time, and with such violence of passion, that they have been 'harder to be won than the bars of a castle.' Neighbourhoods have been distracted with divisions and contentions, and nations rent asunder by faction and discord. Empires have become fields of war and slaughter, and the earth has been changed into a vast receptacle of misery and ruin. All this wretchedness is the consequence of sin; its immediate product, its genuine offspring. Should we then drop this character, would not our consciences be more serene, our lives more pleasant, our families more harmonious, and the world more quiet and happy.

The mighty difference between heaven and earth, angels and men, lies in holiness and sin. Angels are holy, we are sinful; their residence is happy, ours in many respects wretched. This world was originally formed to be a delightful habitation; and at the close of the creation, was by God himself pronounced to be very good. Man was once immortal and happy, because he was just, kind, sincere, humble, and pious. What has the world, what has man, gained by the change? The afflicting answer may be summed up in a word. God made the earth a beautiful image of heaven; man, by his apostasy, has changed it into no obscure resemblance of hell. God made man 'a little lower than the angels, and crowned him with glory and honour; man being in honour, abode not, but became like the beasts which perish.'

SERMON XIX.

CREATION.—THE ANGELS.

For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him. —Col. i. 16.

In the preceding Discourse, I began a consideration of the nature and circumstances of angels. After examining these things generally, as imported by the several names given to these illustrious beings in the Scriptures, I proposed to mention whatever was necessary to my design under the following heads:—

I. Their rank or station. II. Their attributes. And, III. Their employments.

The two first of these subjects I then considered at some length. Under the second head I observed, that they are possessed, 1. Of wonderful power; 2. Of wonderful activity: 3. Of immortal youth; 4. Of the noblest intellectual faculties, and of knowledge superior to that of any other created beings: and, 5. Of consummate holiness.

I shall now proceed to a further consideration of this branch of the general subject; and observe,

6. That angels are possessed of distinguished loveliness of character.

In the view of passion and taste, beings are lovely when possessed of external beauty of form, and gracefulness of deportment. A complexion finely coloured and blended, a figure finely fashioned, features happily turned and adjusted, and a demeanour elegantly exhibited, are to our fancy and our passions, so engaging and lovely, as not unfrequently to engross the affections of the mind. Yet even we are sensible that these are very imperfect objects of our attachment. Accordingly we speak of them, in customary language, as things of mere fancy; unsolid, unenduring, of little value; and therefore incapable of claiming or receiving the sincere approbation of the judgment, the full testimony of unbiassed reason, on account of any inherent or essential excellence.

But there are objects of a nobler kind, claiming, in a far higher degree, both our affections and our esteem. All the diversities of virtue and holiness, are in their nature pre-eminently lovely. Virtue is the beauty of the mind, and as superior to that of the form, as the soul is superior to the tenement in which it dwells. On this delightful object, the understanding, in spite of every human prejudice, fixes its eye with unqualified approbation; and the heart, if not wholly destitute of candour, with sincere delight. Virtue is the beauty of the heavenly world; and while it engrosses the attachment, and the homage of angels themselves, is regarded with entire complacency by its divine Author.

In exact accordance with the supreme value of this inestimable object, mankind customarily speak of it under its various names, as more excellent, more noble, more solid, more desirable, and as demanding, in a higher degree than any other attribute, the regard and complacency of every intelligent being. In this manner we show, that partial as we are, we still prefer worth to external beauty and grace.

There is, then, even in our view, a higher and nobler loveliness, than that which engages our fancy or our taste; a foundation in the nature of things for more rational, more pure, and more enduring attachment. In what does this loveliness consist? In something, plainly, which is not found in external form, complexion, or gracefulness; something which belongs to mind, and not to person. It does not consist in intelligence. Men of the greatest understanding and information are often odious, injurious, and deformed with all the turpitude ever found in the human character. The fallen angels are also unquestionably possessed of intelligence, in degrees far superior to our comprehension; and are, notwithstanding, the most hateful of all beings.

In the disposition, then, the only remaining characteristical faculty of the mind, must its amiableness reside. But the disposition is lovely, either as it is sinful or virtuous; either as it hates or loves God and other intelligent beings. To determine in which of these cases the mind is lovely, demands not even a question.

In virtue then, according to the decision of mankind, sinful as they are, is found the true loveliness of intelligent beings; that which unbiassed reason approves, which is always excellent, which is uniformly the object of delight, which will never change, and which will never cease to be desired.

Of this loveliness, angels are above all created beings supremely possessed. Angels are sincere, gentle, meek, kind, compassionate, and perfectly conformed to that great moral principle, communicated in the 'words of the Lord Jesus,' when he said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' This sublime excellence, incomparably 'more precious than gold which perisheth,' has in them been, from the beginning, debased with no alloy, tarnished with no spot, impaired by no length of years, and changed by no weakness or imperfection. Free from every defect and every mixture, it has varied with length of years merely towards higher and higher perfection, and shone, not only with undiminished, but with increased beauty and lustre. There is no good which it is proper for angels to do, which they are not habitually prepared to do. There is no kindness capable of being suitably exercised by them, which they do not in fact exercise. The more their faculties are enlarged, the more their knowledge is increased; the more their means of usefulness are multiplied, the more exalted is their excellence, the more disinterested and noble their disposition, the more intense their benevolence, and the more lovely and beautiful their character. The good which they have already done, has only prepared them to do more and greater good; and the disposition with which it was done, has only become stronger by every preceding exertion.

Let me pause here, with a momentary digression; and persuade you to call to mind how delightful an intimate connexion must be with even a single rational being; who always spoke that which was true, and always did that which was just and kind; in whom confidence could be reposed without a fear, and from whom every kind office might be expected without even a suspicion, of disappointment. If the friendship of one such being would be a rich possession, how inestimable must be the privilege of living for ever in a world of such friends.

7. Angels are invested with high personal dignity and glory.

Dignity originally denoted the same with worth; but is now generally used to signify that kind of worth which is elevated and great; which inspires reverence and admiration, rather than that which is more gentle and familiar; as well as the manifestations of it in the conduct, and the honours with which it is considered as suitably rewarded. The spirit and character, formed by the magnanimous and sublimer virtues, are here intended by personal dignity; and all the honour with which God has invested this character in angels, is intended by personal glory. In these respects, angels are totally distinguished from all other created beings.

This truth cannot but be evident from the account already summarily given of the attributes, both natural and moral, of these exalted intelligences. Their minds, as it has been shown, were originally formed with vast capacities, and with an unmingled and intense love of

truth. Truth is an account of the character and works of God, subjects elevated above all height, and extended above all limits; possessed of inherent grandeur, and sublimity literally infinite; fitted to awaken in every mind, formed with an understanding to perceive, and a taste to relish them, great ideas and exalted conceptions; and calculated to inspire habits of thinking and feeling, of the most dignified nature. To these subjects, angels have already devoted themselves throughout a vast period of time, with supreme intenseness and fervour. Their views have been all formed without error, decay, or weariness; and their relish for the objects of their knowledge has only been strengthened by indulgence. Of course, their progress in understanding has been rapid, and their attainments have been very great. Of course, also, their minds have been continually expanded and ennobled, by all the conceptions which they have entertained concerning these wonderful subjects.

In the meantime, the conscious exercise of such vast power and activity, and the possession of ever vigorous, ever blooming youth, destined to survive and triumph over time and labour, must carry with them a sense of personal importance, which, tempered and refined by perfect humility, cannot but be elevated in a manner to which there is no parallel. To this character their stations, their residence, and their employments, all powerfully contribute. Highly favoured, exalted, and happy, in these great particulars, angels have the nearest access to their Creator, for understanding the mysteries, and contemplating the greatness of his dispensations, and for learning from them his infinitely majestic and glorious character. Heaven is the centre and the seat of all that is great and wonderful, all that is refined and exquisite, all that is splendid and glorious. To angels, those magnificent things are habitually familiar, and by them their taste is formed, and their character established. Their exertions also are of a kind wonderfully sublime. The being who can bind the four winds of heaven, imprison the prince of the power of the air, or wing his flight in a moment to a distant world, possesses an inherent importance, to which our imaginations cannot extend; a sublimity of character, elevated beyond the utmost stretch of human sight.

Exactly accordant with these views of the subject, are the splendour and majesty of appearance, frequently assumed by angels in their visits to this lower world. I shall not detail the facts of which this splendour has been composed, nor repeat the unrivalled descriptions of it given to us in the word of God. It will be sufficient for my present purpose to observe, that in their presence mankind have trembled, shrunk, and fallen; and, scarcely able to survive their impressions, have felt themselves to be nothing, and less than nothing.

How abashed, how amazed, how dumb should we be in the presence of Gabriel, known by us to be an inhabitant of the heavenly world, to 'stand in the presence of God;' to be exalted above all human weakness, error, and sin; and to be wise, and great, and good, in the sight of God himself! How great must he seem to us, how dignified, how glorious! How little, on the contrary, should we appear to him; how low, how unworthy! Would not our pride wither in a moment, and our vanity flee away? Should we not, like Peter and his companions in the presence of Moses and Elias, be instantly lost and bewildered; and utter, if we spoke at all, that which we did not understand.

Of all these attributes it is to be remembered farther, that they are eternal. Angels live for ever; and are hence termed, by way of distinction, living ones, or living creatures. With their being, their excellencies are all co-extended, and are in the same manner immortal. Nor are they merely immortal, but are perpetually improving. Every day they study and understand more and more the wonders of creation and providence, and the character of their great Author. With their knowledge, their love to God is continually enlarged and enraptured; their benevolence to their fellow creatures, their amiable conduct, their sweetness, loveliness, and dignity of character, are all enhanced and refined. Great, wise, noble, and excellent at first, they have regularly advanced in this divine progress of improvement to the present time.

How excellent did Paul become in the short period of his life, which elapsed after his conversion! How much more excellent and glorious have angels become; who, never stained with sin, weakened by prejudice, nor wearied by labour, have, with enlarged understanding, intense love of truth, and unmingled holiness of disposition, regularly and rapidly advanced in the attainment of all that is great and good, through a period of six thousand years! How superlatively and universally excellent will they then become hereafter! To what a height of glory will they rise in the exercise of these faculties, in the pursuit of these objects, and in the indulgence of this disposition throughout endless ages!

III. *Angels hold the first employments and offices in the universe.*

In every government there must be, of course, public offices. These offices must also increase in number and importance, as the government becomes more extensive. In a town they will naturally be few, in a province more numerous, and in a kingdom far more numerous still. In such an empire as Rome or China, a vast multitude of concerns continually exist, all of which must be the immediate business of persons devoted to them only. Were this world under a single administration of government, the public offices would become numerous, important, and dignified, proportionally to the number, greatness, and complication of its mighty interests. The kingdom of God, if I mistake not, is plainly exhibited, both in his word and works, as a kingdom of means. Under his universal government, secondary causes and subordinate agents are employed with a real instrumentality and efficacy, in accomplishing his pleasure. In such an empire the concerns are necessarily immense, both in their number and their importance. Of these, some, however, are greater, and others less: while all are, in their respective places, proper and useful. These concerns, according to this scheme, are, to an extent undefinable, committed to such of his intelligent creatures as he has formed to conduct them under his own superintendency; and the offices which they of course sustain, must, to our view, be, in a vast multitude of instances, invested with a greatness, dignity, and importance, incomprehensible.

The intelligent beings to whom the greatest and noblest of these concerns are intrusted, and by whom the most illustrious of all these offices are sustained, are undoubtedly the angels of God. Whatever demands the employment of created power, activity, knowledge,

and virtue, of high distinction; whatever is in an eminent degree complicated, vast, or sublime, can with propriety be committed only to beings eminently invested with these illustrious attributes. In the amazing extent of creation, in the eternal progress of providence, fields, sufficiently ample, are furnished for the employment of immense numbers of these glorious beings, in business of high import and inestimable dignity. To this scheme of things accord, not only their attributes, but their numbers, as they are exhibited in the Scriptures; for we are there told, that 'thousand thousands minister unto God, and ten thousand times ten thousand stand before him.'

That angels are actually thus employed, can scarcely be doubted by any man who remembers the illustrious attributes of which they are possessed, and who believes that these attributes were not given in vain. Should he, however, doubt, he may be furnished with proofs from the Scriptures, which cannot rationally be questioned.

1. Their names clearly indicate their high employments.

They are styled angels; that is, the immediate messengers of God. They are styled thrones, dominions, authorities, principalities or governments, and powers, to denote that they sit upon thrones, exercise dominion, hold authority, preside in government, and are invested with the power necessary for these great purposes.

They are called chief princes, to indicate that they are the first order of rulers in the universe, under Him who has 'prepared his throne in the heavens, and whose kingdom ruleth over all.' They are called sons of God, to teach us that they are beings nearly related to God in character, favour, place, and authority. They are called morning stars, to teach us the splendour and glory with which they outshine all other intelligent creatures. They are named cherubim and seraphim, to inform us that they are beings furnished with superior knowledge to discern, and with superior holiness to pursue, whatever is good and right, honourable to the Creator, and useful to his creatures.

All these names are descriptive either of the nature and attributes of these exalted beings, or of the stations and employments for which, by this nature, they are qualified.

2. The Scriptures, in many instances, exhibit them as thus employed.

(1.) Angels are in the Scriptures declared to be extensively engaged in the immediate business of glorifying God, and celebrating his praise.

At the creation, 'the morning stars,' in the dawn of their being, surrounded their Maker during the progress of that great work; and when it was finished, in the celebration of that peculiarly divine sabbath, observed, consecrated, and blessed by God himself, as an infinitely solemn and authoritative example to mankind, 'sang together, and shouted for joy.'

When the Lord Jesus Christ descended on Mount Sinai, to publish, amid thunders and lightnings, and a flame of devouring fire, his most holy law to the children of men, 'the chariots of God, even thousands of angels,' * attended him at this awful solemnity, and glorified him by their ministry in this sublime dispensation.

When the same divine person became incarnate, Gabriel announced his birth to Zechariah and to Mary. An angel also proclaimed these 'glad tidings of great joy' to the shepherds of Bethlehem; and 'a multitude of the heavenly host praised God' on the same occasion, in the noblest hymn ever heard in this lower world; and sang, 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will towards men.'

'When he ascended on high, and led captivity captive,' having finished the work of redemption, and triumphed over all his enemies; the same exalted beings, with renewed transport and adoration, surrounded him with the same magnificent attendance as at Sinai, singing, as he approached the heaven of heavens, 'Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in.' †

At the end of this earthly system, when 'he shall come to judge the quick and the dead,' and blot out from under heaven this world of iniquity and rebellion; an archangel preceding him, will call the dead out of their graves; while the multitude of the heavenly host will shout to the universe the awful wonders of the final day, and subjoin, to all its amazing transactions, their solemn Amen.

In the heaven of heavens, the four living ones 'rest not, day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty; who was, and who is, and who is to come.' 'And I beheld,' says St John, 'and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the living ones, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and wisdom, and riches, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.'

(2.) Angels are employed in studying the works of God, and in learning from them his perfections.

'Who created all things,' says St Paul, 'by Jesus Christ; to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God.' 'Which things,' says St Peter, 'the angels desire to look into:' or more literally, 'Into which things angels earnestly desire to look with the deepest attention.' The original word, παρακυψαι, denotes the action of stooping down to inspect minutely, and pry critically into an object of investigation.

In the former of these passages we are presented with one great end of the creation of all things; *viz.* the disclosure of 'the manifold wisdom of God,' in his dispensations to his 'church, unto principalities and powers in heavenly places.' As this disclosure was one great end of the creation of all things, so it is evident that angels were created with the special design, that they should attain the knowledge which it conveys. In the second of these passages we are taught, that the disposition of angels is perfectly accordant with this design, and that 'they earnestly desire' to investigate, and are therefore unceasingly employed in investigating those things, for the knowledge of which they were especially created.

For this great purpose, these glorious beings are in the most eminent manner fitted by all their other employments, their wonderful attributes, and their exalted station. Particularly, in their employments as messen-

* Psal. lxviii. 17, 18.

† Psal. lxviii. 17, 18. compared with Eph. iv. 8. See also Psal. xxiv.

gers of God, in which they visit, not only this world, but the Ουρανια of the Scriptures, *the innumerable regions of the heavens;* they are furnished with the most ample and perfect opportunities of understanding the endless multitude, and the astonishing nature, of the works of creation and providence. Throughout these incomprehensible tracts, there is every reason to believe, that the same unceasing diversity is continually pursued in all the divine works, which prevails so perfectly in this world. The nature, attributes, and real importance of all things, are learned, not by inspection only, but also, in an extensive degree, by comparison. The relations which they bear to each other, can be known in no other manner: and the knowledge of these is a most extensive and important part of all that is known. From the advantage furnished him of beholding many objects, and making numerous and accurate comparisons between them, a rational traveller who has visited many countries, is universally acknowledged, not only to possess a more enlarged knowledge of the world than other men, but also to be a more sound and thorough judge of the things with which he is acquainted. Angels visit distant worlds, probably with more ease and expedition than men the towns in their neighbourhood; and compare systems with more perfect comprehension and accuracy, than we, states and kingdoms. At the same time, their strong and unmingled relish for all the objects of their contemplation, the unwearied and undiminished vigour of their minds, and the length of years through which they have been employed in this illustrious pursuit, have, on the one hand, given it the peculiar power of habit, and, on the other, increased beyond calculation the pleasure which it originally and naturally yields. Man, by the limited nature of his powers, is almost of course obliged, whenever he studies, to confine himself to study; and whenever he acts, to action. Angels, by their superior energy, seem fitted to pursue both courses at once; and to be able to study and act without hindrance, confusion, or any other disadvantage.

(3.) Angels are employed in executing the judgments of God upon this world.

The first judgment upon man, which was excluding him from paradise, appears to have been committed to the execution of these ministering spirits. In the same manner, they were the immediate instruments of inflicting the vengeance of God on the Israelites, on the army of Sennacherib, on Nebuchadnezzar, and on Herod. In the same manner also they are exhibited, in the Revelation of St John, as pouring out the vials of divine wrath upon the nations of this guilty world, and especially upon the antichristian hierarchy, as the peculiar ministers of the justice of God. To us, with our limited views and strong partialities, this office may seem undesirable, and a diminution of that perfect felicity which I have attributed to this distinguished order of beings. The decision, however, will easily appear to be unfounded, if we remember that they possess an entire and unchangeable confidence in God, and in the perfect rectitude of all his dispensations; and in innumerable instances, a clear comprehension of the nature and import of the dispensations themselves; the wisdom and goodness with which they are brought to pass, and the valuable and glorious ends which they are intended to accomplish. In exact accordance with this view of the subject is sung in heaven, 'the song of Moses and the Lamb. Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty. Just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? For thou only art holy; for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest.

(4.) Angels are also employed in ministering blessings to the children of God in this world.

'Are they not all ministering spirits,' says St Paul, 'sent forth to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation!' In this passage we are plainly taught, that ministering to the saints is a standing employment of angels, throughout the ages of time. Accordingly, they are exhibited in Jacob's vision of the ladder as 'ascending and descending' from heaven to earth, and from earth to heaven continually, in the discharge of this great duty. According to this declaration also, we are furnished by the Scriptures with numerous examples of their actual ministry to the children of God. Thus angels delivered Lot from Sodom, Jacob from Esau, Daniel from the lions, his three companions from the fiery furnace, Peter from Herod and the Jewish Sanhedrim, and the nation of the Israelites, successively, from the Egyptians, Canaanites, and Assyrians. Thus they conducted Lot, Abraham, and the Israelites, in seasons of great difficulty and danger, to places and circumstances of safety and peace. Thus they conducted Gideon to the destruction of the Midianites, Joseph and Mary to Egypt, Philip to the Eunuch, and Cornelius to Peter, to the knowledge of the gospel through him, and to the salvation of himself, his family, and his friends. Thus angels instructed Abraham, Joshua, Gideon, David, Elijah, Daniel, Zechariah the prophet, Zacharias the father of John the Baptist, the Virgin Mary, the apostles, and their fellow disciples. Thus they comforted Jacob at the approach of Esau, Daniel in his peculiar sorrows and dangers, Zechariah in the sufferings of his nation, Joseph and Mary in their perplexities, Christ in his agony, the apostles and their companions after his resurrection. Paul immediately before his shipwreck, and the church universally, by the testimony and instruction given in the Revelation of St John.

Generally, the Scriptures inform us, especially in the visions of Ezekiel, Daniel, and John, that they are employed in executing various, great, and wonderful purposes of divine providence. Here we behold them controlling evil spirits, wielding the elements of this world, producing, directing, and terminating the great convulsions of time; conveying the souls of the just to the paradise of God, severing the wicked from the good at the day of judgment, and performing the duties of other dignified and glorious missions. All these are instances, either of wonderful power and skill, or of singular benevolence and excellency of character; both eminently honourable to them, and eminently important to the universe. By these facts we cannot fail to be convinced, that their employments are wholly noble and magnificent, and wholly suited to their dignified stations and exalted titles, as well as to the attributes of power, knowledge, and goodness, of which they are so transcendently possessed. Nor can we rationally doubt, that they visit every other habitable world with messages and designs of the same sublime import; execute the great purposes of God in all the parts of his vast kingdom, and thus become in an extensive sense, illustrious benefactors of the intelligent creation.

REMARKS.

1. These considerations furnish us with a strong presumptive argument, that the Scriptures are a divine revelation.

In the Scriptures we find an order, or rather a kind of beings described, which were never known nor imagined by any person who did not derive his acquaintance with them from that book. They are beings who have a character as appropriate as that of man, and differing from that of man as far as finite intelligences can be supposed to differ from each other. Yet the character is complete, entire, and of a piece with itself. Every attribute is suited to every other; all are angelic, all are heavenly. A station is also assigned to them, of dignity and importance perfectly fitted to their character, and worthy of being filled by such beings. Employments are also marked out for them, altogether becoming both the station and the character; angelic employments, suited to the sons of God, the morning stars of heaven. Can it be reasonably supposed that these things were devised by human imagination? Have similar things been ever thus devised? The fancy of man has, in all nations and ages, delighted itself with the employment of fashioning imaginary beings of a nature superior to ours. What have been its productions? The gods, demons, and genii of ancient, and the elves, sylphs, and fairies of more modern times. But how do all these shrink from a comparison with angels? They are little, base, trifling, sordid, and sinful enough to have been copied, with a few easy additions, from the depraved characteristics of men. But where does this world furnish materials for the composition of an angelic character? What originals has it presented, from which the portrait could be drawn?

A multitude of writers in the Scriptures, fifteen at least, have described these glorious beings with the most perfect harmony, and without a single discordant idea. In the meantime, their descriptions are extensively various, comprising many particulars, and wholly independent of each other. All the writers are in this respect, as well as others, originals. Not one is a copier, not one a plagiary; yet their representations are universally noble, sublime, dignified, beautiful, and lovely, beyond any thing found in the most perfect writings of uninspired men.

How came these things to pass? Whence did these writers in so distant ages, and differing so widely in education, genius, characters, interests, and views, unite with such perfect harmony in so difficult an object of conception; while writing for so diverse purposes, and on so diverse occasions? Whence is it, that not an individual of them has made a single slip; that not a thought is uttered, not a fact asserted, nor a doctrine declared, but such as is perfectly free from fault, impurity, littleness, and defect; such as is entirely noble, refined, and becoming so exalted and spotless a character? All heathen writers have stained even their gods with great defects, and deformed them with gross crimes; and wherever they have exhibited their gods as acting, have filled up their history with weakness and depravity. The angels of the Scriptures, on the contrary, are everywhere, by every writer, and in every attribute and act, alike pure and perfect. The only answer which can be given is, God directed the one class of writers, and human reason and imagination the other.

2. How wonderful, and how amiable, do these considerations exhibit the humility of angels.

In the observations which have been made, we have seen their character to be great and glorious without a parallel; their station exalted above that of all other created beings, and their employments the first in the kingdom of God. Yet they do not disdain, nor grudge to minister to the wants and the relief, to the instruction and the comfort of men; who, compared with them, are only worms of the dust.

A single fact will set this subject in a stronger light, than any train of general observations. Call up to your view, then, a choir of these illustrious beings, cheerfully leaving the glory of heaven, and directing their flight to this forlorn and sinful earth, to accompany the departing spirit of poor, despised, forgotten Lazarus to the world of happiness; to point the way to that distant and delightful region, and to aid his trembling wing to the house and presence of his Father and his God. What monarch, what noble, what gentleman, what plain man, would willingly have even attended his funeral? Who would have received him when alive into his house, powerfully as his sufferings pleaded for charitable relief? Who, much more, would have consented to become his companion? Who, still more, would have acknowledged himself his friend? Yet all this, angels did not disdain.

Let us take to ourselves shame and confusion of face, at the remembrance of our pride and haughtiness of heart. How often do we despise, neglect, insult, and trample under foot those, who in the sight of God are far better than ourselves. For what do we despise them? Because, perhaps, their houses, their persons, their dress, their wealth, or their talents, are inferior to our own. We might indeed sometimes pity them for these reasons and be justified. But where shall we find an excuse for despising them?

Nor is the meekness of angels less contrasted to our wrath and revenge. They do not even 'bring railing accusations.' Much less do they, like ourselves, indulge furious resentments, and seek insatiable revenge. There is not a single reason to believe that they ever exercised, even in one instance, personal resentment against the basest and most guilty child of Adam, or a revengeful thought against the most depraved inhabitant of hell. No provocation is able to disturb the serenity of their minds. No cloud ever overcasts their smiles, or intercepts the clear sunshine of their benevolence.

3. How are the meek and humble virtues dignified by this great example.

These virtues are the constant character, the essential attributes, the peculiar glory, of thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers. But these virtues, and those in whom they are found on earth, 'man, who is a worm, and the son of man, who is but a worm,' regards with contempt. Men glory in being proud, in being wrathful, in being revengeful, in being tyrants and oppressors, in being heroes and butchers. To men of these characters, statues are erected; nay, temples have been built, and altars smoked with victims. To them, the page of the historian and the harp of the poet are consecrated. To their praise, the sculptor bids the marble breathe, and the painter teaches his canvass to glow. They live in palaces, and are entombed in mausoleums. Shouts and hosannas follow them through

life; and at their death, nations re-echo the cries of lamentation, and kingdoms are covered with sackcloth and ashes. How strange is all this to the eye of reason. 'Dives arrayed in purple and fine linen, and faring sumptuously every day;' while Lazarus lies 'at his gate,' under the naked heaven, coveting 'only to be fed with the crumbs which fall from his table.' Nay, Pilate and Herod on the seat of judgment, and Christ on the cross.

In the invisible world these things are wonderfully inverted. 'Dives expires,' but no angels convey him 'to Abraham's bosom.' There the meek and lowly virtues claim the esteem and love, and engross the kind offices of beings, possessed of the highest wisdom and excellence; and obtain the everlasting favour of the infinite God. On these virtues, angels smile with complacency, while fools and sinners regard them with hatred and scorn. But if we would be like angels, if we would secure their good-will, if we would be admitted to their glorious company, if we would share in their immortal blessings, if we would dwell in the house of their Father and our Father, of their God and our God; we must esteem the things which they esteem, love the things which they love, and do the things which they do. We must renounce the haughty, angry, revengeful character, which we are so pleased to assume; become 'meek and lowly of heart,' like the divine Redeemer; and in the midst of provocations, however great, must be ready cheerfully to say, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.'

4. What exalted views does this subject present to us of the future state of the righteous.

'In the resurrection,' says our Saviour to the Sadducees, 'the children of God shall be ισαγγελοι, equal to the angels;' or perhaps more properly, they shall be like the angels in attributes, station, and employments. Like the angels, they will possess endless youth, activity, power, knowledge, and holiness; enjoy the same immortal happiness, dignity, and divine favour; be lovely, beautiful, and glorious, in the sight of God; and 'shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.' Like the angels, shall they be sons, and kings, and priests to God, and live and reign with him for ever and ever.

What a change must this be from the present weakness and guilt of man; from sluggishness and ignorance, decay and death, sin and misery. What a wonderful display of the boundless compassion of God, to raise us from such a depth to such a height! Can we hesitate to exclaim, 'This is love, passing all understanding.' Who would not, for these divine blessings, renounce the pleasures of sin; and cheerfully bid adieu to all that avarice, ambition, and sensuality can boast! Who would not, with all the wise and good, cease at once from the sordid pursuits of sinners, and direct every view, desire, and effort, towards the state and character of angels, and the attainment of the same residence, employments, happiness, and glory.

5. What sublime views does this subject furnish us of the greatness of Christ.

By him, says the text, were all these illustrious beings created, together with all their attributes, importance, and dignity. The character of every workman is seen, of course, in the nature of the work which he has made. If this be insignificant and worthless, it exhibits nothing but the insignificance and worthlessness of the maker. If curious and excellent, if sublime and wonderful, it unfolds strongly and certainly, his greatness, wisdom, and glory. Of what faculties are angels the subjects! Of what intelligence, purity, power, loveliness, and elevation of mind! What, then, must be the perfections of him who contrived and formed angels; who, with a word, called them into being: who preserves, informs, directs, controls, and blesses them for ever. Great and excellent as they are, they are exhibited as 'unclean in his sight, and as charged with folly' before him. How amazing, then, must be the perfection of his character; how great, how wise, how good!

SERMON XX.

CREATION.—THE FALLEN ANGELS.

And the angels, who kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains, under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day.—Jude 6.

In this passage we have a concise, but very interesting account of certain angels, who once dwelt in heaven. Created at first with all the excellencies of the angelic nature, placed in circumstances of the highest honour, and enjoying the greatest happiness, they are here represented as having lost their character, and forfeited their honour and happiness. The nature and allotments of these angels, furnish the subject which next demands our attention in this System of Discourses.

Before I enter on the consideration of this subject, it will be proper to take some notice of an opinion which has, chiefly within the two past centuries, been adopted concerning it, and advanced with confidence by persons of various descriptions: an opinion which, if true, would preclude the present Discourse as groundless and nugatory. It is this: that there are no such beings as fallen angels. Infidels have made the scriptural account of these beings a formal objection against the truth and credibility of the Scriptures. Not a small number of men, professing themselves to be Christians, have partly yielded to the objection, and partly considered the contrary doctrine as necessary to their particular systems of theology. Thus, here, as in other cases, men apparently opposed to each other in the belief and denial of the Scriptures, have yet united in overthrowing their authority, and unsettling their character as a revelation.

From the manner in which the doctrine has been op-

posed, we should naturally argue unfavourably concerning the opposition. It has been most usually opposed, not with sober argument, but with ridicule and sneers. A cause which needs this support is bad, of course, and is by its abettors seen to be bad; for no man of common sense will ever resort to this feeble and ineffectual mode of attack or defence, when the surer, more rational, and more efficacious resort of sober argument is in his power.

If the existence of fallen angels is incredible, it must be so for one of the following reasons:—

1. That it is not revealed sufficiently to command belief; and that, as we have no direct knowledge of invisible beings, aside from revelation, so, in this case, revelation does not warrant us to admit their existence: or,

2. There is some evidence in the nature of things which disproves their existence, or at least renders it highly improbable.

Concerning the first of these methods of opposing the existence of fallen angels, I observe, that it has been very little resorted to by the opposers of this doctrine. Here, as in many other cases, revelation has been tried before the tribunal of philosophy. Men have supposed that their own judgment was a more unerring standard of faith and truth, than the Scriptures. That infidels should thus act is certainly to be expected, for this opinion is the basis of their system. However irrational, therefore, and indefensible their conduct may seem to us, we are certainly to feel no surprise when they resort to it, or rely upon it with confidence. But for this opinion, they could not retain their system for a moment.

But that men, professing to believe in the Scriptures as a divine revelation, should adopt this method of establishing or refuting their declarations, is, to say the least, wonderful. Still it has in every age been more or less the conduct of persons who have professed this belief. It began to exist in the time of the apostles, and was boldly adopted in defiance of their authority and inspiration. The declarations of St Paul, relative to this subject, are ample proofs of the fact. The two first chapters of the First Epistle to the Corinthians are in a great measure employed on this subject. In them he informs us, that to the philosophical Greeks, who arrogated to themselves the titles of Σοφοι and Φιλοσοφοι, Wise Men and Philosophers, the doctrine of the cross was 'foolishness.' This, therefore, was then a general decision of philosophy. Against the adoption of that philosophy, and the imitation of the men who professed it, he strongly cautions the Corinthian Christians, who were in no small danger from its imposing and deceitful influence. At the same time he informs them, that this 'foolishness,' as they termed it, 'of God, was wiser than men;' that 'God had not chosen' men of this character 'to call them' to salvation, but men of an opposite character, who disclaimed the very 'words,' as well as the spirit of this philosophy; men who, although despised and accounted as nothing by these vain, arrogant philosophers, and their followers, were yet beloved of God, and the instruments of their salvation. He farther informs them, that 'the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God;' and again declares, 'that the Lord knoweth the reasonings of the wise, that they are vain.' To the Colossians he writes, 'Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit;' that is, vain and deceitful philosophy; which, he declares, accorded with 'the traditions of men, and the rudiments of this world, but not with Christ.' Of course, it merited contempt on the one hand, and was fraught with danger on the other.

From the age of the apostles to the present time, almost every existing heresy has been derived from this source. The Scriptures were found by many men, and men too who were often distinguished by their ingenuity, not to agree with their philosophy; and, of course, could not, in their opinion, be true, unless they could be bent to such an agreement. Those, therefore, who chose still to acknowledge the revelation of the Scriptures, employed themselves in helping out their character as a system of truth, and removing their supposed inconsistencies by new constructions, allegorical explanations, and generally by substituting what they ought to mean, for that which, according to the natural and proper force of language, they must mean. Those, on the contrary, who cared little about them, finding the doctrines which they contain to disagree with their own philosophy, denied their authority at once. Men of this class are, in my view, more rational, more self-consistent, and less injurious to the character of the Scriptures, than those of the other. For nothing can be more irrational, inconsistent, or injurious to the Scriptures, than to profess to receive them as a divine revelation, and at the same time to make human opinion the standard by which their declarations are to be tried. This is no other than to sit in judgment upon God himself, (who in this case is acknowledged to be the Author of the declarations) and to determine whether he has spoken truth or falsehood. Must not angels wonder to see men thus employed!

The truth is, the doctrine in question is so often and so clearly asserted in the Scriptures, that the denial of it cannot be founded on them alone. All men act in this case as Dr Priestley has acted, in questioning the existence of the holy angels. In pursuing the doctrines of his peculiar system, he was led to doubt, and ultimately to deny, the immateriality of the human soul; and roundly decided, that it was nothing but organized matter. Angels, he saw plainly, stood in the way of his arguments concerning this subject: for no mind possesses sufficient ingenuity to render it even remotely probable that angels are material. And as the human soul may as easily be supposed to be immaterial as an angel can be, there was no resort left to Dr Priestley, but to question the existence of angels altogether. This, therefore, he chose to do, notwithstanding the numerous express declarations of God to the contrary; declarations as express as language will admit; rather than give up a doctrine which he thought necessary to the support of his system. In this manner the Scriptures may be made to declare any thing.

With respect to the second of these reasons, on which the existence of fallen angels is denied, viz. that there is some evidence in the nature of things, which disproves the existence of such beings, or at least renders it highly improbable, I observe,

1. That the existence of angels, generally considered, is originally less improbable than that of men.

To a rational being, unacquainted with the existence of either angels or men, pure spirits would seem more likely to be a part of the creation of God, than spirits united to bodies; beings wholly rational, than beings

partly rational and partly animal. God is a pure spirit. It is not rationally supposed, that in creating intelligent beings, he would unite them to matter in such a manner as to form one being of both matter and mind; but it is rationally supposed, that delighting as he does in his own manner of existence, he would create beings as much like himself as might be. In creating man, a new difficulty concerning existence, a new mystery of philosophy, is presented to our contemplation; viz. the union of soul and body, so accomplished as to constitute one percipient being. Should it be here observed, that philosophers, in denying the existence of angels, whether virtuous or fallen, avoid this difficulty by denying also the existence of an immaterial soul in man: I acknowledge that the objection is fairly alleged, as being founded in truth; but I beg leave to subjoin, that in this very manner they introduce to us a new, more mysterious, and more perplexing doctrine; a doctrine so mysterious as to be no other than a gross absurdity; viz. the doctrine of cogitative or thinking matter. As I propose hereafter to discuss this subject at length, I shall dismiss it for the present without any farther remarks.

2. That angels, after their creation, fell, involves no more difficulty than that which is involved in the fall of man.

All that in the nature of the case appears necessary to accomplish the fall of any finite being is a sufficient temptation. Temptation, for aught that appears, may rise to any degree beneath infinite: and there is no more reason to suppose that the strength of an angel, or his habits of virtue, are sufficient to resist all possible temptation, than to suppose that the strength of a man is sufficient. I speak here of such a man as Adam, who antecedently to the first temptation, was absolutely free from sin. The same temptation which would overcome the man, might not, and probably would not, overcome the angel; but a temptation sufficiently increased to bear an equal proportion to his disposition to resist, might overcome him, and undoubtedly would: nor is there any apparent proof that God is any more obliged to secure an angel from falling, than to secure a man.

3. That fallen angels, if permitted, should act in the affairs of mankind, is attended with no more improbability, than that virtuous angels should thus act.

Virtuous angels are declared to be 'all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to the heirs of salvation;' and are, throughout the Scriptures, exhibited as being really, continually, and extensively concerned in the affairs of the present world. With the same clearness are fallen angels also declared to be thus employed.

Nor is there any presumption against this interference of either. We, it is true, could not know this fact, unless it were declared to us, or unless we were to become acquainted with it by experimental evidence. But that the rational inhabitants of one world should be interested in the concerns of another, and if allowed by God thus to act, interfere in them in a manner suited to their respective dispositions, is in a high degree probable. We, certainly, if we were able, and were permitted to visit the planetary worlds, should take such a part in the important concerns of their inhabitants as suited our dispositions. If we were governed by benevolent motives, we should save or relieve them, so far as was in our power, from dangers and sufferings; if by malevolent ones, we should promote their distress and ruin. We do in reality thus act in this world, not in our own affairs only, but in those of others; in the affairs of strangers as well as of our friends, and of those in distant nations and countries, as well as our own. But there is nothing more unnatural or improbable in our interference, if it were permitted, in the concerns of distant worlds, than in those of distant nations.

4. There is no more difficulty in supposing, that the fallen angels accomplish evil in the divine kingdom, than that fallen men do the same.

It is indeed originally improbable, that either men or angels should accomplish evil in the divine kingdom; or universally, that evil should exist at all. But since we know that it does exist, there is no more perceivable difficulty in attributing it to one class of intelligent creatures than to another. Nor is there any explanation of the agency of men in producing evil, which may not be applied in a manner equally satisfactory to that of angels.

5. That angels should communicate thoughts, either good or evil, to mankind, is originally no more improbable than that we should communicate them to each other.

We do this daily and hourly in many ways which are familiar to us by experience, but which were originally unimaginable by ourselves, and probably by any other finite beings. We show our thoughts to each other by words, tones, gestures, silence, hieroglyphics, pictures, letters, and many other things. All these, antecedent to our experience of them, were hidden in absolute darkness from our conception. If all mankind had been born dumb, no man would have entertained a single thought concerning the communication of ideas by speech. The conveyance of thoughts by looks also, if never experienced by us, would have been necessarily deemed mysterious and impossible. Yet very many thoughts are thus conveyed by every person living, and with very great force, and frequently with entire precision. Nay, the countenance often discloses the whole character at once.

That angels communicate their thoughts to each other, we know, because the Scriptures have declared the fact; that they may communicate them to us, we have no solid reason to doubt. Of the mode of communication in either case we know nothing, and are unable to conjecture any thing but what is idle and useless. But that they may convey thoughts into our minds, as well as understand those which arise in them, contravenes no analogy and no evidence.

Should it be said, that when we communicate thoughts to each other, we are conscious of the act by which the thoughts are communicated to us, and of the presence and agency of the communicator; but that we are conscious in no instance of communication from angels, and never perceive their presence or agency; whence it is reasonably concluded, that angels do not convey thoughts to our minds: I admit the declaration as just, but deny the inference derived from it by the objector. There is no proof from any thing with which we are acquainted, that thoughts cannot be conveyed to us by a being, of whose presence and agency in conveying them we are not conscious.

In the Scriptures we are informed abundantly that God, by his Holy Spirit, communicates thoughts to

mankind. But it is certain that we have no consciousness of his presence and agency, in communicating them. Of the thoughts themselves we are indeed conscious, but not of the source whence they are derived. The same doctrine, for aught that appears, is equally applicable to our reception of thoughts from angels.

6. If good angels may with propriety be supposed to promote our obedience; evil angels may with the same propriety be supposed to prompt us to disobedience.

If the agency of these two classes of beings should be exactly balanced, it is plain that we could suffer no injury. There is no reason to conclude, however, that the influence of good angels does not upon the whole overbalance that of evil ones. But all that is necessary to vindicate God in the case supposed (if even this is necessary) is, that we be not upon the whole subjected by their joint agency to any disadvantage. That we are thus subjected the Scriptures furnish us not a single reason to believe; nor can it be reasonably believed, unless perhaps where judicial blindness is inflicted as a punishment on an obstinate sinner. On the contrary, there is sufficient reason to conclude, from the mercy of God, as unfolded in the Scriptures, that he always causes the scale in this case to preponderate in our favour.

Thus have I considered all the material objections which I think of, against the existence and agency of angels, particularly evil ones, suggested by human philosophy; and, if I mistake not, have proved them to be unfounded. I proceed therefore to a particular consideration of the doctrines contained in the text.

In this passage of Scripture we are informed,

I. That after the angels were created, a part of them kept not their first estate:

II. That they left their own habitation:

III. That they are confined in chains under darkness: and,

IV. That they are reserved in this state unto the judgment of the great day.

These propositions I shall briefly examine in the order specified.

I. *After the angels were created, a part of them kept not their first estate.*

The angels who fell were in the first estate of the same rank and character, engaged in the same employments, and possessed of the same happiness, which was enjoyed by their virtuous companions. Accordingly, they are described by the same names in 1 Cor. xv. 24, and Ephes. vii 10. This doctrine is also clearly indicated in the text; where in the original it is said, 'that they kept not their principality,' instead of 'their first estate,' as it is improperly rendered in our Bible. All these blessings however they lost by rebelling against God. Of this great and wonderful event, a revolt in the heavenly world, and among the highest order of created beings, we have no regular history in the Scriptures. Still we are abundantly assured by them, that it actually took place. By various declarations, allusions, and hints, contained in them, we are taught that Satan, an angel of pre-eminent distinction in heaven, rebelled, under the influence of pride and ambition, against his Maker. In this deplorable enterprise, we farther learn, that multitudes of the heavenly host united with him; and with the same disposition violated the law, and revolted from the government, of God, That pride and ambition were especially the sins by which Satan and his companions fell, is I think sufficiently evident from 1 Tim. iii. 6, where St Paul, speaking of a bishop, says, 'he must not be a novice,' νεοφυτον, a new convert, 'lest, being puffed up with pride, he fall into the condemnation of the devil.' In this passage it is plainly asserted, that the devil was condemned for his pride; and it is fairly presumable, that the same sin was the source of condemnation to his companions. The revolt appears to have been but one, to have existed at one time, and to have united those who shared in it, in the same guilt, as well as in the same undertaking.

II. *They left their own habitation.*

By this phraseology heaven is perhaps intended, or that happy world in which all the angels were originally united together around the throne, and in the peculiar presence of God. If this sense be admitted, as by most persons it probably will be, then it would seem that they voluntarily deserted this happy place, and chose to withdraw themselves from its glorious blessings, rather than continue under the government from which they were derived. If οικητηριον, the Greek word which is rendered 'habitation,' denotes, as some divines have supposed, some other residence or station assigned them in some other world; then it would seem that they left this residence, and the principality or government, that is, the office or station which they held, refusing to perform the duty assigned them by their Creator. In either case they were shut out of heaven; and as St Peter informs us, were cast out by a final banishment from God, and were never more permitted to return to their former habitation. They had despised and disturbed the happiness of heaven, and therefore were permitted to enjoy it no more. They were discontented with their blessings, therefore they were taken from them. They had revolted from their God, therefore he cast them off.

III. *They are confined in chains under darkness.*

'Darkness' is a state obviously suitable for beings to whom the light of heaven was unsatisfactory and odious; and 'chains' are most proper for beings, whose proud and wanton wishes were discontented with the 'glorious liberty of the sons of God.' Both also united, form a degradation eminently fitted for beings who, at the head of the created universe, were impatiently ambitious of a higher station. Both at the same time constitute a proper temporary punishment for beings who rebelled against the government of God himself, who kindled discord even in heaven, and to whom all their exalted blessings stood for nothing, while any higher and richer blessings remained.

IV. *They are reserved unto the judgment of the great day.*

The punishment and degradation of these evil beings are not completed. They will hereafter be tried and condemned, for all the evils which they will have wrought or attempted, during the continuance of this earthly system. These evils, however gratifying to them in the perpetration, will after the judgment return upon their own heads; and instead of the triumph for which they hoped and laboured, will cover them with eternal shame, and overwhelm them in endless ruin. The chains which they now wear are literally everlasting, and will confine them unto the judgment, so that they cannot escape; and will confine them for ever in the sufferance of that misery to which they have destined themselves by a voluntary devotion.

Such, generally, is the scriptural account of the character and allotment of evil angels. It will be proper to add a few more particulars derived from the same source. The leader or prince of these evil beings, was the tempter of our first parents; the author of all the miseries, and an instrumental cause of all the sins, which have followed that dreadful event. The same disposition which manifested itself in his rebellion in the heavenly world, was here directed in the same manner against the government of his Maker: a disposition compounded of malice, baseness, and treachery. Hence he is styled in the Scriptures, 'the adversary,' the calumniator, 'the father of lies, the destroyer, a murderer, and a liar from the beginning.' All his followers sustain the same dreadful and detestable character. So far as has been in their power, they have deceived, betrayed, and destroyed the race of men; have been uniformly the enemies of God and mankind; have tempted them unceasingly to sin, and have especially persecuted and distressed the children of God. They powerfully excited the persecution and crucifixion of the Redeemer, and the sufferings of his apostles and their followers. From that time to the present they have unceasingly pursued the same malignant course; and will hereafter, so far as they are permitted, delude, distress, and destroy unto the end of the world.

REMARKS.

1. In this passage we find a short but affecting account of one of the most stupendous events which have taken place in the universe.

A vast multitude of intelligent beings of the first order in the divine kingdom, excelling all other orders in knowledge, power, and splendour, and unrivalled in the favour of God, rose up in rebellion against their Creator, Benefactor, and Sovereign; lost their pristine honour and happiness, their primeval virtue and dignity; sank down to the depths of sin, shame, and misery, and incurred the endless hatred and contempt of all good beings.

From this singular and amazing event, many interesting truths may be learned by us.

(1.) No created faculties, no finite holiness or happiness, furnish sufficient inducements to prevent creatures from apostasy. Angels fell. All others therefore may fall; and, if left to themselves, will fall. The true reason why 'the spirits of just men made perfect, and the innumerable company of holy angels,' persevere in their obedience is evidently, I think, not their own inherent perfection, but the promise of God, and his almighty power especially exerted to secure them from sin. Without this safeguard they would, at least to my view, be utterly unsafe, and plainly exposed to destruction. We cannot but see, therefore, with what forcible propriety our Saviour has taught us to pray 'after this manner. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.' If angels needed a continual exertion of divine power to preserve them from falling, how much more do we, frail and feeble as we are, prone by nature to sin, and easily overcome by temptation, need the same exertions for our daily and hourly safety. How constantly and earnestly ought we to offer up these petitions. How unceasingly ought we to beseech God to 'keep our feet from falling, our eyes from tears, and our souls from death;' and to implore the influence of his holy and good Spirit to make 'the meditations of our hearts and the words of our mouths, acceptable in his sight.' He only can preserve the bruised reed from falling asunder, and the dimly burning flax from being extinguished in everlasting darkness.

(2.) We are here taught that pride could disturb the peace and happiness of heaven, and prove the cause of endless ruin to a multitude of its inhabitants. How great an evil then is pride! It overcast in a moment all the beautiful and eternal prospects, it eclipsed in a moment all the splendour, virtue, and dignity of angels. What a vast, what an immeasurable ruin did it here accomplish! What a change did it make in the universe! What an amazing change did it produce in those by whom it was exercised! How ought we then to tremble at the indulgence of pride, the sin to which we are probably more prone than to any other! More or less, it occupies every heart; manifests itself in all the conduct of the children of men, and intrudes itself into their piety, their benevolence, their prayers, their songs, their alms, their humility, and their repentance. If angels were so odious in the sight of God on account of their pride, how odious must we be! If they were ruined by it for ever, what will become of us!

(3.) We are further taught that no creatures are so necessary or important to God, as to be secure from his anger, when they sin against him. Angels sinned, and were destroyed. Who then, if found of the same character, will escape? Men often satisfy themselves that they are safe in the falsely-intended reflection, 'that God never made men to damn them.' I have used the words which I have frequently heard used to express this miserable refuge of lies. It is undoubtedly true, in the strictest sense, that God never created either man or any other beings for this end; but it is equally true, that he has created men and angels also, who, after they were created, sinned; and who, for their sin, were condemned to final perdition. The phraseology, apparently true, is substantially false, and is used only for the purpose of deceiving ourselves and others. The angels might certainly have used this language with more seeming force and justice than we can; but it could not save them, and therefore certainly cannot save us.

The number of wicked men, relied on in no small degree as a foundation of hope and safety, is merely a foundation of sand. The number of the wicked angels did not avail them at all. Every one of the rebels was destroyed as absolutely, as if no other had been concerned in the rebellion. Their number also was immensely great; and one of them was of more worth and importance than many men united.

(4.) The punishment of the evil angels is not disciplinary. They have been already punished at least six thousand years; yet instead of being reformed, they have grown worse continually; and will grow worse, not only till the day of judgment, but probably for ever. The Scriptures inform us that the punishment of evil angels is the same with that of evil men. The punishment of evil men therefore is not disciplinary, but punishment properly so called; punishment designed to reward the sins, not to amend the characters of either angels or men. Both are hopeless of amendment; yet both may be useful, although dreadful, examples to the rest of the universe. There is not a reason to believe that a sin was ever renounced, or a sinner reformed, except by the almighty power of the Spirit of grace.

2. We learn from these observations, that opposition to God is supremely odious and deformed.

This is the fundamental characteristic of apostasy in both angels and men. Of this the diabolical character is made up. How odious and deformed is it most justly accounted! How false, how malicious, how cruel, how base, how detestable! Let it be remembered that all opposition to God is, in nature and substance, the same; and that it differs not in kind, but merely in degree.

3. In how many respects do wicked men resemble wicked angels.

Like them, do wicked men exalt themselves against God, hate his government, oppose his designs, and revile his character; inflate themselves with pride, murmur at their own allotments, covet the enjoyments of others, corrupt their fellow creatures, tempt them to iniquity, and defraud them of endless life. Like them do they hate, envy, injure, calumniate, and destroy. How much of the history of this great world has resembled a history of fiends. How much of it has been a history of falsehood, fraud, treachery, pollution, slanders, contentions, murders, oppression, slaughter, irreligion, impiety, profaneness, and blasphemy. How readily have evil men, like evil angels, undertaken to rival God: and demanded the homage, worship, and obedience due to him alone.

How laboriously do infidel writers, even now, oppose their Maker and their Redeemer; and strive to shut both their fellow men and themselves out of heaven. Particularly, with what frequency and constancy do they repeat the very falsehood, which was first told to the parents of mankind: 'Although ye disobey God, ye shall not surely die.' How continually do wicked men by argument, ridicule, eloquence, and example, tempt each other to sin against God! How great a part of their life and labours do multitudes spend in this employment! Where can we find a moral distinction between this conduct, and that of fallen angels?

4. The same punishment which is reserved for evil angels, is accordingly reserved for evil men.

This punishment was 'prepared' at first, 'for the devil and his angels.' But Christ the final judge of the quick and the dead has informed us, that impenitent men shall, at the great day, stand with them on the left hand, be included in the same sentence, and depart to the same place of torment. Both will have been embarked in one cause, will have sustained one character, and will therefore share in one allotment of woe. Perhaps there is not a more affecting, more overwhelming consideration to a serious mind than this: that evil men will hereafter be confined in the same habitation with these hateful beings, who are possessed of a disposition to do every thing which is injurious to God and their fellow creatures, and to perpetrate all the crimes dictated by malice, cruelty, deceit, and revenge. To be imprisoned in this world with a collection of abandoned villains; to be hated and despised, deceived and betrayed, oppressed and insulted, wounded to the soul with unceasing cruelty and treachery, and broken down by scorn and insolence, even for our present, momentary life, would I think be a lot sufficiently dreadful to lacerate the soul with agony. What then must be the nature and misery of a confinement with these powerful, active, sagacious beings; whose minds are all malice, fraud, and cruelty; and whose endless being is only a succession of rage, revenge, and despair.

SERMON XXI.

CREATION.—THE EARTH.

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.—Gen. i. 1.

In the four preceding Sermons, I have briefly considered the several things intended in the Jewish use of the word Heaven; and made some observations concerning the character and circumstances of those beings, who either are or have been inhabitants of the supreme heaven. The next subject of examination in our progress, is the world which we inhabit.

In the history given by Moses of this great work, we are informed,

1. That together with the rest of the material system, it was made of nothing; or in other words, the materials were brought into existence, of which the world was afterwards composed. That we might be at no loss concerning this truth, Moses has taught it distinctly in Gen. ii. 3; where he informs us, that 'God rested from all his works, which he created and made;' or, as in the original, *created to make*. Of the energy by which this mighty effort was accomplished, the Psalmist gives us a most sublime conception, when he says, concerning the Creator, that 'he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast.' These materials, as they were first brought into being, were originally a mere mass of confusion; in the language of the divine writer, 'without form and void;' and are styled successively, 'the earth, the waters, and the deep.'

2. The first element separated from the chaos was light, the most wonderful and the most useful of all material objects. At this time it seems not to have been gathered into any common receptacle, as, according to the received philosophy, it is at the present time; but to have been diffused extensively through the universe. It is possible that this may now be its real state; and that the sun and stars, instead of being in themselves luminous, may merely possess the power of originating its motion and direction. That period of darkness which intervened between the creation of the chaos and the production of light, and that period of light which preceded the next return of darkness, constituted the first day. In reference to this event, the Israelites were commanded to celebrate their sabbath 'from evening to evening,' this being the true course of a natural day.

3. The next event in this great work was the consti-

tution of the firmament, and a division of the chaotic mass into two great parts, one beneath and one above the firmament. This was the work of the second day.

4. This was followed by the separation of the land from the waters; the land being named earth, and the great collection of waters, seas.

To this immediately succeeded the creation of grass and herbs, of shrubs and trees. These were all formed with the power of re-production, and of continuing their respective kinds in this manner to the end of the world. By a wonderful process of vegetation, they were enabled to yield, each its own proper seed: a minute particle, which, being committed to the earth, a plant of the same nature and properties regularly springs up, and gradually advances to its perfection. Thus vegetables have existed in every age, of the same kinds, which were formed on the third day of the creation; and have ever constituted much of the food of both men and animals, and not a little part of the pleasures enjoyed by both. With the creation of these terminated the third day.

5. On the fourth day were created the lights of heaven, particularly the sun and moon. As I have heretofore considered these, in the discourse on the heavens, it will be unnecessary to repeat here what I have so lately said. I shall therefore confine myself to a few additional observations.

These luminaries were set in the firmament of heaven, to divide the day from the night; and to be for signs and for seasons, for days and for years. Accordingly, they have been the great means of distributing time from the beginning, into all its important divisions; enabling us to form the chronology of the world, to ascertain the order and connexion of all historical events, and to regulate by correct dates our various useful business.

The sun at the same time is the great fountain of light to this world, and to all those which are united in our system; and thus enables the inhabitants to pursue successfully their necessary employments. It is the parent also of that universal vegetation with which the earth is so beautifully adorned, and on which we are so obviously dependent for the existence of health, comfort, and life. Not less absolutely, and still more immediately, is our life, together with our activity, dependent on the presence, warmth, and energy of this fountain of light. In a word, whatever lives and moves, lives and moves by the influence of the sun; and without his presence, eternal night, and eternal winter, would reign with boundless desolation over this habitable globe.

The moon also is inestimably useful to mankind in the beautiful light which she gives by night, in the important changes which she accomplishes in the ocean and the atmosphere; and in becoming, in connexion with the other luminaries of heaven, the source of a great part of our skill in navigation, and our knowledge of geography and astronomy.

6. When the earth was thus prepared to be a habitation of living beings, God said, on the morning of the fifth day, 'Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven.' Immediately the ocean and the air were filled with their respective inhabitants. The innumerable useful and delightful purposes which they were destined to accomplish, and which accordingly they have accomplished to the present time, it will be unnecessary to particularize on the present occasion.

7. On the sixth and last day of the creation, the earth was replenished with the four-footed beasts, and creeping things, by which it has been ever since inhabited. These also, so useful to man, and so indispensable to his comfortable existence, are so well known as not to demand any account of their nature, or destination from me.

8. All these works of the divine hand were severally pronounced by their great Author to be very good. Such indeed was the original nature of them all. This world was formed to be a delightful residence. Its surface was beautiful, its soil fertile without decay, its seasons vernal, its atmosphere, waters, and productions, pregnant with life; and all its inhabitants pacific, useful, and happy. In the country of Eden, 'the Lord God planted also a garden,' to become the appropriate residence of the first man; and here 'he made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food.' This paradise was the beautiful metropolis of a beautiful world.

REMARKS.

From these observations we learn,

1. How mighty and majestic a work was the creation of this world.

The earth is a vast and solid globe, composed of particles so small as to be imperceptible to us, united by the energy which called them into being, and holden together by the same energy in a manner wholly incomprehensible. This globe is 'hung upon nothing;' and moved through the fields of ether with amazing velocity, and yet with infinite ease, by the hand of its Creator. Too great to be moved at all, perhaps, by all created intelligences, it has yet for many thousand years been rolled on with perfect ease by him 'who fainteth not, neither is weary.' It has also moved always in its own place, and in perfect harmony with other worlds. Its motion at the same time is so regular and undisturbed, as to be imperceptible to its inhabitants; and yet so rapid, as to outrun every human conception.

In a manner not less wonderful, it turns its face continually to the sun; and derives light, and warmth, and energy, for the comfort of its inhabitants, the production of its fruits, and the accomplishment of the business allotted to the race of man.

How expressive of infinite power were the acts of calling it into being, uniting its parts, preserving its structure, moving it through the boundless void, and regulating with perfect harmony all its various affections.

How expressive of infinite wisdom is the endless diversity of beings which it contains; their structure, qualities, and uses; their relations and dependences, their wants and supplies, their endlessly various beauty, novelty, and grandeur.

Nor is infinite goodness less wonderfully manifested by the bounty everywhere displayed in providing for the least as well as the greatest; in making the least, that it might be provided for, and in giving to each its own peculiar happiness. How evidently are all these things the work of a God!

2. How wonderful is the order of things which was established at the creation.

This subject may be advantageously divided into two parts: the order of things which is permanent, and that which is subject to perpetual revolutions.

Of the former class are the stable position of the globe

at given distances from the heavenly bodies, the position of its poles, its regular motions round its axis and round the sun, by which the revolutions of the seasons, and the returns of day and night are accomplished; the steady attractions of gravitation and cohesion, which produce the stability of the earth itself, and all its great affections. All these are indispensable to the existing state of the world and its inhabitants. The order of these things I call permanent, although subject to many changes, and in several instances a mere series of changes; because they are stable, regular, and unvarying in their nature.

The other and more mutable course of things respects the animal, vegetable, and mineral kingdoms; the state of the atmosphere, the ocean, and the surface of the earth. These all are subjects of unceasing changes; and several of them of continual decay, and continual renovation. Plants and animals are formed to renew and perpetuate their kinds through an indefinite period; and were the date of the earth to be sufficiently protracted, to continue them for ever. Nor are mineral substances, so far as they are liable to decay, unprovided with the means of reproduction. Stones decay, and return to earth; and earth is petrified or hardened into stone. Ores are supposed to be exhausted and renewed. Gems and other beautiful substances are multiplied, and worn out. Soils are furnished anew for the most luxuriant vegetation. The ocean is also, in a sense, emptied and filled again. From that great storehouse of waters, vapour perpetually ascends, and is discharged on the earth in rain, snow, and hail, in mists and dews; while the earth, through its various channels, returns again its tribute of waters to the ocean. Thus in the language of the wisest of men:

> 'Generation goeth, and generation cometh!
> But the earth doth ever abide.
> The sun also riseth, the sun also setteth,
> And hasteth to the place where it rose;
> It passeth to the south; again it circleth to the north.
> Round and round goeth the wind,
> And ever repeateth its circuits.
> All the rivers run down into the sea,
> Yet the sea doth not overflow:
> To the place, whence the rivers go forth,
> To the same, to flow again, do they return.
> All the things thus at their task, no man can recount;
> The eye would not be able to behold them,
> Nor would the ear be competent to hear them.'

3. How wonderful are the uses of the various things which constitute this earthly system.

How important to mankind is the mineral kingdom! How indispensable is the soil for vegetation, the stones and clay for building, the peat and coal for fuel, the metals for all the necessary and elegant arts of life, and for the existence of almost every thing which we name a convenience, or a comfort. Iron alone is indispensable to the employments, and even to the existence of civilized life. Without it agriculture, commerce, arts, and science, would dwindle speedily into nothing; and, but for its aid, would never have been. To minerals also we are indebted for medicines of the most valuable nature, indispensable to the restoration of health, and the continuance of life.

What then shall be said of the vegetable kingdom; of grass, as food for cattle; and herbs and grain, as the food of men; of the flax, cotton, and hemp, with which we are clothed; of trees, as the materials of fuel, building, and fencing; and as the means of accomplishing a multitude of other purposes, equally demanded by necessity and comfort.

Finally, what shall be said of the animal kingdom; of the horse, the ox, the cow, the camel, and the sheep; of the furry tribes, and the silk-worm: all of which so largely contribute either to the husbandry of man, his food, his clothing, or his pleasure.

Nor ought we, in considering the nature of earthly things, to forget them as the delightful means of beauty and grandeur. Were all the interesting diversities of colour and form to disappear, how unsightly, dull, and wearisome would be the aspect of the world. The pleasures conveyed to us by the endless varieties with which these sources of beauty are presented to the eye, are so much things of course, and exist so much without intermission, that we scarcely think either of their nature, their number, or the great proportion which they constitute in the whole mass of our enjoyment. But were an inhabitant of this country removed from its delightful scenery, to the midst of an Arabian desert; a boundless expanse of sand, a waste spread with uniform desolation, enlivened by the murmur of no stream, and cheered by the beauty of no verdure; although he might live in a palace, and riot in splendour and luxury, he would, I think, find life a dull, wearisome, melancholy round of existence; and amid all his gratifications, would sigh for the hills and valleys of his native land, the brooks and rivers, the living lustre of the spring, and the rich glories of the autumn. The ever-varying brilliancy and grandeur of the landscape, and the magnificence of the sky, sun, moon, and stars, enter more extensively into the enjoyment of mankind than we perhaps ever think, or can possibly apprehend, without frequent and extensive investigation. This beauty and splendour of the objects around us, it is ever to be remembered, is not necessary to their existence, nor to what we commonly intend by their usefulness. It is therefore to be regarded as a source of pleasure, gratuitously superinduced upon the general nature of the objects themselves; and in this light, as a testimony of the divine goodness, peculiarly affecting.

Still more deeply ought we to regard this part of the creation as exhibiting, in the most convincing manner, the being and agency of God How plainly, how delightfully, how solemnly is this glorious Being seen every where in these works of his hands. All these changes are the result of a cause adequate to their production. The living, acting thing, called man, is never directly perceived by other men. We see motions, and know that there is one who moves. We hear a voice, and know that there is one who speaks. We perceive actions, and know that there is an agent who gives them birth. This agent we denominate man. So in every place, in every thing, and during every moment, we behold, throughout the creation, a perpetual progress of most wonderful events; and know that an agent to us invisible, but adequate to their production, effectuates them all. This agent we call God; and discern his being, character, and presence, as directly and clearly as we discern the being, character, and presence of man. Thus all things hold out to every attentive eye, the living, acting, governing Jehovah.

At the same time, this earthly system strongly displays the anger of God against the sins of men. Amidst all these pleasing manifestations of the Creator, the world around us furnishes also many proofs of his displeasure

The storm plunges multitudes in the deep. The lightning destroys its victims in a moment. The famine sweeps its millions to the grave. The volcano overwhelms towns and cities with deluges of fire. The pestilence, 'walking in darkness,' drives before it whole nations into eternity: while death, both with and without the aid of these ministers, empties, once in thirty years, the world of its inhabitants. What awful, as well as decisive proofs are here furnished, that the Maker of all things regards our race with severe and terrible displeasure. How solemnly do they impress this humiliating truth upon every serious mind. How forcibly do they summon us to repent and reform, that we may find mercy!

There is still another point of view, in which these works ought to be remembered on the present occasion. Every thing in creation and providence appears not only to be useful, but to have many uses, and to answer very many purposes. God, so far as we can understand his agency, accomplishes his ends by the most direct, the simplest, and the fewest means.

> 'In human works, though labouring on with pain,
> A thousand movements scarce one purpose gain;
> In God's, one single can its end produce,
> Yet serves to second, too, some other use.'*

Thus water and iron become means of ends innumerable. The latter enters, to a vast extent, into almost all human arts and concerns: while the former is almost everywhere diffused through the great system of benefits which God has provided for mankind.

A great part of the usefulness found in the objects of this world, arises from the order established among them, and mentioned under a former head of discourses. From this order springs all the forecast of the human mind. By observing the regular succession of causes and effects around us, we learn to judge with a good degree of correctness, from past events, concerning those which are future. The nature of the seasons, exhibited in their past revolutions, teaches us how to prepare ourselves against both heat and cold; to sow our seed in the spring, and gather our harvests in the summer and autumn; to shelter ourselves from the inclemencies of the sky, to make the necessary provision for ourselves and our families, and to adjust universally, the arts and business of life. By the regularity of the system, all our profitable employments are wholly directed. Without this guide we could plan nothing, we could accomplish nothing; and should literally be unable to conjecture what a day, an hour, or a moment, would bring forth. Our existence would be a mere succession of accidents. Nor can we conceive how, in such a state, any means could be furnished, by which we might either enjoy comfort, or prolong our lives.

From the same source arises, in a chief measure, that full, unanswerable proof of the existence and character of God, which is presented by these works of his hands. The wisdom of God is principally seen in the design and contrivance exhibited throughout the globe. But contrivance and design appear only in the adaptation of means to ends: and wisdom is visible only in the choice of good ends, and of fit means to accomplish them. I have already remarked, that without this regularity, our existence would be a mere succession of accidents. This would be equally true of the whole course of events. There would be, visibly, neither means nor ends. If second causes existed, they would be unperceived; and their efficacy, being continually variable, could never be discerned. All things, therefore, would naturally be attributed to chance. Who then would be able to refute the doctrines of Epicurus, or to prove satisfactorily the perfections or even the existence of God?

4. How interesting an object is the destination of this world,

The earth was designed to be the habitation of immortal beings, whose numbers the human mind is unable to limit. Every one of these is an heir, either of endless happiness or endless woe. All of them also have apostatized from God, and exposed themselves to final condemnation. In this state of things, this world became the theatre of the most wonderful works, which, so far as our knowledge extends, have ever existed. The Son of God descended from heaven, and, passing by the angels, 'took upon him the seed of Abraham;' suffered the distresses of an humble persecuted life; died on the cross, and was buried in the grave, to expiate the sins of men. In consequence of this expiation, the Spirit of truth has here shed his renewing influence on the human soul; and has sanctified, and will hereafter sanctify, a multitude which no man can number, 'of all nations, kindreds, and tongues.' All these, 'by a patient continuance in well-doing, will seek for glory, honour, and immortality;' and will find a new, 'eternal, life.' By their union to Christ, and their interest in his mediation, they will hereafter become, together with the angels who kept their first estate, inhabitants of the supreme heaven, and attendants upon the throne of God. This is a destiny to which, so far as we are informed, no other virtuous beings will ever be raised. Thus this world is a scene of transactions, such as probably never existed in any other: and its inhabitants are heirs of glory and happiness, in which they will be rivalled only by the angels of God.

5. These considerations exhibit the unreasonableness of several objections made against the divine origin of the Scriptures.

(1.) The representation of the Scriptures, that the creation was accomplished progressively, and not instantaneously, is declared to be unworthy of God. It will be admitted that Moses has taught, not only in the most explicit, but in the most sublime manner, that it was perfectly easy for God to create the world in an instant. 'Let there be light,' said this glorious Being, 'and there was light. Let there be a firmament, and there was a firmament. Let the waters be separated from the waters, and they were separated.' He who can do these things in this manner, can do any thing in any manner that shall please him. No other representation of power was ever to be compared with this. Nor has any one of those who have followed Moses, whether inspired or uninspired, rivalled him in sublimity of narration.

But while he exhibits the omnipotence of God in so impressive a manner, he gives us an account of the creation which is both intelligible and useful. Had the work of creation been instantaneously performed, it would have been totally incomprehensible even by the angels, who were witnesses of it; and the history of it would have been totally useless to ourselves, except merely as settling the point, that the world was created. The first verse in the Bible would have contained the whole. Nor could any thing have been added to it

* Essay on Man, part i. line 53.

with propriety, unless that God called the universe into existence by his word. How much more interesting, comprehensible, and delightful, is the whole chapter, in which that verse is contained. In a far higher proportion was the actual progress and order of this great work intelligible, interesting, and delightful, to the 'sons of God,' who were witnesses of its accomplishment. They saw and understood much of what was done: we read and understand not a little.

The history of the creation as written by Moses, is the noblest history which was ever written by man, With perfect simplicity, it unites supreme grandeur; and has accordingly received the highest testimony of criticism, from the time of Longinus to the present day.

It is farther to be remembered, that by means of this order of creation, the sabbath, the great source of piety and eternal life to man, was ushered into the world with a solemnity unrivalled and infinite. 'God rested,' say the divine writers, 'from all his works which he created and made; the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy.' What a sabbath was this! Who, with such an example before him, can refuse to 'keep this day holy unto the Lord?' Who does not see that the very existence of this example, and all its consequent influence, arose out of the order of the creation, recited by Moses?

(2.) Another objection urged by infidels against the divine origin of the Scriptures, is derived from the date assigned by them to the creation. 'Can it be supposed,' say these men, 'that God existed so many millions of ages alone; and began the work of creating only six thousand years ago?' This question has been often asked with confidence, and even with triumph. But it has been always asked without good sense or consideration. Yet, as there are persons who will ask it, and others who will suppose it to possess real weight, it will not be improper to give it a momentary attention. I answer then,

In the first place, that the Scriptures do not assert the existence of created things to have been begun at the time when this world was made; and there is no presumption against the formation of this world at the time specified. There is no more reason to conclude, *a priori* that worlds may not be created at different times, but must all be brought into existence coetaneously, than there is to form the same decision concerning trees, animals, or men.

Again: If all things were created at the time specified by Moses, then it is certain that the creation existed as soon as was possible. Between the eternity of God, and any supposable date of creation or commencement of time, there is, there can be, no possible relation, and therefore no possible comparison. To the eternity of him, 'with whom one day is exactly as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day; who inhabiteth eternity at once; whose duration is an omnipresent *now*; our successive existence, and the periods by which it is reckoned have no reference whatever. To him, time and date have no relation, and are obviously nothing.

Farther: Had the world been created at the commencement of any imaginable past period, suppose a billion of years; at the end of six thousand years from its first creation, the same objection would have been made against the date of its existence with exactly the same force. It might then have been asked, with exactly the same propriety, can it be supposed that God existed so many millions of ages alone, and began the work of creating only six thousand years ago? The objectors appear not to perceive, that by receding into past duration, they approach no nearer to a goal; but that, while they amuse themselves with the dream of advancing towards a satisfactory limit, the same vast still expands immeasurably before them.

(3.) From the regular order of things, infidels have also determined, that the universe is eternal, and have hence denied the revelation of the Scriptures. St Peter has taught us, that 'in the last days there should be scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, where is the promise of his coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the world.' This prediction we ourselves see verified. There have long been, there are now, just such scoffers, just such objectors. The regular order of things established in this world, has long been the source of pertinacious opposition to the word, the government, and even the existence of God; and the design of the opposition has uniformly been to overthrow 'the promise,' and the probability, 'of his coming' to judgment.

The general doctrine of these men has been this: 'The materials of the universe were self-existent and eternal. By means of these materials, fate, necessity, destiny, or a blind succession of causes, have produced such beings and events as have hitherto existed.' At the same time, another class of infidels pronounce all such beings and events to be the result of mere chance. Regular as the present system is, they professedly find in it sufficient irregularity to warrant them in making this conclusion. Singular, indeed, must be that state of things which is sufficiently regular to support the former of these doctrines, and sufficiently irregular to warrant the latter. According to these schemes, taken together, there neither is, nor can be, any proof of the existence and government of God, either in the present, or in any supposable state of things. The only remaining mode by which the Creator can make himself known to mankind is revelation; and the possibility of this, several of these men roundly deny. Men, indeed, make known themselves to each other every day, by speaking, moving, and acting. Even common modesty, as well as common sense, could not, one would think, believe this to be beyond the power and skill of the omnipotent and omniscient Creator of men.

The two schemes of existence here specified, have been sufficiently examined in the second of these Discourses. All that I have intended here, was barely to remind you of the manner in which men of this character have thought proper to reason; and to show you that their views of the universe and its Author, flow from the heart, and not from the head.

(4.) Infidels object the miracles recorded in the Scriptures, against their divine origin, on the ground that there is a universal presumption against the existence of a miracle. Those which are styled the laws of nature were, it will be remembered, subsequent in their existence to the creation. This work could not therefore be in any sense conformed to them, but was an immediate act of divine power; absolutely new, conformed to no analogy, and existing in a manner wholly miraculous. What is thus true of the work of creation at large, is equally true of the act by which each individual thing, originally created, was brought into be-

ing. There have, therefore, been many millions of miraculous productions; and in this vast number of instances, miracles have been certainly wrought. Of course, there is the strongest presumption of their existence in other cases. We know that they have been actually wrought, when there was a sufficient occasion; and cannot rationally doubt, that on every other such occasion they would be wrought again. Nothing more, therefore, can be necessary to prove their existence, than fair unexceptionable testimony.

6. If this great work is thus wonderful, how wonderful, how glorious must be its Author.

All these things he contrived and executed. All of them are merely pictures, or archetypes, of the thoughts originally existing in the uncreated mind. Whatever is beautiful, useful, majestic, or exalted, is only a display of the beauty, excellence, greatness, and sublimity of divine perfection. How naturally do our first parents exclaim, in the language of the great English poet,

> 'These are thy glorious works, Parent of good,
> Almighty! thine this universal frame,
> Thus wondrous fair; thyself how wondrous then,
> Unspeakable!

What an astonishing act must it have been to create a world, its furniture and its inhabitants, together with all their natures and qualities, and to prepare them for all their successive operations: many of these inhabitants destined to live, and many of these operations destined to affect them throughout eternity.

What a mind must that be, which could contain an exact as well as comprehensive scheme of all the parts, characteristical qualities, and operations of such a work; which, without confusion or mistake, could see through the whole, and discern every consequence, even in the remotest ages of being; which could so exactly prescribe the nature, determine the operations, and limit the number of parts, however great, however minute; and in the progress of duration find no cause for the least change in the work, or the least deviation from the system.

Such are the views which justly arise from the contemplation of our world, as it now is. How much more forcibly would they have been impressed on our minds, had we lived in the same world, as it came fresh and fair from the hands of the Creator, when he surveyed every thing that he had done, and pronounced it 'very good!' How delightfully should we have been affected by the objects contained in the present world, had we been superior to death, and destined to live for ever; had we been planted in Eden, where the air, the earth, and the waters, teemed with life; and immortality breathed in the winds, flowed in the streams, ripened in the fruits, and exhaled from the flowers. At the side of our first parents, and encircled by paradise, how instinctively should we have exclaimed, 'Worthy art thou, O Lord, to receive blessing, and glory, and honour, and power, for thou hast made all things, and for thy pleasure they are, and were created.'

The source of all these wonders is the Lord Jesus Christ. 'For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible; whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by him, and for him; and he is before all things, and by him all things consist.' To Him, therefore, is this admiration and glory due; and to him, the obedience, confidence, and worship, which the Creator of the universe justly challenges from his intelligent creation.

SERMON XXII.

CREATION.—MAN.

And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image; in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.—Gen. i. 26, 27.

In several preceding Discourses, I have considered the formation of the heavens, the character and circumstances of angels, both virtuous and fallen, and the creation of the world in which we dwell. The next subject of our investigation is man. This subject though far less splendid than several of the preceding themes of contemplation, is yet peculiarly interesting to us. Every thing that relates to it must directly and intimately concern ourselves; and nothing of this nature can be to us uninvested with serious importance, or undeserving of our particular attention.

Nor is this the only point of view in which man claims a high regard. God himself has bestowed an attention upon him, which has not been given even to angels themselves. Angels, when they fell, were banished for ever from the presence and favour of their Creator. But when man had fallen, the Son of God descended from heaven; assumed our nature, lived in this world a suffering life, and died a shameful death, that we might be saved. From the grave, also, he arose on the third day, ascended to heaven, sat down at the right hand of God the Father, and became 'head over all things' for the benefit of his church. Angels themselves are employed by him in promoting this mighty work; and are 'all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation.' For man, heaven, shut to the apostate angels, is again opened. For man, also, when 'the earth and all the works

that are therein, shall be burnt up, and the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved; new heavens, and a new earth,' like the fabled phœnix out of its ashes, shall arise, 'in which righteousness shall dwell' for ever.

Man, therefore, notwithstanding his humble origin and guilty character, is an object, rendered highly important on account of the peculiar regard exhibited to him by his Maker. At the same time we ought, in every general estimate of man, to remember, that at his creation he was endued with powers, placed in circumstances, and destined to enjoyments, of no inconsiderable distinction and glory. This reference we are, in every such case, taught to make by St James; who, speaking of the abuses of the tongue, and of cursing our fellow men as one of those abuses, mentions the original character of human nature, as a consideration plainly enhancing both the absurdity and the guilt of this evil conduct. 'Therewith,' says this apostle, 'bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, who are,' or as in the Greek, 'who were made in the similitude of God.'

In the text, the Author of all things is exhibited as holding a consultation, concerning the creation of man. 'And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.' The work of creation is in the Scriptures indifferently attributed to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. That it is attributed to the Father, will not be questioned. That it is attributed to the Son, and to the Spirit, can no more be questioned, if we allow the Scriptures to speak the customary language of men; or indeed, if we allow them to speak language that has any defensible construction, or any meaning.

The text declares to us, in a clear and decisive manner, that more persons than one were concerned in the design of creating man; and that some person or persons were addressed by the speaker. Various attempts have indeed been made to avoid the proof, furnished by this passage, to the doctrine of the Trinity; and in this manner to force out of view the obvious and only meaning of the terms. But none of these attempts, which I have seen, will bear examination.

In the first place: The style royal is not adopted here. This is the use of the plural personal pronoun, instead of the singular, to denote an individual; a practice adopted by modern princes, with an intention to distinguish themselves from inferior mortals. He who can believe that Jehovah would in this manner violate the propriety of language to distinguish himself, and countenance human pride and folly, in its ridiculous labours for the acquisition of personal superiority, must, to say the least, have formed extraordinary views concerning the character of his Creator. That God has not acted in this manner is unanswerably clear from the universal tenor of the scriptural language. Only a single specimen, and that a doubtful one, of the style in question, can be found in the sacred writings. Nor is this in the Hebrew style; but copied from the decree of a Persian monarch, some thousands of years after the Pentateuch was written. The simplicity of the scriptural language is supreme. Every thing is spoken of as it is, and in the mere phraseology of nature. A Jew, if the passage had been intended to speak in this manner, would hardly have been able to discover its signification.

But what places the point in question out of dispute, is the declaration of the same glorious Being, in the third chapter and twenty-second verse: 'And the Lord God said, behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil.' It will not be pretended that even a modern prince, when declaring that one of his subjects had become like himself, would say, This man has become as *one* of *us*.

Our Saviour, who understood this subject incomparably better than these commentators, has explained to us this phraseology in a manner which solves every rational doubt. Speaking, as St John declares, John xii. 41, in Isaiah vi. 8, he says, 'Whom shall I send, and who will go for *us*.' Again, addressing his Father, John xvii. 21, he says, 'That they all may be one, as thou Father art in me, and I in thee; that they also may be one in *us*.' And again, verse 22, 'That they may be one, even as *we* are one.' In all these instances, the same person uses the same language, with the same, and that both obvious and exact, propriety.

Secondly: This phraseology also is not addressed to angels. Angels could not be addressed in this manner; for such an address would have had neither truth nor meaning. In the work of creating man, angels had as little agency as the man who was to be created. Suppose, instead of the proposal to angels to unite with God in creating man, we were to substitute a history of this transaction. We should then say, that God and his angels created man; and therefore, that angels performed a part of this work; or were, in some sense and degree, the creators of man. The absurdity of this account needs no explanation. It is as really, it is equally, absurd to suppose, that God would address angels in this manner, and propose to them to occupy themselves, or to be in any way concerned in this work; in which both he and they knew it was neither proper, nor possible for them to be at all concerned, as to suppose that they actually performed a part of it. It was, also, according to every scriptural account of the Creator, and of angels, wholly improper for him to associate them with himself in a work which was exclusively his own. Nor will it be asserted, that God here proposes to create man in the image of angels. In verse 2, it is said, 'God created man in his own image.' In addition to this it is to be remembered, that angels are not mentioned in this history, till a considerable time afterward; and, therefore, if they had been intended, this could not be known; whereas in the sense in which these words have been customarily interpreted, the persons spoken of in the text are expressly named. 'In the beginning Aleim' (the covenanters *) 'created the heaven and the earth.'

I have observed, that the Author of all things is exhibited in the text as solemnly consulting concerning the creation of man. 'Let us make man,' said the Divine Workman, 'in our image, after our likeness;' not, let man exist, or let there be man; as he had before said, 'Let there be light, let there be a firmament, let the earth bring forth grass:' and so on, with respect to every thing else that was made. This solemn manner of introducing man into being, was strongly expressive of his importance, and very honourable to his character. The distinction made between him and all the preceding objects of creation was intentional, and declared him to be of more consequence than them all.

* Parkhurst.

This subject I will now endeavour to illustrate in the following observations.

I. *The time at which man was created, is strongly expressive of the importance of his character.*

The creation of the world was now completed. 'The heavens were finished, and all the host of them.' The sun was constituted a perpetual fountain of light, and set in the firmament to rule over the day, and to distribute warmth and life, activity and enjoyment, to all the sentient inhabitants of this world. In his absence, 'the moon walked in brightness, to rule the night;' and shed on the earth a softer but not less beautiful splendour than that of the day. The stars also, spreading their glory throughout the sky, delightfully illustrated the wisdom of the Creator, and rejoiced over the inferior works of his hands.

The whole process also of forming the earth, of clothing it with verdure, of replenishing it with animals, of providing the means of their subsistence and comfort, and of arraying it with beauty and magnificence, was brought to an end. Fresh from the perfect hand of its Creator, it was a work of such excellence, that the eye of infinite wisdom, surveying all its parts, saw that it was 'very good.' It was a habitation which angels beheld with delight; a palace fitted for the residence of an immortal, virtuous, happy being; of him who was to be made in the image of God, of him who was to have dominion over the earth, and every thing which it contained.

This mighty preparation conveys to us high ideas concerning the object for which so much was done. God does nothing but with the strictest propriety. The bounty which here flowed in such copious streams, was directed by infinite wisdom, as well as poured out by infinite goodness. While, on the one hand, it was glorious to its author; it was, on the other, perfectly suited to the character of the recipient. The recipient, therefore, was of such a character, as to be the proper object of these illustrious communications.

II. *The nature of man is a still more interesting object of our attention.*

Man is a compound existence, made up of two great parts; the body, and the soul, or spirit. The body was formed of the dust of the ground, and can claim no higher origin than that of the animals by which we are surrounded; is possessed only of the same life and activity, and is the subject of the same suffering and enjoyment. Still, it is a frame of the most wonderful nature. The parts of which it is composed; their number, their various natures, dependencies, operations, and uses; the arrangement by which they are formed into a system, a world within itself; the faculties attached to it, of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and feeling; its capacity of pain and pleasure, the warnings which it is fitted to give of approaching or commencing evil, and the power which it so variously possesses, of self-restoration; are all wonderful, mysterious, and strongly declaratory of the skill and goodness of the Creator. Nor ought we, on this occasion, to forget the peculiar structure of the person; the beauty of the complexion, the symmetry of the members, particularly that displayed in the features of the face; the gracefulness and dignity of the motions; nor the power of the countenance to express the thoughts and feelings of the mind. By this last-mentioned attribute, the face becomes an index to the character of the invisible man; and shows, not only his ideas, but his emotions also; his virtue and vice, his loveliness and deformity; and, in a word, whatever his fellow-men are interested to know.

All these things were at first formed for endless duration. The body, like the mind, was originally incapable of decomposition or decay. Its life was a mere progress of youth, and bloom, and beauty; and disease and death had not yet marked it for their prey.

Of a still more wonderful nature was the human soul, or spirit. This indeed would naturally be expected, from the peculiar descripion of it given in the text: 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.' And again, 'So God created man in his own image; in the image of God created he him.' It will not be doubted that the image of God was impressed, and was capable of being impressed on the soul only, and not on the body. As little ought it to be doubted, that this phraseology attributes to the soul a distinguished importance, not a little enhanced by these repetitions. Since this peculiar language embodies all the important characteristics of the human soul, I shall conform the observations, which it will be necessary to make at the present time on this subject, to the single scheme of explaining these declarations in the text.

The image of God, in which man is here said to have been created, denotes especially the following things.

1. That the soul, or spirit, was created a pure uncompounded substance.

It is impossible that thought should be the act of a plurality of subjects, since it is in its own nature perfectly simple and indivisible. It will be readily acknowledged, that such is the nature of God; and that the same nature is also possessed by angels. There is as little reason to deny, that it is also the nature of the human soul. On this subject however I shall dwell more extensively in the following Discourse, and shall here consider it as granted.

In this important particular, it will be seen, that the soul differs entirely from all material substances. These are, universally, collections of innumerable atoms; and therefore become, whenever the bond which unites them is destroyed, subjects of dissolution. Nothing more is necessary to the destruction of the material form, than the mere separation of its parts. The soul being perfectly simple, is incapable of suffering this process, and cannot perish, unless by annihilation. As there is no example of annihilation within the experience of man, no reason can be drawn from analogy to support the supposition, that the existence of the soul will ever be terminated.

2. The soul was formed a THINKING substance.

St Paul, Col. iii. 10, says, 'And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge, after the image of Him that created him.' To know therefore, the great exercise of thought, is in one respect of high importance to be like God. Thinking beings are the only beings who are active; who originate changes in the universe, who commence operations, who contrive useful purposes, who direct unconcious objects to their proper uses, and who are the subjects of enjoyment or suffering.

Bare thought is not, however, all that is here to be understood. Animals think; but are not, still, created in the image of God. The broad distinction between men and animals is, that the former discern the nature

of moral good and evil, and can therefore be made, and are actually made, subjects of law and moral government; of both which the latter are absolutely incapable.

Even this is not the whole of what is intended, either by Moses or Paul. The knowledge which they consider as comprised in the image of God, is that of a sanctified or virtuous mind; such a mind as Adam possessed at his creation. It is the knowledge possessed by that 'love which rejoiceth in the truth;' which is, of course, unprejudiced and impartial; which allows argument and evidence their true weight; and which therefore perceives and admits truth, especially moral truth, as it is. This, and this only, is the manner in which Adam knew; and, in which, to a considerable extent, every sanctified mind also knows. But this knowledge is, in some respects, essentially different from that possessed by men in, what the Scriptures call, their natural state. 'The natural man,' says St Paul, or as it is rendered by Dr Macknight, 'the animal man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.'

A most important characteristic of this knowledge is, that it discerns the glory and excellence of God, displayed in his works, and especially in his word. By the natural man, every thing of this nature is unknown. To the renewed man, every such thing is real and obvious, whenever the objects in which it exists are presented to his eye, and placed within the grasp of his understanding. This difference does not arise from difference of capacity. The capacity of the natural man is in innumerable instances greater, and his power of discerning stronger, than that of the renewed man. The reason why he views spiritual objects in so imperfect and unhappy a manner, lies supremely in his disposition. His biasses against their true nature are intense, and his views therefore always oblique and delusive. When Adam was created he was a friend of God; saw his character with friendly eyes, and therefore discerned its excellence.

3. That the soul was formed with dispositions or affections.

God himself is possessed of infinite affections; of infinite love to good, and of infinite hatred to evil; and is the subject of infinite joy in himself, his designs, and his works.

In this respect also the soul was formed to resemble its Maker, an endowment of more importance than even knowledge itself. These are the great springs whence proceed all the action of minds; the directory of our contemplation, the cause of our knowledge, and the source of our virtue, usefulness, and enjoyment. Man without them would be a clod, and the world a desert.

4. That the affections of the soul were duly attempered and directed; or, in other words, were virtuous.

In Ephes. iv. 24, St Paul says, 'And that ye put on the new man, which after God' (κατα Θεον, after the image of God) 'is created in righteousness and true holiness.' Holiness is that state of the affections in which the soul loves what God loves. God loves himself, his creation, its interests, and every thing which promotes them; on the contrary, he hates every thing by which they are destroyed or injured. Such is the virtue of the human soul; such its love, such its hatred, whenever it is enstamped with the image of God. Such was the character of Adam at his creation.

5. That the soul had dominion over the world.

God is the infinite Ruler. Man was constituted the ruler of this lower world, with a delegated dominion over all its inhabitants. The government of God is wholly righteous, reasonable, and benevolent. Such only was that which man, at his creation, was disposed to exercise. All creatures, under his government, were uninvaded, uninjured, and happy.

6. That the soul of the first man was possessed of spiritual enjoyment.

By this I intend that enjoyment which springs from affections harmonizing with the conscience, and with each other. In such a soul, every affection is delightful; and all its views, purposes, and pursuits, are just, sincere, benevolent, and lovely. Love, the controlling affection, however various may be its exercises, is only a succession of varied pleasure. Its two great constituents are, delight in the objects beloved, and a desire to do them good. The more excellent, dignified, and enduring these objects are, the more noble, pure, and rapturous, is the enjoyment which it derives from them. Love to God, therefore, transcendently the greatest and most excellent of all objects, is capable of becoming in itself, and in its consequences, higher enjoyment than any other. At the same time, every other affection is, in such a mind, perfectly accordant with this commanding one. Other objects are all duly loved, and every exercise of the heart is attended by the delightful sense of rectitude.

To such a mind also, all the various displays of wisdom, power, and goodness, in the works of creation and providence, are illustrious sources of pleasure. Wherever the eye turns its glance, God is seen; and wherever He is seen, he is seen with delight. The endlessly diversified forms of beauty, grandeur, and glory in the works of God are, and are regarded as being, only exhibitions of infinite excellence, made to delight, improve, and ennoble the intelligent system.

7. That the soul was created immortal.

Both the body and mind of man were originally formed and destined for immortality. After the apostasy, however, the body was sentenced to 'return to the dust;' as being rendered wholly unfit to exist in the new creation. But the soul was left possessed of the never-dying principle, with which it was originally endowed; was incapable of dissolution, and was indestructible, except by the exertions of almighty power.

Thus was man, as he came from the hands of his Maker, a creature endued with high and glorious perfections. To complete his happiness, 'God created him male and female:' and this not only for the multiplication of his species, but also for the interchange of those amiable affections, and those offices of kindness, which arise from the inherent diversity of character in the sexes. In the emphatical language of the Scriptures, they were made 'helpmeets,' for each other; and were designed to furnish, mutually, a social and superior happiness, of which solitude is incapable. A more delicate and beautiful form was united in the woman, to a mind possessing gentler and lovelier affections, a more refined taste, and more elegant sentiments. In the man, a firmer and stronger frame was joined to a mind more robust, more patient of toil, and more equal to difficulties. In each, the other was intended to find, that which was wanting in itself; and to approve, love, and admire, both qualities and actions, of which itself was imperfect-

ly capable; while in their reciprocations of tenderness and good will, each beheld every blessing mightily enhanced, and intensely endeared.

From these considerations are naturally derived the following

REMARKS.

1. How illustrious a being was man, as he came from the hands of his Maker!

With what dignified attributes was he endued! For what high pursuits was he qualified! To what sublime enjoyments was he destined! In him was found, in an important sense, the end of this earthly system. Without man, the world, its furniture, and its inhabitants, would have existed in vain. Whatever skill, power, and goodness were displayed by the creating Hand; there was, before the formation of man, none to understand, admire, love, enjoy, or praise the Creator. The earth was clothed with beauty, the landscape unfolded its delightful scenes, the sky spread its magnificent curtains, the sun 'travelled in the greatness of his strength,' the moon and stars solemnly displayed the glorious wisdom of their Author, without an eye to gaze, or a heart to contemplate. A magnificent habitation was indeed built and furnished, but no tenant was found. Brutes were the only beings which could enjoy at all, and their enjoyment was limited to animal gratification.

But man was separated from all earthly creatures, by being formed an intelligent being. His mind could trace the skill and glory of the Creator in the works of his hands; and from the nature of the work, could understand, admire, and adore the Workman. His thoughts could rise to God, and wander through eternity. The universe was to him a mirror, by which he saw reflected every moment, in every place, and in every form, the beauty, greatness, and excellence of Jehovah. To Him, his affections, and his praises rose, more sweet than the incense of the morning; and made no unhappy harmony with the loftier music of heaven. He was the priest of this great world; and offered the morning and evening sacrifice of thanksgiving for the whole earthly creation. Of this creation he was also the lord; not the tyrant, but the rightful, just, benevolent sovereign. The subjection of the inferior creatures to him was voluntary; and productive of nothing but order, peace, and happiness. With these endowments and privileges, he was placed in paradise, no unhappy resemblance of heaven itself; and surrounded by every thing which was 'good for food, or pleasant to the eye,' or fragrant to the smell. In an atmosphere, impregnated with life; amid streams, in which life flowed; amid fruits, in which life bloomed and ripened; encircled by ever-living beauty and magnificence, peaceful within, safe without, and conscious of immortality; he was destined to labour, only that he might be useful and happy, and to contemplate the wonders of the universe, and worship its glorious Author, as his prime and professional employment. He was an image of the invisible God; created to be like him in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, his most illustrious attributes; and like him, to exercise dominion over the works of his hands.

In this situation also, removed far from death and disease, from sorrow and fear, he was formed for endless improvement. His mind, like that of angels, was capable of continual expansion, refinement, and elevation; and his life, of perpetual exaltation in worth, usefulness, and honour. God was his visitor, angels were his companions.

To complete this system of delight, he was created to be the parent of countless millions, who, like himself, were all to be sinless. They were also to inhabit the same world of peace, life, and happiness; to possess the same immortality, and to share in the same endless enjoyment. At the head of this lower creation, he was to stand and survey this great globe, filled with his own offspring; and to see the whole immense family, like himself, children and heirs of his everlasting love.

2. How greatly has man fallen from his original state.

What proofs of humiliation are visible in every thing found in the present world.

In our bodies, particularly, what seeds of weakness, distress, and decay! The first proofs that we possess life are the cries of pain and suffering, inarticulately uttered by the infant just entered into the world. How often does even that infant agonize and expire in the cradle! If he passes into childhood, how many pains does he undergo; how many fears, how many sorrows! How frequently is he carried, while a child, to the grave. Should he arrive at youth, what a train of new evils is he obliged to encounter. And in how many instances does the canker-worm or the frost nip the blossom, and wither it beneath the fond eye of parental love. Should he become a man, sickness, pain, and sorrow still hunt him through every course of life, and not unfrequently infix their fangs in his heart-strings; while death, always watching for his prey, descends when he is least aware, and seizes, and bears away the miserable victim. Should he live to old age, his strength declines, his face is furrowed with wrinkles, and his head whitened with hoary locks. His body bends towards the earth from which it was taken; and exhausted by suffering, he resigns his breath; and is conveyed to the dark and narrow house, devoured by worms, dissolved by corruption, and changed into his original dust.

His mind, in the meantime, the sport of evil, ungovernable passions, is ignorant, wild, wayward; the seat of a thousand errors, weaknesses, and follies. With its follies, its sins keep at least an equal pace. Selfishness in many forms, all of them odious, distresses the parental eye, even in infancy. In childhood, in youth, in manhood, it is seen in new varieties of operation, and new appearances of deformity. Pride and ambition, avarice and sensuality, pollute and debase the man in early stages of life; and all increase their savage, brutal control, as he advances in his progress. At the same time envy, fraud, deceit, violence, and cruelty, mould him into a monster; and scarcely permit us to believe, that he was once formed in the image of God. Where is now the mild, benevolent, equitable dominion, exercised by our great progenitor over his happy empire? Where the peace between man and the inferior inhabitants of the earth? The chief traces of his footsteps through the animal world, are oppression, blood, and death.

In the moral world, what scenes of pollution, fraud, and tyranny, of war and ravage, are everywhere displayed. What groans of anguish have been heard from one end of heaven to the other, and from the apostasy to the present hour!

In the natural world, what a host of enemies to man are arrayed by famine and disease, the storm, the earth-

quake, and the volcano! Even his breath, his food, his pleasure, are all means of his destruction.

Where is his purity, justice, truth, and good-will? Where his piety, his morning praise, his evening incense? Where his converse with God, his familiarity with angels? Men are now the family of Adam; but how different a family from that which has been described. Were the great ancestor of mankind to rise from the dead and cast his eyes over this earth; what a race of children would he behold. Accompany him in your imagination to the retreats of drunkenness, gluttony, and pollution. Could he believe that the wretches, burrowed in these foul recesses, sprang from him who once offered up the worship of paradise? Enter with him into a hall of justice, and see him ponder in silent amazement the terrible exhibitions of fraud and falsehood, private injustice and personal cruelty. Behold him mark with a failing eye the lowering gloom of the gibbet, the horrid recesses of the gaol, and the felon crimes which they were destined to reward. Follow him to the throne of tyranny, and see his bosom heave with emotions unutterable, while he watches the devastation of human happiness and human hope, accomplished by the iron hand of power; man blasted and withered by its touch, and the fiend himself rioting on sorrow, tears, and death. Finally, adventure with him to the field of battle; and see him tremble and faint at the shouts and groans, at the sight of immeasurable fury, carnage, and woe. How would his heart rend asunder with agony; how would his eyes weep blood, at such a view of this miserable world! at the remembrance, that both the authors and the subjects of these sufferings were his own offspring. Where would he now find his Eden, his virtue, his immortality?

3. How desirable would it be to regain the blessings originally bestowed on man.

The paradisiacal state has been an object of high estimation to all men. Our first parents were wise, virtuous, and happy. They were at peace with God, enjoyed his presence, and received continual communications of his favour. They were companions of angels; and shared their conversation, their friendship, and their joys. Alike were they free from pain, sickness, sorrow, and death; safe from fear and hatred, injustice and cruelty; and superior to meanness, sloth, intemperance, and pollution. They were also immortal; were destined to dwell in a perpetual Eden, were surrounded always by beauty, life, and fragrance; and were employed only in knowing, loving, and enjoying. To regain all these things, would indeed be 'a consummation devoutly to be wished.' But God has offered them all to us; has commanded, has besought us to receive them: and has given his Son to die, that we might obtain the glorious possession. We may therefore regain the blessings of that paradise, the loss of which we so deeply lament, and the splendour of which is at times the delightful theme of our contemplation, and the most fascinating ornament of descriptive song.

The best of its blessings we may in a great measure regain even here. Sin blasted all the bloom and beauty of the primitive state, and changed the garden of God into a desolate wilderness. This happy place was formed to be the residence of virtue; and virtue can again call forth all its glories, even on the face of this dreary world. 'Godliness has the promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come.' The piety, truth, and benevolence which adorned our first parents, would again call down similar blessings from heaven. What a world would this become, if such were again the disposition of man. How transporting a deliverance, to be freed from all the sins and sufferings of this melancholy state; and to enjoy, wherever we roved, an approving conscience, serenity of soul, an unspotted life, kindness interchanged with all men, universal peace, mild and equitable government, and the pure, constant, and delightful worship of the Infinite Benefactor. To escape from our present melancholy, stormy, bloody world, to such a state, would be to quit, for a palace of splendour and delight, the gloom of a vault hung round with midnight, and peopled with corpses; a bedlam, where the eye of frenzy flashed, the tongue vibrated with malice, and chains clanked in dreadful concert to rage and blasphemy; a dungeon haunted with crimes, teeming with curses, filled with fiends in the human shape, and opening its doors only to the gibbet and the grave.

4. How glorious does the Redeemer appear in the contemplation of this subject.

Christ formed our first parents, endowed them with unspotted holiness, and invested them with immortal life. Christ planted Eden for their possession, and placed them in the enjoyment of all its felicity. Christ gave them the dominion of this lower world, and entitled them to the company of the heavenly host. All these blessings they lost by their apostasy; and with their apostasy, the loss also has descended to their posterity. To restore our ruined race to the enjoyment of these blessings, Christ, with infinite compassion, left his own glory, lived in our world a frail suffering man, and died a death of shame and agony.

He who created paradise at first, can create it again. He who gave immortal life and youth; he who communicated spiritual knowledge, refined affections, and spotless holiness to our first parents, can communicate them to us. By creating them at first, he has proved that he is able; by becoming incarnate, living and dying for our sakes, he has proved that he is willing.

For this end he has assumed the government of all things. 'In his fathers house,' he has told us, 'are many mansions.' To that happy residence 'he has gone before, to prepare a place for us,' Nay, he has declared that he will 'create new heavens and a new earth,' for the reception of those who trust in him, and 'love his appearing.' In this new world, he has assured us, 'there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying, nor any more pain: for all these former evil things shall then have passed away.' In this happy region, the 'righteousness,' which the paradise below the sun was destined to reward, 'will dwell for ever.' There the tree of life blossoms, and bears anew; and there immortality flows again in 'the pure river of the water of life.' There 'the sun no more goes down; neither does the moon withdraw itself;' for Jehovah is 'the everlasting light' of his children, and 'their God their glory.' From that delightful world the Redeemer cries, 'Behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me' Oh that every heart present may answer, 'Even so, come Lord Jesus. Amen.'

SERMON XXIII.

THE SOUL NOT MATERIAL.

And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul.—GEN. ii. 7.

IN my last discourse, I considered the creation of man under these two heads: The character of the Creator; and, the nature of the being which was created.

Under the latter head I observed that man, the being which was created, was composed of two entirely distinct parts, commonly termed the body and the soul. Of the latter I also observed, that it was a simple, uncompounded, immaterial substance: being in this respect as well as in others, made in the image or after the likeness of God. This assertion I regard as being the amount of that which is contained in the text. I am well aware that the text itself has been variously construed. Instead, however, of considering these different constructions, I shall attempt to settle the true meaning, by appealing directly to an interpreter whose opinions will not be disputed. The apostle Paul quotes this passage in the following manner: 'For thus it is written, the first man, Adam,' εγενετο εις ψυχην ζωσαν, 'was made, or became a living soul.' This quotation determines, in my view, absolutely, that the text is accurately rendered into our language by the translators.

The doctrine which I consider as contained in the text has also been abundantly disputed. Three entirely different opinions have been formed on this subject.

The first is that which I have already advanced; viz. that man is an immaterial substance, an intelligent, voluntary being; the subject of attributes, the author of actions, and destined to immortality.

The second is, that man is a material, thinking, voluntary being; differing in nothing, but his modification and its effects, from other material substances. Some of those who hold this scheme believe him immortal, while others limit his existence to the present world.

The third is, that man is neither of these, but a mere succession or chain, as the abettors of it express themselves, of ideas and exercises.

That something is true with regard to this subject must be admitted, and that all these schemes cannot be true. I would willingly have avoided the discussion of a subject so metaphysical: but when I observe the importance which it has assumed, in modern times, and especially when I see theological doctrines of very high import, derived from the two last of these schemes as their proper consequences, I feel myself obliged to give the subject a place in this system of discourses.

In the discussion upon which I am entering, I shall pursue the following plan: viz. I shall attempt to disprove the two last of these doctrines; and, in that way, to establish the first. One of the three is undoubtedly true. If the two last are false, the first is, of course, true,

I. Then, I assert that *the soul is not material.*

It will be necessary, in order to exhibit the truth of this proposition in the most convincing light, to prove the falsehood of the opposite doctrine, in all the forms in which it has been maintained. This, therefore, I shall attempt.

1. Atoms in their original state do not think.

Our senses give us the amplest evidence of this fact; so ample, that no man ever disbelieved it who was not an idiot or a maniac. At the same time, the proposition admits of a direct demonstration. Thought is in its nature perfectly simple and indivisible. But if each atom were a thinking being, millions of thoughts would exist in such a compound of them as man.

2. Atoms do not think in any aggregate, or under any organization.

(1.) That a mere accumulation of atoms cannot think, unless the original atoms were possessed of thought, is self-evident. If they do not think when separate, we are intuitively certain, that mere juxtaposition cannot give them the power of thought.

(2.) Atoms cannot derive thought from any relative position. Suppose one atom placed above, beneath, or on either side of another; it is intuitively certain, that, if they did not think before they were thus posited, neither of these positions, nor any other, can have the least influence towards producing thought in either of them. What is thus true of two, is equally true of every supposable number.

3. Matter cannot derive thought from attenuation.

The attenuation of matter is made up wholly of the distance, and the minuteness of its particles. That distance has no influence on this subject, has been already shown. That the minuteness of the corpuscles has no influence on it, is clear from this fact; that the original atoms, which have been proved to be unpossessed of thought, are the most minute divisions of matter which are possible. That the distance and minuteness compounded do not influence it, is certain, because, if thought depends on neither of these, it cannot depend on both united: for nothing, repeated ever so often, is still nothing. It is also evident to our senses from the facts, that air, heat, and light, approximate no nearer to thought than stones, lead, or earth. When therefore men speak of the soul as a material substance, eminently refined, tenuous, subtile, or ethereal, they speak without meaning: for all these are still the descriptions of mere attenuations of matter, or matter attenuated; and it is clearly certain, that no attenuation of matter can have the least efficacy towards enabling it to think.

4. Thought cannot be the result of the chemical properties of matter.

It is not inherent in any of the elements which chemistry has hitherto discovered. All these are mere collections of atoms; and are therefore absolutely incogitative; no one of their attributes having the least resemblance to thought.

It cannot be the result of their operations. The ele-

ments of matter operate by their powers or attributes. These powers, by whatever names they are called, and however diversified in their operations, are only two; attraction and repulsion. But it is certain, that the only influence which these powers can have on corpuscles must be originally contained in the powers themselves. But nothing is more certain, than that there is no resemblance to thought, either in the operation of drawing one particle of matter to another, or in that of forcing one particle of matter from another; nor in the capacity of thus drawing or being drawn, nor in that of thus repelling or being repelled. But if the powers themselves, and the particles in which they inhere, possess no resemblance of thought, they can never communicate thought to each other. What they have not they cannot give.

Farther, the only possible results of chemical attraction and repulsion arise solely from motion, relative position, condensation, and attenuation. But it has already been shown, that neither of the three last can have the least influence towards enabling matter to think. Every result of chemical powers and operations hitherto explained, has been satisfactorily explained to be the effect of attraction and repulsion; nor is there the least reason to believe that there is any other chemical power.

5. Thought is not the result of motion.

Motion is a change of place or relative position, or a continued succession of such changes. It has been already shown, that no relative position can have any possible influence towards the production of thought; and that particles, if not originally cogitative, cannot become so by any possible relative position; nor by any distance from each other, whether greater or less. Of course, it is certain, that no change of position, which is nothing but the mere assumption of a new position, or a variation of distance, and therefore that no succession of such changes can have any influence; for motion is nothing but this succession of changes. Accordingly, a cannon ball approximates no nearer to thought by moving at the rate of four hundred and twenty miles an hour, than when lodged in the chamber of a cannon; the air, when moving with the swiftness of sound, than when at rest; the electrical fluid, or the rays of light, than brass, marble, or dust.

As motion cannot contribute at all to thought, so no combination of motions, however complicated and diversified, can have any such efficacy. Organic motion, therefore, though so multiform and mysterious as to perplex our minds, and to leave us in a sense lost, when contemplating it, in admiration, being only a combination of simple motions, each of which has no tendency towards the production of thought, has not in any degree this tendency, however diversified, or however mysteriously combined.

6. Thought cannot be superadded to matter, so as in any sense to render it true, that matter can become cogitative.

If thought be superadded to matter, the thought must be first created, and exist separately and independently of the matter. Should it be said that the creation of an attribute, without any subject or being in which it inheres, is an absurdity: I readily grant it; but it is an absurdity, of which the persons whom I oppose are the authors. They must therefore charge it to themselves, and not to me. But the thought or consciousness existing by itself and independently, before it is annexed to the matter, must exist also in the same independent manner afterwards. It may be annexed or joined to the matter; but it cannot be inherent in it. The thought may exist within or without the matter as an appendage; but it is not, and cannot be, a property or attribute of the matter. The matter was perfect in all its essential properties, antecedently to the annexation of thought; and thought was not one of those properties. Thought is no more one of the properties of matter, after being annexed to it, than it was before; and if separated from it again, will leave the matter still perfect, or possessed of all its properties. Before the thought was annexed to it, it could not be truly said that the matter was cogitative; it can be no more truly said now, after it is annexed, for the matter itself thinks no more than before. The supposition, therefore, that thought may be superadded to matter, is a palpable absurdity.

7. This doctrine intends, either that the properties of matter and mind are the same; or that the substratum of mind is the same with the substratum of matter; and in either intention is an absurdity.

That thought, volition, and motivity, the properties of mind, are the same thing with solidity, extension, and mobility, the properties of matter, is a proposition which contradicts intuitive certainty, and is therefore intuitively false. The substrata, in both cases, are absolutely unknown by us. But it is a palpable absurdity to say, that an unknown thing in one case, a thing of which we have no conception, is the same with the thing in another case, equally unknown. I grant that a proposition concerning things unknown may be true, but it can never be known by us to be true. Ideas which we have not, we cannot possibly compare: and therefore can never discern whether they agree or disagree. To form propositions about them, therefore, so long as this is the fact, is absurd and ridiculous. But if both these propositions are absurdities, then the proposition that mind is material, is also an absurdity: for it is formed either of one or both of these.

The only mode of legitimate argumentation on the subject, considered in this manner, is the following: Mind and matter present to us two totally diverse sets of properties. The substratum in which these properties co-exist is, in each case, rationally regarded as the cause of this difference. The properties (you will observe, I speak of essential properties only) are commonly and justly considered as a part, and an inseparable part of the nature or constitution of the substratum in which they are inherent? not as merely annexed, or arbitrarily adjoined to the substratum; but as inseparable from it in such a sense, that the destruction of the properties would be also the destruction of the substratum. Thus, if matter should cease to be extended, solid, or movable, it would cease to be matter. Thus, if minds ceased to be perceiving, conscious, voluntary, and active, they would cease to be minds. This part of their nature, therefore, which we call their properties, is so absolutely dependent on the constitution of the substratum, or that part of their nature which lies beyond our reach, that both necessarily exist or cease to exist together. The substratum is therefore, by its constitution, the necessary and inseparable cause of the properties; that is, the properties are what they are, because the substratum is what it is. As therefore the effects are totally unlike, it is rationally argued that the causes are unlike, from the well known and intui-

tive truth, that unlike effects cannot proceed from the same cause.

8. The existence of the substratum itself cannot be proved.

This truth is so well known to every metaphysician, and even to every person tolerably acquainted with logic, as customarily taught in schools of science, that it would seem hardly to demand an illustration. Still it may be proper to observe, that as this supposed substratum, if it exist, is a thing of which we do not, and cannot, form a single idea; we can, of course, neither affirm nor deny any thing concerning it, with any possible knowledge, that either the affirmation or negation is true. All that we can do is to render one or the other in a certain degree probable. Of course, every discussion and every doctrine, tending to establish the materiality of the soul, is founded originally in uncertainty, and absolutely incapable of proof; for if it cannot be proved that such a substratum exists, it plainly cannot be proved that the soul is such a substratum, connected with its properties.

I have hitherto considered this doctrine as it is presented to us by reason. I shall now proceed to examine the account which is given of it in the Scriptures.

Here I observe,

1. That all other thinking beings, of which we have any knowledge, are exhibited in the Scriptures as being immaterial.

Beside ourselves we have no knowledge of any other thinking beings, except God and angels. Both these are expressly declared to be 'spirits' in the Scriptures, in a plain and direct distinction from matter. That God is an immaterial being, will not be questioned. That angels are immaterial, as represented in the Scriptures, is so obvious, that so far as I know, it never has been questioned. Dr Priestley, the principal modern champion for the materiality of the soul, was so sensible that this is the scriptural exhibition of this subject, that he has laboured hard to disprove the existence of any such beings as angels; because he saw their existence, as separate spirits, would prove an insurmountable obstacle to the establishment of his scheme; and because he thought it easier to disprove their existence absolutely, than to evince that they were material. In doing the former, he had, however, to face a great multitude of express assertions contained in the Bible, declaring the existence of such beings; and a multitude of historical accounts, affirming in the same direct manner their character, stations, and employments; together with their appearance and agency, often repeated in the affairs of this world. If he thought this the easier task of the two, as he evidently did, it is clear that the latter, viz. the proof that angels are material, was in his view a task absolutely hopeless. In truth, every thing attributed to angels in the Scriptures, refutes and destroys every supposition of their materiality.

But, if God, if angels are thinking beings, and at the same time immaterial, the argument from analogy strongly leads us to conclude, that all other thinking beings are immaterial also. Nor is there one valid objection against the immateriality of the human soul which will not lie with equal force against that of angels, and that of the Creator. It is true, neither of these beings is united to a body; but both God and angels are possessed of the power of acting upon matter, and controlling it to a far greater extent than we. This being admitted, as it plainly must be without a question, the only real difficulty concerning the connexion of soul and body is removed, and there can remain no solid objection against the immateriality of the soul, derived from this source.

2. The souls of men are in the Scriptures declared to be immaterial.

The Scriptures exhibit this doctrine in two ways;—in express assertions, and in facts.

(1.) In express assertions.

In Psalm xxxi. 5, David says, 'Into thine hand I commit my spirit.' These words were repeated by our Saviour on the cross, immediately before he expired. In the same manner St Stephen, immediately before his death, prayed to Christ in these words; 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit,' That both these forms of phraseology have a real and important meaning, cannot be disputed; nor that those who uttered them understood what that meaning was, and used them with the most exact propriety: one of them being Christ; the other two, David, an inspired prophet, and Stephen, 'a man full of the Holy Ghost.' Let me then ask, what is this meaning? What does the word spirit, in these passages, signify? Certainly it does not signify the body. It will not be pretended that this can be the meaning. Much less does it signify that organization of the body, which Dr Priestley considers as being especially the soul. Certainly it does not intend the breath; for it cannot be supposed that either of these persons wished to commend to God the last portion of air which he breathed. What then does it intend? There is no other alternative but this; that it intends the immaterial soul; the thinking, conscious being.

This is completely evinced by that remarkable phraseology, with which the Hebrews customarily declared the death of a man; 'He gave up the ghost.' That this phrase denoted, in the mouths of those who used it, the yielding up of the immaterial spirit into the hands of God cannot be doubted, unless it be voluntarily doubted. Should it be doubted, Solomon has determined the point beyond a debate. 'Then,' says he (that is, immediately after death), 'shall the dust,' or body, 'return to the earth as it was, and the spirit into the hands of God who gave it'. Here the whole Hebrew doctrine is declared on this subject, and the distinction between the soul and the body completely established: for of the one it is asserted, that it 'shall return to the earth; and of the other, 'that it shall return to God.' As the dust or body contains all that is material in man: so it is certain that all this, after death, 'returns to the earth.' But it is equally certain that 'the spirit' does not return to the earth, but 'unto God;' and is therefore something totally distinct from the body, or the material part of man. This is, therefore, unquestionably, the true meaning of the Hebrew phrase, 'giving up the ghost;' and of these expressions of our Saviour, David, and Stephen. This phraseology, it should be remembered, is always used by the Spirit of truth; and is chosen by him to convey to us, just ideas concerning this subject. It is therefore really just, and is exactly expressive of that which is true.

In Isa. xxxi. 3, the prophet says, 'For the Egyptians are men, and not God; and their horses flesh, and not spirit.' Here the distinction between flesh, or body, and spirit is so plainly, as well as intentionally marked, that the passage can need no comment.

In Gen. xxv. 8, it is said, 'Then Abraham gave up the ghost—and was gathered to his people.' This, by a thoughtless reader, may be supposed to mean, that Abraham was buried with his fathers. But this is an entire misconception: for the fathers of Abraham were buried several hundred miles from him; some in Chaldea, and Terah, in Haran, in Mesopotamia; whereas Abraham was buried in the cave of Macpelah, in Canaan. The true meaning of the passage is, that he was gathered to the assembly of the blessed, and particularly to those good men among his ancestors, who were united to that assembly. In this manner the prophets themselves explain it. Job says, 'The rich man shall lie down, but he shall not be gathered.' Christ, in Isa. xlix. 5, says, 'Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord.' In the same manner is the phrase explained by Jeremiah and Ezekiel. But the body of Abraham was changed to dust, in the cave of Macpelah: while something beside that body, that is, the immaterial spirit, was gathered to this divine assembly. Accordingly, Christ announces to his disciples, that they shall 'sit down in the kingdom of God, with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob;' concerning each of whom it was also said, 'that he was gathered unto his people.' Accordingly also, God says to Moses, 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.' Christ alleges these words as unquestionable proof of the ἀναστασις, or future separate existence of spirits; and subjoins to his proof this unanswerable argument, which the Sadducees, the materialists of that day, durst not attempt to dispute; 'for God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.' In other words, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, were living beings, when this declaration was made by God to Moses.

Accordingly also, Christ, in the parable of Dives and Lazarus, informs us, that Lazarus was, after his death, 'carried by angels to Abraham's bosom:' Lazarus being gathered to his people, as Abraham was to his; and both being united to the assembly of the blessed.

This parable is itself the most explicit declaration of the doctrine for which I contend. In it Dives and Lazarus, are both asserted to have died, and to have entered the future world as separate spirits, while the 'five brethren' of Dives were living, and of course, while their bodies were both masses of putrefaction in this world. No exhibition can be clearer, or more unexceptionable than this.

It has however been objected, that this is a parabolic representation; and that therefore it is not to be considered as decisive on this point. Nothing could more strongly prove the decisive influence of this parable on the question, in the eye of the objector himself, than his recourse to this pitiful subterfuge. It is acknowledged on all hands, that the truth of a parable does not demand the reality of the persons or the historical facts which it contains. But that the doctrines contained in it are equally true with those of the literal texts, must be admitted by every man who does not choose to say, that Christ in his parables is a teacher of falsehood. The doctrine, therefore, that spirits exist in a separate state, is as certainly declared here as it can be by words.

To the thief, just ready to expire on the cross, our Saviour said, 'To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.' The body of the thief was that day either on the cross, or in the grave. Of course, his soul or spirit was that which went to paradise with the Redeemer. The objectors to this doctrine have attempted to escape from the irresistible force of this text by two comments, still more pitiful than the subterfuge above mentioned. The first is that the word, 'to-day,' refers to the time of our Saviour's speaking, and not to the time when the thief was to be with him in paradise. On this I shall only ask my opponent, Whether he really believes that our Saviour said thus: I speak to thee to-day, and not yesterday, nor to-morrow? The other explanation is, that as in the eternity of God one day is the same thing as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day, Christ meant by the word 'to-day' the same thing with that eternity. On this comment I shall only ask, Whether the dying Saviour spoke to the dying man, language which he intended he should understand, and which he could understand; or whether he spoke to him language which he could not possibly understand, and by which Christ knew he would certainly be deceived?

St Paul, in 2 Cor. v. 6, says, 'Therefore we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord. We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.' In this passage the apostle declares expressly, that to be 'at home in the body' is to be 'absent from the Lord;' and that to be 'absent from the body' is to be 'present with the Lord.' But according to the scheme which I am opposing, the body is the whole man: and therefore, if the man is ever to be present with the Lord, his body must be present; and if his body be absent, the man must be absent also; in direct contradiction to the assertion of the apostle. To be absent from the body is, on this plan, phraseology without meaning; because there is nothing but the body. This passage is therefore an explicit declaration, that man is something beside body; distinct from it; capable of being separated, or absent from it; and in consequence of this separation, of being 'present with the Lord.' This something also he elsewhere declares to be conscious, and capable of enjoyment; for he says, that to be thus present with Christ is a far better state than the present. This something, therefore, thus capable of being absent from the body, is an immaterial spirit: for beside body or matter, my opponents will agree that there is nothing except spirit.

(2.) The Scriptures give an unanswerable proof by facts, that the soul is immaterial.

The Revelation of St John furnishes many specimens of this nature. In the fourth chapter of this prophecy, he saw 'four and twenty elders,' surrounding the throne of the Majesty in the heavens. In the seventh chapter he informs us, that he 'beheld a great multitude which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palms in their hands,' uniting with the angels, the elders, and the four living ones, in the worship of God, and the everlasting ascription of praise and glory to his name. Upon this he asked the angel interpreter who these persons were? The angel informed him, that they were those 'who came out of great tribulation, and who had washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb; that therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple; that they shall neither hunger nor thirst, nor suffer any more; but shall be fed by the Lamb with living bread, and led unto fountains of living waters.' No ingenuity

of interpretation, no skill at evasion will enable any man to satisfy even himself, if he will take all the parts of these accounts together, that they can mean any thing less or more, than that these persons were all separate spirits. Elders are men; those who are redeemed by the blood of the Lamb are men, and can be no other than men. Men who are around the throne of God, and 'before his throne;' who are 'brought out of great tribulation;' who 'serve him day and night in his temple; who 'hunger, thirst, and suffer no more;' who 'feed on the bread, and drink the water of life;' and who sustain all these characters, and do all these things, while the world yet remains, and many ages before its termination, are men in the heavens. They are therefore the bodies of men, or their separate spirits. I leave my antagonists to choose which side of the alternative they please.

But if a doubt can remain, St John has himself settled it; for in the sixth chapter and ninth verse, he says, 'And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held; and white robes were given unto every one of them.' The like phraseology is also used, Rev. xx. 4. Now let me ask, what was it which John saw? That they were persons, or intelligent beings, cannot be doubted; that they have been once slain, and are therefore men, is equally certain; that they are glorified persons is also certain; that they are 'souls,' or separate spirits is certain; because the apostle has said so, and the Spirit of God has said so. It is therefore true. It is also certain, from the whole account given by the Scriptures at large concerning this subject; for we know, 'that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.' Should it be said, that these things passed in vision, and that they were not real exhibitions of facts; the book being a symbolical representation, and not a real account of facts: I answer, that I have no difficulty in granting it; although I have not a doubt, that every one of the things which I have mentioned, was strictly a matter of fact. At the same time, the argument stands on the same basis upon either scheme. If the representation be considered as strictly symbolical, still the doctrines which it contains are all exactly true. This is all for which I contend; and this must be conceded by my opponents, unless they are willing to charge God with having taught falsehood to mankind.

In exact accordance with these observations, St Paul observes, 1 Thess. iv. 14, 'For if we believe that Jesus died, and rose again; even so them also who sleep in Jesus, will God bring with him;' that is, when 'the Lord shall descend,' as he mentions in the next verse but one, 'from heaven with a shout,' with the innumerable company of angels; God shall bring with him to this world the spirits of just men made perfect, and re-unite their bodies to them; and they, and those followers of Christ who shall 'remain alive' at the end of the world, 'shall be caught up together to meet the Lord in the air.' A great multitude of these very persons are those glorified saints, whom John saw when he was admitted to that happy world.

I shall not insist on the facts specified in the parable of Dives and Lazarus, as an example under this head; although I think they might be fairly insisted on as furnishing such an example. Instead of dwelling on this, I shall proceed to another specimen, which is certainly secured, if in the view of prejudice any thing can be secured, from evasion and cavil.

When Christ was transfigured on the Mount, there were present with him Moses and Elias, 'who appeared in glory, and talked with him, and spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem. The body of Elias was changed, when he was conveyed to heaven in a chariot of fire. But the body of Moses was buried by the hand of God 'in a valley in the land of Moab, over against Beth-Peor;' and will rise hereafter with other bodies of the saints, at the general resurrection. Yet Moses was actually on this Mount in company with Elias. If Moses when he thus appeared was not a separate spirit, I leave it to my antagonists to tell us what he was.

Thus I have summarily considered this subject, as it is presented to us both by Scripture and reason. If the things which I have said have the same weight and conclusiveness in the minds of others which they have in my own, it must be admitted by them as unquestionably evident from both sources of proof, not only that the soul is not material, but that the doctrine of its materiality is sustained by no solid argument whatever. Reason furnishes none: the Scriptures furnish none. I cannot help adding, that had the doctrine been considered by itself only, and not been thought necessary for the support of some system, it would probably never have been adopted by any man living. I know not that it was ever adopted by itself, or on account of any evidence which was supposed to attend it, when considered singly, or as unconnected with other doctrines. It seems always to have been taken up, either as subsidiary to the support of other parts of a system, or as necessarily flowing from other doctrines, considered as already established, and as being inconsistent in themselves with the immateriality of the soul. Dr Priestley appears to have adopted this scheme for the former of these reasons; viz. because he thought the materiality of the soul necessary to the support of those parts of his system, which respect the character of the Redeemer. This at least is the fact, if I understand his own language. Atheists have embraced this doctrine, because they were driven to it by the fundamental principles of their system. There is always a rational suspicion concerning the soundness and evidence of doctrines taken up on these grounds.

A single observation shall conclude this Discourse.

We see here, one remarkable instance of the agreement of the Scriptures with common sense.

All nations have united in the opinion, that the human soul is an immaterial being, wholly distinct from the body. I do not intend, that ignorant nations have formed a system or a science on this subject; nor that a savage could correctly define or explain his views of it, so as to leave them unobjectionable in the eye of a philosopher. But I intend, that immateriality, and distinction from the body, are essential parts of all his opinions concerning the soul. When I mention this as the doctrine of all nations, I would be understood to mean, not that there are no exceptions, but that the existing exceptions are, at least so far as hitherto known, few and insignificant with respect to this question. The aborigines of this country, for example, believed that, although they buried the body of a friend, and left it to moulder into dust, the friend, the man, lived still, and went to a happier world. This man, therefore, was not the body, for that was in the grave; but was an immaterial and

separate spirit; the living, thinking thing, which controlled and actuated that body.

Exactly the same in substance, and altogether more perfect in manner and degree, is the doctrine of the Scriptures. This harmony between the Scriptures and common sense was indeed to be presumed; for God is the origin of both. Hence in all cases, so far as the views of common sense extend, they are exactly accordant with the Scriptures. Philosophy has opposed he Scriptures often: common sense never. Accordingly 'the common people' of the Jewish nation 'gladly heard Christ,' in the great body of instances, and his apostles after him; in spite of all their prejudices, and the influence of their rulers; and often awed those rulers, so as to restrain them from the violence which they intended. On the other hand, the Scribes and Pharisees, and still more the Sadducees, rejected their doctrines almost absolutely, notwithstanding the confirmation of them by their own Scriptures. In the same manner have the common people in Christian countries generally, when left to themselves, adhered to the genuine scheme of the gospel: while the numerous heresies which have disturbed the church, and misled mankind, have been almost without an exception, the offspring of philosophy.

SERMON XXIV.

THE SOUL NOT A CHAIN OF IDEAS AND EXERCISES.

And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul.—Gen. ii. 7.

In my last Discourse, I proposed to consider the nature of the human soul. Concerning this subject I remarked, that there were three entirely different opinions.

The first of these, in the order in which they were then mentioned, is, That man is an immaterial substance, an intelligent, voluntary being; the subject of attributes, the author of actions, and destined to immortality.

The second is, That man is a material, thinking, voluntary being; differing in nothing, but his modification and its effects, from other material substances. Some of those who hold this scheme believe him immortal, while others limit his existence to the present world.

The third is, That man is neither of these, but a mere succession or chain, as the abettors of it express themselves, of ideas and exercises.

In discussing this subject, I proposed the following plan, viz. to prove the first of these doctrines, by disproving the two last: observing, that as one of the three is unquestionably true, if the two are false, the first is true of course.

The second, which asserts the soul to be material, I then considered at length.

I shall now proceed to the consideration of the third, which asserts, That the soul is a mere succession, or chain, of ideas and exercises.

Before I commence the direct arguments against this doctrine in form, it will be proper to say something on the principal reason alleged against the reception of the first of these schemes; or that which I consider as the true one, and made particularly the foundation of the reception of the third. This reason, so far as I have been informed of it, (and I have heard it alleged by the ablest philosopher among all those whom I have known to adopt this scheme, on this side of the Atlantic,) is the following: that we can form no conception of any thing in ourselves, beyond our ideas and exercises. Of these we are conscious and certain; but of a supposed substance in which these are inherent, a cause whence they proceed, an agent who is the author of them, we have no conception. This argument, reduced to a general form, will stand thus: That nothing exists, of which we have no conception. For undoubtedly, if the argument is conclusive, or has weight, when alleged against the existence of man as an agent, substance, or cause; it will have the same weight or conclusiveness, against the existence of every other agent, cause, or substance; and, in a word, against the existence of every thing of which we cannot form a conception.

Let us now briefly consider the length to which we shall necessarily be carried by the adoption of this supposed principle.

Of God, the original existence, from whom all things else are derived, it is said in the Scriptures, (and Reason subjoins her fullest attestation to what is said) 'Canst thou by searching find out God; canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?' 'It,' that is, this subject, 'is high as heaven, what canst thou do? deeper than hell, what canst thou know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea.' Concerning the omnipresence and omniscience of this great Being, David exclaims, 'Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it.' According to the above-mentioned principle, all that which we cannot understand concerning God, has no existence, and must stand for nothing. But how little do we understand concerning God: particularly, of the nature of that exalted Being: his influence as a cause, and his mode of operating. To apply the argument to the case in hand: it is, undoubtedly, at least as difficult to conceive of an Infinite agent as of a finite one. If then we are to deny the existence of a finite agent, because we can form no conception of the substance of such a being, or the modes in which he operates, or the power which he possesses of producing effects; then we must also deny the existence of an Infinite agent, for exactly the same reason; since it is perfectly plain, that we can no more form any conception of these things in Him.

Nor shall we have any happier success in our inquiries concerning attributes and operations. God styles himself merciful, gracious, true, faithful, and just; and we uniformly attribute to him mercy, grace, wisdom, truth,

faithfulness, and justice. These names are supposed to stand for certain things which they indicate; things which in fact exist. In the same manner also, they are considered by God himself, as is evident from this plain reason; that he adopts them to express his views to mankind, as they adopt them to express theirs to each other; and does not indicate what, if the case were otherwise, veracity plainly demands; that he uses them in a manner diverse from that in which they are used by men. What then is the meaning of these words? What, for example, is Truth in God? There are but two answers which can be given to the question. One is, that he has invariably spoken truth; and the other, that there is in him a cause, disposition, or propensity, which induces or inclines him to speak truth. It hardly needs to be observed, that the former of these is very rarely intended, when we speak of the veracity of God; and the latter, almost always. As this cannot but be admitted by every man, so it is expressly declared in many parts of the Scriptures. St Paul, speaking concerning the oath of God to Abraham, says, that 'it was impossible for God to lie.' Now it is perfectly evident, that the mere fact that God has invariably spoken truth heretofore, infers not in any degree an impossibility that he should lie hereafter. All which can be said concerning this fact is, that it gives us satisfactory reason to conclude that he will not. The impossibility of his speaking falsehood is supposed by us to exist, where it must necessarily exist, if at all, in the cause which induces him to speak truth; that is, in the moral attribute of his nature, commonly called Truth or Veracity. If there be nothing in his nature which, as a cause, influences him to speak truth; then his speaking truth heretofore has been, and his speaking truth hereafter, if he should in fact speak it, will be, a mere contingency. If then 'it is impossible for God to lie;' it is so for this reason only, that there is in his nature a cause which invariably produces truth in him, as its proper and uniform effect; viz. the moral attribute of truth or veracity.

But of this cause, what conception are we able to form? Plainly, none at all. Its effects are all that we know; and from these only, or from its connexion with other moral attributes, do we argue even its existence. Shall we then deny this attribute to God, and say that all which we mean, and all which he means, when he is called a God of truth, is, that he has invariably spoken truth hitherto? There was a period in duration when he had not spoken at all; because there was no being beside himself, and therefore none to whom he could speak. But will any man say he was not then as truly and entirely as at any period afterwards, a God of truth.

Nor shall we be materially more successful in our inquiries concerning operations, than concerning attributes and agents. Christ declares that every man who 'sees the kingdom of God, must be born again of the Spirit of God.' But what conception are we able to form of regeneration, beyond the mere fact? Christ himself teaches us in his allusion to the wind, in the same discourse, that we are unconscious alike of the manner in which, and the Agent by whom, it is produced. Shall we then deny the fact, that man is thus regenerated? What is true of the attribute of truth, thus considered, and of the operation by which the new birth is thus formed in man, is equally true of other attributes and other operations. Universally, substance, causation, and *modus operandi*, lie wholly beyond our reach. But shall we on this account deny the facts; or assert that there are no causes to produce them? In the former case, we shall annihilate the universe at once; and in the latter, pronounce every fact to be a mere contingency.

Thus it appears, that the general argument on which the scheme concerning the human soul, opposed in this discourse, is founded, does not contribute, even in the remotest manner, to support it. It appears, also, that, according to this argument, the very fundamental principles of all science must be given up, as a collection of palpable absurdities.

Having premised these things, I shall now proceed to offer some direct arguments against this scheme.

1. It is directly contrary to the natural conceptions of mankind, and is therefore false.

Every man living, naturally and originally conceives, that he himself is a being, a substance, an agent; immediately the subject of his own thoughts, and the cause and author of his volitions and actions. By his preceding thoughts, volitions, and actions, he feels conscious to himself that he influences, in a great variety of ways, those which succeed; and that by his past and present conduct he so influences his future conduct, that it would never be what it is, but for such influence. At the same time he is equally conscious, that he was the subject of past thoughts, and the author of past conduct, during a period which he denominates *his life*. This he considers himself as knowing, by means of the evidence termed remembrance; and regards himself as having had, from the utmost limit of that period, a continued being. This he witnesses every day by saying, 'I was the subject of such and such thoughts, and the author of such and such conduct and designs, at such and such times:' denoting that the something which he calls 'I,' and which he considers as a living, acting existence, was in being at these several times, and has had a continued being to the present time. He does not say, 'Such an idea existed at such a time; such a volition, such an exercise or action:' but that 'I,' a certain something, totally distinct from the idea or the exercise, 'was the subject of that idea or exercise, the author of it; the agent by whom it was performed, or brought to pass.' Whether this be not the only course of thinking adopted by us with respect to this subject, I appeal to every member of this assembly to decide: for he will find the proof complete in his own mind. This mode of thinking is so natural and necessary to man, that no other mode can, without great labour and pains-taking, be pursued for any length of time by any man; if, indeed, it can be thus pursued at all.

But the mode of thinking, natural to man, was constituted by God himself, and inwrought in our very nature. If then this mode is erroneous, God has produced the error by his own creative act; and is himself the author of a standing, universal delusion, of which man is the subject always: not by any bias of inclination, but by the original constitution of his nature. Is such conduct reconcileable with the Divine character; with that perfect sincerity, with that infinite love of truth, which on the best grounds we attribute to our Maker? If by his own voluntary act he deludes us in this instance, and necessitates us to be deluded; is it not rationally to be supposed, that he may delude us in any and every other?

Farther: The real works of God, whatever they are,

are undoubtedly the best and most perfect displays of his character. When, therefore, intelligent creatures conceive of his works as they really are; they conceive of *Him*, the author of them, in the manner most honourable to himself, and most agreeable to his pleasure. For such conceptions, then, he undoubtedly formed them. Accordingly, if they exercise their faculty of understanding, and employ their powers of conceiving, in the manner in which they were constituted, faithfully, and without negligence; their conceptions, it ought to be presumed, will be right and true, so far as they extend. Their conceptions may be very few, but they will not be necessarily erroneous. They may mistake, as they must be ignorant with regard to things beyond the limits of their capacity; but their original mode of conceiving cannot be supposed to lead them of course to misconception. If the contrary be true, then God has, by the constitution of their minds, led them necessarily to misconceive of his works; and to regard him as having made, not the things which he has really made, but totally other things; and necessarily to conceive of him in a totally other light, than that in which he would be exhibited by the real works of his hands. In this case, they are prevented from knowing his real character by his works, the only medium through which it can be known at all; and are led to form a false character of him, from that constitution which he has given to their minds.

This argument is not a little illustrated by the nature of language. Language was originally given to mankind by God, as the medium of communicating their thoughts to each other. It is, therefore, unquestionably a just and true medium of communication. This is farther proved by the fact, that he has himself used it to communicate his own thoughts to mankind; and used it in exactly the same manner, in which it is customarily used by them. But all languages are formed on the scheme of the existence and agency of real beings, called men. Such beings, particularly, are denoted in all languages by the personal pronouns. Each of these expresses a being, an agent, who thinks and acts; and who is uniformly spoken of as a thinking, acting being; the subject of qualities and powers, and the author of consequent actions. Every man uses language in this manner. In the same manner God uses the language of men; and not only speaks of *himself* as an existing living agent, thinking and acting in such and such manners; but of men, also, as existing, thinking, and acting, as really as himself. To this scheme every part of language is so conformed, that no man can possibly discourse, even for a few minutes, in such a manner as to conform his language to the scheme which I am opposing. The very abettors of it are obliged, in spite of their philosophy, to speak in the same manner with that of other men; and must form a new language, if they would discourse in a manner accordant with their philosophy.

That language is truly expressive of the manner in which men really think, cannot be questioned. Men, therefore, unquestionably think, and ever have thought, in the manner thus clearly exhibited by the very nature of their language. As this language was originally communicated, and has since been extensively used, by God himself, it is rationally concluded, that the thoughts which it expresses are just and true.

2. Attributes cannot be conceived to exist independently of substances, or of something in which they inhere.

No man conceives that extension, solidity, and mobility, make up what he calls matter; but all men regard matter as being an extended, solid, movable something; which something is entirely distinct from these attributes, and is the subject in which they are inherent. By the abettors of this scheme, it is thought to be an objection against the existence of substance, that we cannot conceive of its nature. Let them try whether they can form a conception of an idea, possessing an independent existence; of consciousness, without a being to be conscious; of an exercise, without any thing exercised, or without a subject of that exercise. If they can form distinct conceptions of this kind, they must undoubtedly be pronounced to possess minds of a very peculiar structure.

3. This scheme destroys personal identity.

An idea is a mere event, having a momentary existence, and then perishing for ever. Should another idea afterward exist, exactly resembling it in every thing but the period in which it exists, it would not, and could not be the same; but would differ from it, in consequence of being separated from it by time, just as if the two ideas were to co-exist, and were separated from each other by place and number. As we could not say in the latter case, that the two ideas were but one or the same: so we could no more truly say this in the former case. An example will make this subject perfectly familiar. Two equal parts of space, separated from each other by intervening space, are numerically different, and cannot be said, with even the appearance of truth, to be the same: but are intuitively discerned to be distinct from each other. In the same manner, two equal parts of duration separated by intervening duration, are intuitively discerned not to be the same; but are perfectly distinct from each other. The hour between eleven and twelve which existed yesterday, cannot re-exist to-day, or hereafter; but has perished for ever; and cannot be recalled even by God himself, since its re-existence would involve a contradiction. In the same manner it involves a contradiction to suppose, that an idea which existed yesterday should re-exist to-day. On this plan, therefore, the soul of man has no continued existence, except for an indivisible moment; and is not the same thing which it was the preceding hour, day, or year; but has varied and become an absolutely new soul, through every moment which has passed since it was created; and will continue to be a new thing, every moment throughout eternity.

Should it be alleged, that personal identity consists in consciousness; that present or future ideas may be attended with a consciousness of the existence of those which are past, and that thus identity may be preserved: I answer, that Bishop Berkeley has demonstrated, and any man of reflection may easily perceive the demonstration, that personal identity does not, and cannot, consist in consciousness. Consciousness instead of being personal identity, is only the evidence of it; as may be easily and unanswerably proved. But no evidence can exist of that which is not. As in the case supposed, therefore, there is no such identity in fact, no evidence of it can exist.

4. According to this scheme, it follows, that there is nothing which can be punished or rewarded by God.

According to the Scriptures, God will reward and

punish that and that only which is the subject of guilt; and according both to the Scriptures and common sense, this is the only equitable mode of administration. But the guilt or the virtue, if either be imputable to a mere idea or exercise, is imputable only to those ideas and exercises which existed at the time when the guilt or the virtue existed. But these, even if we should allow them to be capable of punishment or reward, have all perished before the day of trial, and can never exist again. That part of the chain of ideas and exercises which will exist at the judgment, will have begun to exist after the day of probation is ended, and cannot be chargeable with guilt which existed before themselves existed. These very ideas also will perish before the punishment will be begun, and will not be the ideas actually punished. Other ideas, not even then in existence, but which will have begun to exist after the trial, and after the sentence, will be the things by which the punishment will be experienced. Thus the whole of what is intended by trial, reward, and punishment, according to this system, amounts to this; that there are many chains of ideas and exercises, successively existing, partly during a period called a state of probation, and partly during another period called a state of reward. In one case, the beginning of a chain is formed of virtuous ideas and exercises; and the end of happy ones: in another, the beginning is formed of sinful ideas and exercises; and the end of miserable ones. I presume this will be admitted to be a strange conception of the creation and providence of God.

5. According to this scheme, neither guilt nor virtue can exist.

In all the views which have been formed by the human mind concerning vice and virtue, or, if this is saying too much, in those which have been formed by common sense, it has been universally deemed indispensable to the existence of either, that a natural ability to choose either to obey or disobey the law of God, should precede or accompany the virtue or the vice; and that the obedience or disobedience should not be, in the natural sense, necessary. Accordingly, a finite agent has been supposed to exist, possessed of understanding to perceive, and ability to choose, that which was good or evil; that which was conformed or not conformed to the law under which he was placed. Whenever he was unpossessed of such an ability, it has been farther supposed, that he was incapable of either virtue or vice. According to this view of common sense, the scheme of the Scriptures seems everywhere to be formed. But according to the scheme which I am opposing, each idea and exercise in the chain is produced by an immediate creative act of God, and must, by natural necessity, be what it is. How, let me ask, can it, in the natural sense of possibility, be otherwise than it is? In the first place, an idea or exercise, itself an attribute, can never be the subject of the attribute of power; and can therefore do nothing towards rendering itself any thing beside what it is. Secondly, it is not in existence to prevent itself from being what it is, until it actually becomes possessed of its proper character; and therefore could not, on this account, have prevented the existence of this character. And thirdly, it is made what it is by Omnipotence which nothing can resist or oppose; and therefore is what it is by the most perfect natural necessity. In what manner an idea or exercise thus created, can be guilty for having an existence and character which it has no natural power to avoid, and for being what it is by a direct act of creation, I confess myself wholly unable to comprehend. It ought here to be remembered, that all preceding volitions and ideas have perished, antecedently to the present volition or idea; and therefore, if we concede that they were capable of influence while they existed, they could have no influence on that which is present, because it had not begun to exist until after they had perished. Each idea and exercise is, on the contrary, created what it is, independently of all which precede it.

6. This scheme annihilates the influence of motives.

Motives in their nature are addressed to beings, supposed to be capable of being moved or influenced by them. But according to this scheme, each idea and exercise is immediately created what it is; and derives its nature and character, not from any preceding motive, but from omnipotence. Motives can be addressed only to things existing at the time when they are addressed. But the idea or exercise which exists at that time, instantly perishes; and can have no possible influence on the nature or character of the new one which succeeds it. This, therefore, which the motive is intended to affect, is removed by the nature of the case beyond the possibility of being affected by it. Still, God addresses motives in his word to mankind; commends them for being influenced by them, and blames them for not being thus influenced. How can this be consistent with the justice of God, when he has himself made it absolutely impossible that any such influence should exist? Besides, if the influence of a motive really affected the preceding idea, and in the nature of things it were possible that the influence should extend to the succeeding one; yet, since he creates the succeeding one such as it is, it is plain that on this account also, no such influence can affect it, unless in direct opposition to an act of omnipotence. Motives therefore can have no possible influence on man, according to this scheme; and yet God proposes them to man, and blames and punishes him for not being influenced by them. Can this be supposed of the Creator?

7. Mankind receive impressions from each other, both of thought and volition, of idea and exercise: but ideas and exercises can never communicate a consciousness of their existence to any thing.

To communicate is an act, and is the result of power. But ideas and exercises which are themselves mere acts, cannot be the subjects of power, and become themselves active. That other men communicate to us many thoughts and volitions, is too certain to admit either of doubt or illustration. The communication certainly exists, and exists continually. Either then the idea, which for the time being is the soul, the man, communicates the apprehension of itself to another idea, which for the time being is another soul; or God by a direct act of his power conveys this apprehension. That an idea, a thing merely passive, should act in this manner, or any manner, is plainly impossible. That God should convey to us an apprehension of an idea, and so convey it as to give us irresistible conviction that it is conveyed to us always by a finite agent, is, so far as I can perceive, the same thing as merely and uniformly to delude us. Certainly this cannot be attributed to God. Yet, as every such communication is unquestionably an act, it certainly is performed by an agent. An idea, a mere attribute, is

intuitively not an agent, but an effect of agency. God is an agent; but he cannot delude his creatures.

Farther: A great multitude of these communications are fraught with moral turpitude; are lies, slanders, sophisms; are full of malignity and of blasphemy, are direct and designed temptations to sin. Can these be the immediate acts of Jehovah? Is it possible that where such is the act, He should be the agent? Can we attribute this conduct to our Creator, and feel ourselves to be guiltless? I will leave it therefore to my antagonists to explain, how ideas and exercises can communicate knowledge of themselves to other ideas and exercises, or how this communication can be charged to God.

8. According to this scheme, the Scriptural doctrine of the perseverance of saints is false.

According to this scheme, many links in the chain of ideas and exercises are, as they plainly must be acknowledged to be, acts of mere disobedience; and are therefore absolutely and only sinful; while others, in the same chain, are considered as acts of mere obedience; and are therefore absolutely and only virtuous or holy. In this manner then, such men as are called good men or Christians, are alternately holy, and perfectly sinful. St John, in the first epistle, fifth chapter, and eighteenth verse, says, 'We know that whosoever is born of God, sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God, keepeth himself: and that wicked one toucheth him not.' As this is said by the Spirit of God, it is true. But in what sense is it true? Certainly not in the absolute sense, that he who is born of God does not commit any sin: for the same apostle says, chapter i. 8, 'If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves; and the truth is not in us.' In this sense only then it is true, viz. that he who is born of God does not become absolutely a sinner. Yet in the case supposed, every such person becomes absolutely a sinner. For many such ideas and exercises in the long chain which extends through life, are absolutely sinful during their existence; and each of these, during its continuance, is the man for the time being. For according to this scheme, there is, during each such period, nothing else existing.

Thus, if the scheme be true, man in his best estate falls from grace, and rises to it again, alternately; becomes absolutely a saint, and absolutely a sinner; is perfectly an object of the divine abhorrence, and the divine complacency, by turns; in thousands and millions of instances. How this doctrine is to be reconciled with the declarations of the Scriptures on this subject, I shall leave to the abettors of the scheme to determine.

9. This scheme contradicts intuitive certainty.

So far as I know, it is agreed by all philosophers, and if the subject were fairly proposed, would be by every man, that we are all intuitively certain of our own existence. But I am not more certain that I exist, than that I act; that I perceive, think, speak, reason, choose, and carry my choice into execution. I am as intuitively certain that a something denoted by the word 'I,' or myself, is a cause of certain effects; an agent, performing certain actions; as I am of any possible proposition. These effects I also intuitively know would not exist, were there not such an agent or cause. My actions are intuitively seen by me, not to be the effects of an extraneous cause, or of something beside myself. It is metaphysically true, and is seen by me with the highest possible certainty to be true, that the thoughts and volitions which I call mine, are really mine; and are brought into existence by an active power which I intuitively perceive myself continually to exercise. They are not the thoughts or volitions of another; but are certainly discerned by me to be mine alone.

Whether this account of the subject be not exactly just, I appeal to every individual to determine for himself. The propriety of this appeal will be evident from the consideration, that there is no other possible mode of presenting this subject to the view of mankind: since whatever any man can know concerning it, he can know only by recurring to what passes within himself. As 'the heart of man answers to the heart of man, just as face answereth to face in the water;' I am warranted to conclude that every other man with respect to this subject, experiences just such views as I experience, and possesses the same evidence which I possess.

But if this evidence does not assure me that I exist as an agent, an active cause, originally and spontaneously operating, it will I think be impossible for me to be assured that there is any such agent. The highest evidence of causation or efficiency, of the necessity of a cause to the existence of an effect, of the production of beings, and changes in beings as effects, and therefore of the necessity of an Original cause, to account for the existence and government of all things, is found by me in the consciousness of my own agency. The certainty perceived by mere mental inspection, that the changes passing in my own mind are produced by my own active power, is a higher certainty than that with which I perceive any other changes to be accomplished by any other active power. All other certainty of the production of such changes is presented by sensitive experience, or derived from reasoning founded on this experience. But it is clear, that sensitive experience furnishes evidence of a kind always less certain and indubitable, than that which is seen by mental inspection. If then we cannot rely on the fact, that we are such agents, when it is exhibited with the certainty of mental inspection; we shall be much less warranted to rely on the fact, that there are any other such agents; because it must always be supported by evidence in its own nature inferior, and in a less degree requiring or warranting our assent. The admission therefore of this scheme will directly and fundamentally weaken, if not destroy, the evidence by which we prove the being of God

Besides, if we are not agents or active causes, possessing active powers, by which we can originate certain changes in the state of things, but are mere chains of ideas and exercises, it will be difficult to assign a reason why God is not also a mere chain of ideas and exercises. Every argument against the existence of man, as a substance and agent, must I think lie with the same force against the fact that God is a substance and an agent. On the one hand, there is at least as little difficulty in supposing, that an omnipotent agent may create a finite one, as that such an agent can be self-existent; and on the other, that God can create finite agents and substances, as that he can create chains of ideas and exercises; mere attributes, existing separately and independently of any subject.

The Scriptures everywhere exhibit man as an agent, such as I have described. St Paul, speaking of himself and his fellow apostles, says, 2 Corinthians vi. 1, 'We then, as workers together with God, beseech you also, that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.' And

again, 1 Corinthians iv. 15, 'For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus have I begotten you through the gospel.' In the first of these passages, the apostle directly asserts, that he and his companions are 'workers together with God,' in the great business of promoting the salvation of men: In the second, that he has been an agent, or active instrument; that is, he has been active, in conjunction with the Spirit of God, in producing the regeneration of the Corinthians. As he spoke this by the inspiration of that Spirit, it cannot but be true; and true in that sense in which it naturally strikes the minds of the great body of mankind; because it was written chiefly for them, and because they could understand the words to mean nothing else.

These specimens may serve as examples of thousands more, in which the same thing is declared, in substance, throughout the Scriptures. I know not that there is any particular advantage in selecting these rather than others. Every page of the Bible almost will furnish many, as expressive of the same thing, as those which I have selected. But these are sufficient, and if these will not be admitted, I presume no others will be. If the apostles were 'workers together with God,' then they were not merely passive. If St Paul really begat the Corinthian Christians, in the spiritual sense, then he was not merely passive. He was not merely an effect, but while he was formed by creative power, and was in this sense an effect of that power; he was also formed an agent, a cause possessed in its own nature of active power, capable of spontaneous exertion; of volitions which were its own; and of motivity, by which it could commence motions and actions in itself, and changes of many kinds in other beings.

I have thus considered this subject at length, in the manner in which it has appeared to my own view; and if I mistake not, have shown, that the scheme which I have opposed, is erroneous in itself, and is followed by consequences plainly and eminently absurd. Each member of my audience must now be left to decide for himself, whether the doctrine contended against be true or false, scriptural or anti-scriptural; whether the soul of man be a chain of ideas and exercises, each created for the moment, and then perishing for ever; a concatenation of mere events, in their nature fleeting and vanishing, and incapable of any permanent existence, even for an hour: or whether it is a spirit, a substance, a permanent being, the subject of a continued existence; an agent possessed of active powers, capable of voluntarily originating important designs, and carrying them into execution; and thus becoming 'a worker together with God,' in the interesting purposes of his eternal kingdom. According to the latter of these schemes, the soul of man is one, created at one time, and continuing the same, as to its substance and nature, throughout eternity; according to the other, the soul, for the time being, is the idea or exercise existing at that time, commencing its existence with the existence of the idea, and perishing with it. Of course, instead of one soul, there are in each chain as many as there are ideas and exercises in that chain: that is, millions literally innumerable. If this scheme can be seriously adopted, rationally understood, and satisfactorily realized by any man; it must be done in a manner which I confess myself unable to comprehend, and by a mind possessed of views and reasonings to which I can make no pretension.

SERMON XXV.

THE CHIEF END OF MAN.

Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.—1 Cor. x. 31.

In the three last Discourses, I have considered the Creation and Nature of Man. The next subject, naturally offered to our view by a system of theology is the end for which man was made. By this I mean, the principal purpose which he is fitted to answer; the thing which God had principally in view in bringing man into existence.

The importance of this subject can need very little illustration. The question, For what end was I made; or what end are my existence and faculties designed to answer; is instinctively realized by every sober man to import all that is of any real moment to himself.

In the text we are required 'to do whatsoever we do to the glory of God. This precept we consider as disclosing to us the true end for which we were made. In examining it, I shall attempt to

I. What it is to glorify God.

II. That this is constituted by God the chief end of man; and,

III. The propriety of this divine constitution.

1. I shall attempt to show what it is to glorify God.

In the Scriptures, mankind are frequently required to glorify their Creator. But it is perfectly plain that they cannot, in any manner or degree, change his nature, or the state of his perfections; these being absolutely without variableness, or shadow of turning. It may, I think, be said, not only with truth, but with the highest reverence, that God himself cannot alter his perfections. Indeed this is directly declared in the text, which I have partially quoted. Yet it will not be denied, that God can glorify himself; that is, make himself glorious, by acting in such a manner as is approved by his own infinite wisdom, and as will display the glory of his character to the view of his intelligent creatures. In a manner, generally resembling this, those creatures, and among them mankind, can also glorify him; that is, they can act in such a manner as

to show his glory to each other, and in this way to please him, and gain his approbation.

To glorify God, in this sense, is,

1. To know him.

The perfections of God are the glory of his character. In order that these may be disclosed by one intelligent creature to another, it is plainly necessary that he should first know them, or understand what they are: this knowledge being the basis on which all other regard to them must be founded. Without this knowledge, mankind might indeed glorify God, as he is glorified by the mute, passive, incogitative works of his hands; such as earth, plants, and trees; that is, by being displays of his power and skill to conscious beings; but they cannot in this manner glorify him, as intelligent beings.

It is to be observed, that knowing God, so as to glorify him, denotes, that we have just conceptions of his character, and not those which are false and imaginary. All the imaginary views which we form of God, are views, not of the real God, but of a God fashioned by our own minds. In every erroneous conception which we form of the Creator, we may be said, with a small alteration of the language of Scripture, 'to change the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made by corruptible man;' and an image also, usually made like unto him; always debasing the character of Jehovah, and robbing it of its real and infinite perfection.

The knowledge of God is gained wholly, either from his works, or from his word. To himself only is he known in the abstract. In creation and providence, however, and especially in the Bible, his intelligent creatures can 'behold, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord.' This knowledge we acquire just so far as we understand the true nature of his works, and the true meaning of his word, and no farther. Erroneous schemes of philosophy, and false systems of divinity, contain and convey, so far as they are erroneous, no knowledge of God at all; and can never, by themselves, be the means of glorifying him. Therefore they can never become of any real value to us. As this knowledge can be gained only by study; so, if we love to glorify God, we shall devote ourselves as much as may be to the study both of his works and of his word.

2. To think of him in a manner suited to his character.

The perfections of God are immensely great, glorious, and wonderful; and justly claim to be thought of by us in a manner corresponding with their exalted nature. They claim, particularly, to be thought of by us frequently, daily, many times a day, and, in a sense, always. Nothing else deserves in any measure so great a share of our thoughts: nothing else therefore should in any measure engross them to so great a degree. God is infinitely greater, wiser, and better than his creatures; and justly demands that we should devote ourselves to him, in a preference to them, which is proportioned to his character. It is one charge against the wicked, and one part of their wickedness, that 'God is not in all their thoughts.' It is one attribute of good beings, who voluntarily glorify him, that God is in all their thoughts. If we would belong to the number of such beings, he must be in all our thoughts; that is, we must think of him, in a sense, unceasingly.

To this end it is necessary that we think of him willingly, or with pleasure; that we find him in all his works, both of creation and providence; that we regard him as the original and universal Agent; as present, acting, and visible, in every thing which is great or good: as particularly visible in the things with which we are conversant, in our own personal afflictions and blessings, in those of our friends, and in those of our country; in his dispensations to his church, and in his government of the world. As these things are chiefly explained to us in the Scriptures, so we should especially think of God as his character is there unfolded, and labour peculiarly to find him there.

To the same end it is still more necessary, that we think of him justly: that is, that our thoughts of him be noble and exalted; suited, so far as our capacities will allow, to the great and wonderful character which he has discovered of himself in his works, and in his word.

3. To love him.

God is infinitely the greatest and most excellent of all beings. In order to glorify him, it is necessary that we not only discern, but also relish, his character; that we wish well to the furtherance and completion of his designs, and rejoice in the perfect happiness which he enjoys in the contemplation of his own excellence, and the accomplishment of his pleasure, with supreme benevolence to him: that we delight in the beauty, loveliness, and glory of his character, with supreme complacency; and that we feel the benefits bestowed on us and ours, with supreme gratitude. Love, in the general sense, is the sum and substance of all the exercises of piety; of reverence, submission, dependence, resignation, confidence, hope, and joy. When therefore it is here said, that it is necessary to love God, in order to glorify him, it is intended that to this end we must become the subjects of all these exercises. Nor is this all which is necessary. We must also become the subjects of them habitually and unceasingly, and the more we know of his character, the more we must delight in it; and thus render to him a continually increasing tribute of piety. All this, and this only, is glorifying God with the heart, the most exalted and noble of our moral faculties: for this is that conduct of the heart which is suited to the nature of the object beloved.

4. To serve him.

God is originally obeyed in the correspondence of the heart with his precepts; and is never in the proper sense obeyed, except in those cases where such a correspondence exists. But to serve him, in the full sense, denotes also the conformity of our external conduct to his most holy will. Accordingly, he has prescribed to us, not only the general spirit of obedience, which is seated in the heart, but also the various modes in which this spirit operates usefully towards Him, our fellow creatures, and ourselves. Towards Him immediately, it operates usefully and amiably, in the several acts of worship, public and private, enjoined in the Scriptures; towards our fellow creatures, in the several duties of patriotism, kindness, truth, forgiveness, and charity; and towards ourselves, in the duties of diligence, meekness, humility, temperance, and general self-denial. In these things at large, we are especially employed as active beings [illegible] God, both by conforming our conduct to [illegible] pleasure, and by exhibiting this co[illegible]w of our fellow men.

5. To [illegible]

To [illegible] take pleasure in his character, This character [illegible] unchangeable, and perfect; yet it

is formed of perfection, endlessly diversified. On the one hand it is infinitely great; on the other it is infinitely beautiful. It involves also all the varieties of greatness and beauty. Innumerable displays and diversities of both greatness and beauty are made to us, in those parts of creation and providence with which we are acquainted; of greatness and beauty both natural and moral, of matter and of mind. All these are merely diversified images of beauty and greatness, originally existing in the divine Mind; feeble reflections of the beams of the Sun of Righteousness. Moral greatness and moral beauty are especially that which is called 'the image of God' in the Scriptures; that in which man was originally created; that to which he is restored by the truth of the gospel, and the Spirit of grace; that in which God himself especially delights; and that which, therefore, ought to be especially relished by us. The greatness of God is properly the object of reverence and admiration: the beauty of his character is properly the object of love: names which in different modes are expressive only of pleasure or delight, existing in different forms. This delight is spontaneously experienced by all intelligent beings who are disposed to glorify their Maker. All these find their happiness ultimately in him; and whether that happiness is gained from the contemplation of his character, or found in his works and dispensations; whether it springs up in peace and self-approbation, or in the reciprocated benevolence of our fellow creatures; whether it is furnished by present enjoyment, or is anticipated in the delightful foretaste of hope; it is all finally referred to him alone as its sole Author. By every such mind he is regarded as 'the fountain of living waters,' whence flows every stream of pleasure to the unnumbered creatures which he has made.

I have considered the enjoyment of God as one of the means of glorifying him, under a distinct head, because it is usually considered as a separate exercise of the mind; and not because I do not suppose it to be in a great measure included under the former heads. Our enjoyment is really and chiefly found in the exercises already specified; and whenever we are the subjects of those exercises, we are also the subjects of corresponding enjoyment.

Even in this world, such enjoyment is experienced, in no small degree, by good men. In the future world, it will fill the minds of all glorified beings. There they will 'behold' their Maker 'face to face,' and 'know,' in some measure, 'as they also are known.' Here 'they taste and see that the Lord is good; here they rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of their salvation.' There they will find 'fulness of joy, and pleasures for evermore;' and there 'God will be all in all.'

That in all these ways God is glorified, hardly needs illustration. When we study to know God, we show that he is in our view deserving of being thus studied and known. When we entertain high and noble thoughts of his character, we declare in the most direct manner, that his perfections are sufficiently great and glorious to claim such things [illegible] him, we show in the most [illegible], that he is lovely. When we serve him [illegible] in the strong language of practice, [illegible] ought to be served, and [illegible] we enjoy him, we prove, that [illegible] great and good, beautiful and [illegible] we exercise ourselves in all these ways with supreme devotion of heart, and make God the object of a regard which admits of no comparison with any other, we testify that he is greater, better, and more desirable, than all things: a Being to whom none can be equal, none can be second.

II. *To glorify God is constituted by him the chief end of man.*

This truth is easily evinced in two ways.

1. God has, in the Scriptures, enjoined this conduct as the only duty of man.

Whatever God designed as the great end of the creation of man, he himself perfectly knew, unquestionably chose, and has certainly enjoined on man, if he has enjoined any thing. But this he has enjoined, and this is all which he has enjoined. This, at the same time, he has required with the promise of eternal life to obedience, and the threatening of eternal death to disobedience: both showing in the strongest manner, that he esteemed this end of sufficient importance to be secured, on the one hand, by the allurement of an infinite reward, and on the other, by the terror of an infinite punishment. From this, it appears that he regarded the end as of infinite value; and that since he has commanded nothing else, he esteemed nothing else as being comparatively of any value.

2. From the nature of the case it is evident, that this is the highest and noblest end which man can accomplish.

As this position will be rendered clearly certain by the considerations suggested under the following head, I shall only observe here, that admitting it to be true, the consequence follows in a manner which allows of no debate.

III. *I shall now attempt to exhibit the propriety of this divine constitution.*

This I think will plainly appear from the following observations.

1. When God created the universe, he created it that he might glorify himself.

That this was the end of all the works of God has, it is apprehended, been made sufficiently evident in a former discourse; and will therefore need no illustration at the present time. It ought to be remembered, that no addition to the inherent glory or excellence of the Creator was possible, or is in this assertion supposed to have been possible. This, therefore, was not, and could not be, a part of the end which he proposed in this great work. But his glory could be manifested; and the manifestation of it is what, both in the Scriptures and in all sound theological discourses, is intended by the glorification of God. To show his own character, to unfold his power, knowledge, and goodness, to creatures capable of understanding them, was the supreme object which he had in view, in the production of all beings and all events.

St John declares that 'God is love.' In other words, benevolence is the sum of his moral character, and the peculiar and distinguishing glory of his nature. This is that which he himself esteems his glory, that for which he chiefly values himself, that which is the prime object of his own complacency. This perfection, then, he intended especially to manifest to his intelligent creation.

It is the essence of benevolence to love and to produce happiness; and of infinite benevolence to love and to produce infinite happiness. As, therefore, benevolence is the moving principle in the divine Mind, whence

all its operations spring, and to which they are all conformed; it is evident that, with knowledge sufficient to contrive, and power sufficient to execute, whatever it dictates, co-existing in the same mind, all its dictates will of course be accomplished. The good therefore in which infinite benevolence delights, was originally chosen, has been actually begun, is uninterruptedly pursued, and will be absolutely completed.

2. For the accomplishment of this end, he has created innumerable creatures, capable of voluntarily co-operating with him in this great design.

Angels and men, and probably many other beings, are formed in the image of God; and, like him, are possessed of the three great powers, of understanding, will, and motivity. They are therefore capable, not only of being passive subjects, on which the glory of God can be displayed and discerned; but of being also agents, by whom his glory may be perceived, loved, enjoyed, and voluntarily promoted. The end, therefore, for which these beings were made, though generally the same with that for which inferior creatures were created, is essentially different, as to the manner in which it is to be accomplished by them. Inferior creatures, such as exist in the mineral, vegetable, and animal kingdoms, are means of the glory of God, merely as it is displayed in their nature, structure, and uses; while they, at the same time, are perfectly unconscious of being such means, and perfectly inactive towards promoting it: contributing to it merely as passive effects, just as a watch is a medium of displaying the skill of the maker. Intelligent beings, on the other hand, being possessed of active powers, are not only such displays of the divine glory in their nature and structure; but are able also to discern, so far as their powers extend, the desirableness of the divine glory; to choose it as the supreme object of all their designs and efforts, and to consecrate to the promotion of it, all their labours throughout eternity. Such creatures are, of course, capable of glorifying God in a twofold manner; viz. by the elevated and important endowments of which they are possessed, and in the voluntary exertion of their active powers towards the accomplishment of the same end. Thus they are far more noble, exalted, and estimable, in the eye of God, than any other creatures.

3. God only can direct all things to the accomplishment of this illustrious end.

That there is a possible good, capable of involving all, which upon the whole is good and desirable; that immensity furnishes sufficient room, and eternity a sufficient duration, for its accomplishment; that God in his omniscience comprehends this system, by his omnipotence is able, and by his goodness or benevolence is disposed to bring it into existence; and that consequently he has begun, and will accomplish it; are, unless I am deceived, truths too clear to be rationally doubted. I shall at this time take them therefore for granted.

But nothing is more plain, than that God only could originally have devised such a system: all other minds being, without a question, infinitely too limited for such a work. The beings and events which it demands and contains, are innumerably and endlessly diversified; and one is far too difficult a contrivance to have been formed by any mind, less than omniscient.

As God only could have devised this immense and glorious system at first; so, none but God is, at the present or any other period of its existence, possessed of sufficient wisdom to direct the innumerable parts of the vast machine, and their innumerable operations, to this great end. All the parts and all their operations, are absolutely necessary to its perfect accomplishment. The failure of either, even in a single instance, would be a defect; and a defect attended with an importance, inconceivable by any mind but His. The mischiefs which would flow from such a defect in the progress of eternity, can be comprehended by no finite understanding. Accordingly he has informed us, that the least event does not come to pass, that a 'sparrow does not fall to the ground,' that a hair does not fall from our heads, without his direction. How evident is it then, that the management of the whole system demands his constant oversight and control.

At the same time, his power, as every man will readily acknowledge, is at least equally necessary for this purpose. The hand which has ever rolled through the universe the worlds of which it is composed, must still continue to roll them. The power by which seasons revolve, days and nights return, light and warmth and rains descend, vegetation springs, animal and rational energy is quickened, the sunshine of intelligence, and the flame of virtue are lighted up; by which the wheels of the universe were set in motion, and the regions of immensity and eternity peopled with being; must still continue its unremitted exertions, or the whole system would dissolve and crumble into ruin.

Nor is the divine benevolence less absolutely necessary for the same end. No finite good-will is sufficiently vast, sufficiently invariable, so superior to prejudice and provocation, so unassailable by temptation, so incapable of weariness, so unsusceptible of decay, as to be safely trusted with the ultimate conduct of so numerous, varying, and important interests.

Thus, it is evident, that, unless God devise, direct, and control, or, in a single word, manage with his power, wisdom, and goodness, the vast machine of the universe; the great and divine purpose, for which it was formed, can never be accomplished. This immense good, therefore, infinitely desirable to the eye of wisdom and goodness, and involving in itself all that is desirable, must otherwise fail of course; and nothing be left in its place but desolation and ruin.

4. Unless intelligent beings voluntarily co-operate with God in promoting this great end, it can never be accomplished.

This truth is easily evinced. God has assigned to intelligent beings their voluntary co-operation with him, as a part, and a primary part, of the end itself. There is in such beings no other virtue, beside this voluntary co-operation. But the virtue of intelligent creatures is, beyond all comparison, far the most important part of the whole end of creation and providence; the chief constituent of the divine glory; and the chief object of the divine complacency in created existence. At the same time, it is, under God, the supreme and indispensable source of all that happiness, which they were intended to enjoy throughout eternity. It is evident, therefore, [illegible] intelligent creatures thus co-operate [illegible] the end of their existence, and [illegible] can never be accomplished.

It [illegible] stated here, that this doctrine makes [illegible] creatures for the execution of his [illegible] objection has, at least in my opinion [illegible] deceived and misguided Christians;

and, among them, not a small number of divines. I have heretofore obviated it on a different occasion; but it may be useful to consider it again.

The independence of God does not at all consist in the fact, that creatures are unnecessary to his purposes; for by making them, he has shown us, that they were thus necessary; nor in the fact, that his happiness would have been equally perfect, if he had never begun the works of creation and providence; for the Scriptures inform us, that the Lord shall rejoice in all his works. But, if he had formed no works, this part of his joy would have had no existence; and therefore his happiness would have been just so far incomplete. The independence of God consists in his absolute sufficiency for the accomplishment of all his purposes; and in the absolute certainty which that sufficiency furnishes, that all his purposes will be accomplished. So long as these remain, he cannot but be absolutely independent. The necessity of the existence and voluntary co-operation of intelligent creatures, to the purposes of God, affects not therefore his independence, in any manner whatever. On the contrary, it is a part, and a most important part, of those very works of God which he has chosen and brought into existence, in which he rejoices, and will for ever rejoice.

It may be farther objected, that many intelligent beings do not thus co-operate with their Maker, and that therefore he will thus far be disappointed, as to the accomplishment of his designs. If this should be seriously said, I would refer the objector, for an answer, to the case of Joseph's brethren, together with his comment upon their conduct: 'Ye meant it for evil; but God meant it for good.' From this case, as well as that of the Assyrian monarch, as explained by God himself, Isaiah x. 5, to the end of the eleventh chapter, and from many others recorded in the Scriptures, the objector may learn, that evil beings by their disobedience as truly accomplish the divine purposes, as good beings by their obedience; and that, notwithstanding all their opposition, he will bring good out of the evil which they design; that 'still his counsel shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure.' But his pleasure would not be done, and his glory would not be displayed in the same perfect manner, if no intelligent creatures were to obey him, by voluntarily co-operating with him in his designs. In this case, the whole face of the universe would be changed, and a new, gloomy, and distressing aspect be spread over the system of creation and providence.

5. Intelligent creatures cannot thus co-operate with the designs of God, but by conforming to his direction.

The coincidence of the heart, with the general purpose of God, is undoubtedly the prime constituent of their obedience, or co-operation. But this is far from being all that is necessary. As none but God can know or direct the things which are to be done; so it is evident that his intelligent creatures, in order to the promotion of his designs, must coincide with his directions. It has been already observed that he cannot direct themselves, and that he [illegible] them. As every part of his designs [illegible] perfection; so it is plain, that it [illegible] is necessary, should universally [illegible] who do not. All their [illegible] labours, must therefore be [illegible] implicit confidence in his wisdo[illegible] tirely conformed to whatever he prescribes. To his direction, the heart must implicitly conform itself, as well as to his general will; and be disposed not only to glorify him, but also to glorify him in exactly that manner which he is pleased to point out. Unless this manner be pursued, the object itself must eventually fail of its perfect accomplishment.

6. In such a conformity of heart and of effort consists all the worth, and all the happiness, of rational creatures.

God is the source and sum of all good, both moral and natural. To know and love him, is to know and love, in a sense, all that is excellent, great, and lovely. To serve him, is to do all that is amiable or desirable, all that is good or honourable, all that is pleasing to God, or profitable to his rational creatures. True happiness, and true worth, are attained in the same manner, and by the same conduct. 'It is more blessed,' says our Saviour, 'to give than to receive.' It is not merely more amply rewarded by God, but more happy in itself; necessarily, and in the nature of things, more happy. In other words, to do good is a more happ condition of being, than to receive good. But all worth consists in doing good, and in the disposition by which it is done. In this course of conduct, therefore, both happiness and worth are found with the highest certainty, and in the greatest degree; or, in better language, both are found here only. But doing good and glorifying God are convertible phrases, denoting exactly the same thing, with one trifling exception; viz. that the former is sometimes used in a sense less extensive than that which is commonly attached to the latter.

It is farther to be observed, that in glorifying God, the mind is engrossed by an object which knows no limit, and in which, therefore, its efforts may be for ever repeated, enlarged, and exalted. No law nor consideration demands that it should limit its views, desires, or labours. Excess here is impossible. Approved always by itself, and by its Maker, the more, the greater its efforts are, it sees no bound set to them, except by its capacity.

Beyond this, as doing good is the entire employment of every rational being, whose heart and labours are thus conformed to the pleasure of his Maker, the good actually done cannot fail, in the progress of the system, of becoming immensely great. Where the joint labours of any society are directed solely to the purpose of producing happiness, these labours, if wisely directed, must, of course, furnish happiness, proportioned to their extent, energy, and duration. In the divine kingdom, a society, greater than the human mind can estimate, all the members of which direct their labours by the unerring wisdom of God, contributing its united efforts throughout eternity, to the mere production of happiness, must effectuate this glorious object in a degree transcending the comprehension of every mind, except the Omniscient. These efforts, it is to be remembered, are all made in circumstances the most auspicious, and with provision the most ample, for the great end of effectuating happiness. Happiness is the end of the whole system. The circumstances and the means by which it is to be produced, were devised by the omniscience of God; and are better suited to the end than any other which omniscience could devise.

At the same time, this good is enjoyed in a manner wholly peculiar. The excellent and disinterested spirit

which is thus employed in promoting the design of God, in the formation of the universe; the manifestation of his own glory in the accomplishment of the supreme good of his creatures; rejoices of necessity in all the happiness which is produced in other individuals, as in its own; and in that of the vast whole, with an ecstacy supereminent and incapable of limitation. Thus both the spirit which produces, and the spirit which enjoys, contribute, each in its own way, to the eventuation of more happiness, than can be originated by any other cause, or enjoyed in any other manner.

All this, however, is only the one combined, immense, and divine effect of infinite wisdom, power, and goodness. God is the original and glorious cause of all. To him, therefore, the eye instinctively looks, as the ocean whence all these innumerable and perennial streams of enjoyment flow, and into which they return. His hand began, and will for ever continue, this amazing work; and will be seen daily, more and more clearly, uniformly and divinely, in every thing which takes place, both within and without the mind. 'Of the increase of His government and their peace;' of the splendour and beneficence of his administrations, of the activity of their efforts, and the intenseness of their enjoyment, 'there will be no end.' More and more beautiful and lovely in his sight, more and more approximating towards his sublime perfection, he will behold them with supreme and eternal complacency; will look with an unclouded smile on the illustrious work which he has made, and with the voice of infinite approbation will pronounce it 'very good.'

Such is the end which God proposed in the creation of Man; such its nature and such its propriety. How plainly is it the best and most glorious end which can be aimed at by man, or accomplished by his Creator?

REMARKS.

From this fruitful theme many more important and practical reflections naturally arise, than can be even mentioned at the present time. It will, however, be highly proper to suggest a few of them; and these will be only suggested. In the contemplation of this subject, we can hardly fail to remark,

1. The pitiful nature of the ends of human existence, and human labour, proposed by heathen philosophy, and modern infidelity.

The great ends of our being, exhibited by heathen philosophy, were the gratification of pride, the establishment of apathy, the acquisition of power, wealth, and fame, and the enjoyment of animal pleasure. All these, except the second, are the ends proposed also by modern infidelity. By all, except the last, they laboured to convert man into a fiend; and by that, to change him into a brute. Barely to descend from the divine object which is the theme of this discourse, to these miserable purposes, is to fall from heaven to earth.

2. It is plainly impossible, that these systems should guide man to his supreme good: and therefore, that they should direct his moral conduct, either with rectitude or profit.

The true end of his being, that which is really his supreme good, they knew not; and, therefore, could not point it out.

3. These systems are hence evidently seen to be false.

There is a real supreme good to man. Truth will certainly guide us to this all-important object. But none of these philosophers have guided us to it. On the contrary, they have only led mankind away from it. Their systems, therefore, are essentially false.

4. We see here, the benevolent design of the Scriptures.

The whole design of the Scriptures is to teach man what is his supreme good, to show the way in which he may attain it, and to require him to devote his efforts to the attainment. How infinitely superior are they, in this respect, to all human systems!

5. The Scriptures are fairly presumed, from this consideration, to be of divine origin.

They alone disclose this great object to mankind; and in this respect, differ immensely from all other writings. Whence this difference? How can it be explained, but by supposing the writers of them to have been inspired?

6. We learn hence the true dignity of man.

The dignity of man has been always a favourite topic of his thoughts, conversation, and writings. When he looks into his own bosom, and discerns the nature and extent of his powers; or casts his eye abroad, and beholds what he has done; it is not strange that he should form elevated ideas concerning his own character and destination. Unhappily, however, he has always formed, when left to his own speculations, erroneous opinions concerning this subject; and has placed his dignity in things, of which it can never be constituted. Personal accomplishments, brilliant or profound talents, extensive acquisitions of learning and science, ingenious inventions or improvements of art, bold achievements, and heroic exploits, have ever been the objects in which he has supposed his dignity to consist, and of which he has ever been inclined to boast. Some of these are indeed, both desirable and commendable; but all, of themselves, are utterly insufficient to constitute real dignity. This is found in the mind only. Intelligence is necessary to it: but of intelligence alone it cannot be constituted. Its real seat is in the disposition. Virtue, moral excellence, the beauty and loveliness of the mind, is the real and only dignity of an intelligent being. To devote all its faculties and labours to the glory of the Creator, in the pursuit of the supreme good of the universe, is the true worth, honour, and glory of every intelligent creature: and compared with it, all things else, of which we are capable, are 'nothing, less than nothing, and vanity.'

7. We cannot but see, in these considerations, the obligation which we are under to devote all our faculties and labours to the promotion of this end.

This observation needs no comment.

8. We also see here, in a clear light, the necessity of Regeneration.

The native disposition of man is opposed to the end of his being. This disposition, nothing has ever changed essentially, except the power of the Spirit of truth. As necessary, therefore, as it is that man should answer the end of his creation, so necessary is it that he should become the subject of this change in his moral character.

2. [illegible] ject the transcendent excel-
[illegible]

[illegible]ry of God, but some display
[illegible]n the scheme of creation,
[illegible]cussed, there is a splendour,
[illegible]ted to Jehovah. In the end

proposed by intelligent beings in their designs, and displayed in their conduct, their proper character is especially manifested. The end proposed by God, and displayed in his works of creation and providence, is unquestionably the noblest and most important of all possible ends, and the strongest proof of the best of all possible characters. It is the most finished, and the most ample manifestation of all that is great, exalted, lovely, and divine. Out of it, spring created intelligence, virtue and enjoyment, enlarged, refined, and brightened for ever. Heaven and its immortal glory are its fruits; angels, and 'the spirits of just men made perfect,' are its offspring. The Sun of righteousness here rises on the astonished sight, without a cloud, and shines with the clear effulgence of eternal day. In the future world, that sun shall no more go down, neither shall that glory withdraw itself; but with a presence ever enjoyed, a lustre ever increasing, shall enlighten, warm, and quicken the universe of virtuous minds with one unceasing day, one everlasting spring; while all that is beautiful, fragrant, and delightful, lovely in the eye of God, and a resemblance of his transcendent perfection, shall rise, and bloom, and flourish, beneath the life-giving influence for ever and ever. Amen.

SERMON XXVI.

PROVIDENCE.—THE PROBATION OF MAN.

And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden, to dress it, and to keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat of it; for in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.—Gen. ii. 15—17

In several preceding Sermons, I have considered the work of Creation; including the heavens and the earth, their inhabitants and their furniture. The next subject in a theological system is, the work of Providence.

From the text, which is an account of the first act of Providence towards mankind, we learn the following things:

I. *That the Providence of God towards man began immediately after he was created.*

In the great and wonderful work of creation, provision was effectually made for the production, subsistence, and comfort of such beings as were afterwards to exist in this world. By this observation, I do not intend absolutely, that no being has been, in the strict sense, created since the conclusion of the period, in which the Scriptures exhibit this work as having been accomplished. Whether this has, or has not, in the strict sense, been the fact, is not material to the present design. I intend, in the Scriptural language, 'that the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them.' The beings, which, during succeeding ages, were to exist in this world, whether in the rational, animal, or vegetable kingdoms, were all, together with the changes in the mineral or inanimate kingdom, to be produced by the instrumentality of secondary causes. As soon as the last creature which was made; when he was [illegible] work of creation was finished. From [illegible] and controlling agency of [illegible] commenced; and [illegible] tended over all the [illegible]

The Providence [illegible] miraculous. Miracle [illegible] agency of God in the [illegible] times, to accomplish [illegible] advantageously accomplish[illegible]. The ordinary providence of God is an agency, directing the several creatures which he has made, to the several purposes for which they were made; and conducted according to certain rules which he has been pleased to establish, and which are commonly, although improperly enough called laws of nature. In the Scriptures, with much more propriety as well as beauty, they are termed ordinances of heaven. In the succession of things, according to these ordinances, the power, wisdom, and goodness of God, are gloriously manifested in a series of events, beautiful and harmonious, wonderful and sublime, beyond any limit assignable by the thoughts of man.

Before the apostasy, these laws and their effects were, beyond a doubt, exceedingly different from those which prevail at the present time. Man was then immortal, holy, and happy; and was destined to breathe in air, to feed on fruits, and to pursue employments, suited to the perpetuation of this delightful state. The world was beautiful and pleasant. All things were peaceful, friendly, and means of unceasing and undisturbed enjoyment. The sources of pain, hunger and thirst, of disquiet, disease and death, were unopened and unknown. To a single end was directed the whole energy of nature; and that end was the immediate good of man.

After the apostasy, a state of things began which was in many respects new; a state suited to fallen beings, who were to live under many manifestations of the divine wrath against sin; and who in the end were to die, and thus cease from all future connexion with the place of their former residence.

After the deluge, the state of the world appears to have been still farther changed. More and more painful proofs of the anger of God against sin were introduced into the system. Life, within a little time, was shortened from one thousand years to seventy. Labour,

sorrow, and disease, were greatly enhanced. The bloom of immortality, already deeply faded, now withered away. Food, together with the whole train of necessaries, lost its power of prolonging life; sickliness overspread the vegetable kingdom, storms convulsed the air and the ocean, earthquakes and volcanoes shook the land, and decay and disorder impaired the whole face of the system.

II. *We learn also that man, immediately after his creation, was placed in a state of active employment.*

The text declares, that 'the Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to dress it, and to keep it.' Activity of body and of mind is the sole means of doing good, and of glorifying God; and is, therefore, indispensable to the end for which intelligent beings were created. Hence man, like the angels, was destined to be active; and was directed to industrious business, immediately after he was brought into the world.

III. *That he was, at the same time, placed in a state of trial.*

By this I intend, that he was put into such a condition as to show whether he would obey or disobey his Maker. The rectitude and reasonableness of this dispensation are easily evinced.

Man, as I flatter myself has been heretofore proved, was created a moral agent, possessed of understanding and will, and therefore free, and capable of obeying. Of course, inability to obey could not be pleaded by him, as a reason why he should be exempted from obedience.

At the same time, his Creator had an entire and indisputable right to his services. No property is so high, or so perfect, as that which the creator has in the thing created; and no right so complete, as that which arises out of this property. God therefore having created man, had the most perfect property in him, and the most perfect right to dispose of him according to his own righteous pleasure.

God also being possessed of infinite greatness and excellence, is infinitely deserving of the supreme love, reverence, and obedience of man.

To serve, love, and honour God, is the most rational and desirable employment which is possible. It was therefore man's highest interest, as well as indispensable duty, to obey. In no other manner could he be either virtuous or happy. Of course, it may with the utmost reverence and propriety be concluded, that God would not have acted in a manner conformable to perfect rectitude, if he had not required obedience from all his rational creatures; since they could neither do, nor enjoy, the good, of which they were made capable, in any other manner.

IV. *That the situation in which man was placed, furnished him with eminent inducements and advantages to obey.*

The truth of this proposition will, I think, appear evident from the following particulars:—

1. Man was created holy, without any mixture of sinful affections.

This needs no proof, because it will be generally acknowledged, and because it has already been sufficiently proved in a former discourse. His understanding admitted truth without prejudice, and without any necessary error, except such as proceeded from mere ignorance. He did not know all things; but those which he knew, he knew truly, or as they really existed. His will also was perfectly conformed to the dictates of his understanding.

2. He was placed in a situation in which external things were most favourable to his obedience.

His habitation was delightful, and only delightful. Plenty, ease, and peace, fragrance, beauty, and joy, sprang up spontaneously around him, and accompanied him whithersoever he went. He was the Lord and proprietor of a world; and that world was an Eden, a paradise of improvement and pleasure.

His employments were all innocent, virtuous, and delightful. In the happy and unlaborious agriculture to which he was summoned, he found business congenial to his nature, powers, and wishes. Every thing flourished under his hand; and furnished him the peculiar pleasure of seeing his efforts contribute to his own enjoyment, and to the beauty and perfection of the objects by which he was surrounded. He felt that he was useful; that he was employed in a manner chosen by his Maker; and that he therefore pleased and obeyed Him; while he also daily contributed to the advancement of his own happiness. This consciousness, united with an employment of the same general nature, is probably necessary to all extensive and permanent good.

All things also daily manifested to him the presence of God, and exhibited this glorious Being only as great, wise, and good; reminding him unceasingly of the Benefactor to whom alone he was indebted, and of the immense extent of the obligations under which he was laid by the overflowing kindness of this Benefactor. Thus every thing with a continual voice called on him to persist in his obedience, and in this manner to preserve the happiness which it insured.

3. God immediately revealed himself to man, in several ways which are recorded, and in many more which are necessarily implied.

God taught man to dress the garden of Eden; or, in other words, communicated to him the knowledge of an agriculture, suited to the nature and circumstances of the spot in which he was placed. It was necessary for man to be employed. Idleness, even in paradise, would, not improbably, have proved fatal to his innocence and peace. Equally necessary was it, that the nature of his employment should be revealed to him, the manner in which it might be pursued with ease to himself, and the means by which it might be rendered most effectual to every desirable purpose. Without such a revelation, ages must in all probability have passed away, before he would have discovered how to employ himself with either convenience or profit.

At the same time, God revealed himself to him immediately; and conversed with him freely, often, and familiarly; directing him by an audible voice, and in a manner wholly intelligible, to whatever his duty required. To enable him to derive the whole benefit flowing from these communications, God endowed him with the power of knowledge of language. This is clearly evinced by the understand the converse of the Scriptures as carried on in significant terms, of the same use in use among men. It is that our first parents were created made to be helps meet for

each other. Without speech, we cannot conceive a social state to exist; nor imagine the mutual assistance aimed at in the creation of the first pair, to be in any possible manner accomplished. Without speech, millions crowded together, would, for this very reason, find themselves in a more perfect solitude. Without speech mutually understood, mankind even now are strangers and aliens to each other; and are not only unable and uninclined to render to each other any material assistance, but are even ready mutually to suspect, hate, and separate. Confidence is never reposed, friendship never springs up, where language is not understood, and where communications are not intelligibly and definitely made.

It is farther proved by the record of the fact itself. Adam, immediately after his creation, gave names to every beast of the field, and to every fowl of the air; names suited to their respective natures, and conveyed down, as their appropriate names, to his posterity. He also named Eve, when she was first brought to him, and assigned his reason for the name which he had chosen. Both he and she also conversed easily and freely, as appears abundantly from the account given of them, notwithstanding its brevity

That language was revealed to man is, as an abstract proposition, abundantly proved by the impossibility, that the fact can have been otherwise. Without society, language could not be formed, and without language, society could not commence.

God also revealed to man, in direct and definite terms, his whole duty; and disclosed to him the law by which his life was to be governed. With the same clearness was he taught the rewards annexed to obedience, and the punishments due to disobedience. Of this truth we have a remarkable exemplification in the text; where we are presented with one of the principal rules given to our first parents for the regulation of their conduct. Man therefore was not left to find out either his duty or his danger, by the critical and doubtful decision of slow discovery, and distant inference; but received the knowledge of both in the same plain and certain manner, in which children are taught obedience by parental instruction.

4. The immediate means of trial were reasonably and benevolently selected.

In the garden of Eden, 'the Lord God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food.' Man lived in the midst of spontaneous abundance. The palate and the eye were alike gratified, and the wishes seemed to have nothing left to ask. One fruit only was forbidden, and this merely for the purpose of trying his fidelity. Had man been placed in hard and difficult circumstances, encircled by few enjoyments, exposed to great temptations, and the subject of much ignorance and doubt concerning his duty; he would still have been indispensably bound to obey. But his real situation [illegible] of all this. God has given [illegible] No-thing was denied [illegible] or useful. A trifling gratifi[illegible] was the utmost [illegible] The contin[illegible] and the favour of God, [illegible] to bless him, was [illegible] situation can be [illegible] could have been placed [illegible] in his duty. All motives which we should think likely to influence, urged him to obey; and none of this description prompted him to disobey. The motives to obedience were many, and in their moment infinite; those to disobedience were few, poor, and trifling.

The law under which our first parents were placed is styled in the Scriptures, 'the first or old covenant;' and is commonly called by divines, the covenant of works; in distinction from the new or second covenant, of which Christ is the mediator, and which is called the covenant of grace. A covenant of works is no other than a law requiring obedience, and prohibiting disobedience, promising a reward to the former, and threatening punishment to the latter. It takes, in this case, the name of a covenant, rather than that of a law, (although it has all the nature and sanctions of a law,) because God was pleased to communicate his will to man in the form of a covenant: a mode, gentle, condescending, and highly expressive of the divine benignity.

No being already sinful, can be possibly holden guiltless under such a covenant; or, in better language, when tried for his conduct, 'be justified.' His former crimes render it impossible that it should become a covenant of life to him. To offer the conditions of such a covenant to beings of this character, would be merely to tantalize them; since by the very terms of it they would be originally fixed in a state of condemnation. Accordingly, when God proposed to place mankind anew, in a state of probation, he 'set forth Christ as a propitiation for the remission of sins, already past;' and offered to accept of his obedience in their stead, as the ground of their justification.

But sinless creatures are, with perfect and obvious propriety, placed under such a covenant. Their character being spotless, is such as to admit of their justification on the ground of their own obedience. If that obedience should, during the time of trial, be perfect, their justification and reward must follow of course, from the conditions of the law itself; and no atonement could be necessary for them. Thus the holy angels obeyed, and were justified. Thus Adam would have been justified, had he continued obedient. Thus also the evil angels fell, and were condemned.

V. *We learn also that the obedience of Adam, as prescribed by this law, was concentred in a single point; and was thus rendered easy, and so far as might be, secure, in a manner strongly expressive of the goodness of God.*

If he eat not of the forbidden fruit, he was approved.

I do not intend, that he was not required to obey God in all things. This unquestionably was demanded of him, as well as of every other creature; and was beyond a doubt his indispensable duty. But I mean, that God absolutely suspended his acceptance, justification, and reward, on the single point of his abstaining from the forbidden fruit. This mode of dealing with Adam, rendered his obedience peculiarly easy. It brought the duty, which he was especially required to perform, up to his view, in the most distinct manner possible; and rendered it too intelligible to be mistaken. No room was left for doubt or debate. The object in question was a sensible object perfectly defined, and perfectly understood. No metaphysical or philosophical discussion was demanded or admitted. No uncertainty existed, as to the degree in which his obedience was required. He was left at no loss concerning the time,

the manner, or the nature of that conduct, which it was proper for him to observe. He knew the whole extent of what was commanded, and what was forbidden; and therefore could not but know whether he obeyed or disobeyed. This knowledge, always of high importance, was especially important to him, so lately brought into existence, so unversed in argumentation, acquainted only with plain facts, and under the guidance of nothing but mere common sense.

Besides, as his obedience was confined to a single point, he was taught and enabled to summon all his watchfulness, resolution, and strength, to this point only; to keep it supremely in view, and to be continually guarded against every thing which might lead him to transgress here. In making this the medium of trial, God secured him of course against all other dangers; so that he was left at full leisure to watch against all possible temptations to this single evil. Were an earthly parent to try the obedience of a child, and make his right to the inheritance of an estate depend on the performance of his filial duty; such a mode of trying him would be thought not only reasonable, but generous, noble, and strongly indicative of parental affection.

VI. *We learn from the text, that the rewards promised to him were infinitely great; and furnished, therefore, an infinite motive to obedience.*

That Adam, if faithfully obedient, would have inherited immortal life, and its various blessings, is evidently involved in the words of the law, 'If thou eatest thereof, thou shalt die.' If thou eatest not, thou shalt not die, but live for ever, is the necessary counterpart; without admitting which, the threatening expressed would mean nothing, and the law become a mere nullity. For in this case, his situation, whether he obeyed or disobeyed, would be exactly the same; and he would be left without a single motive to obedience. That the posterity of Adam have been essentially affected by his apostasy is not often denied, and I think cannot be, with even the appearance of reason. As I propose to discuss this subject hereafter, I shall for the present take this point for granted. If it be admitted, it must also be admitted, that they would have been equally interested in the benefits which would have resulted from his obedience, and would, like him, have lived for ever. After the apostasy, 'he begat a son in his own' moral 'likeness;' sinful and miserable, like himself. Had he obeyed, the children begotten by him would, without a reasonable doubt, have been born in his likeness also, and been destined, like himself, to unceasing holiness and immortal life. It will not be denied, that the motives here presented to obedience were in themselves of infinite magnitude. They were also motives, coming directly to his heart; affected him, as far as might be, with their whole importance, daily forced upon his view; and reasonably expected, if any thing could be expected, to prevail.

VII. *We learn that motives, equally powerful, lent their whole force to deter him from disobeying.*

The reward promised was immortal life; the punishment threatened was, I apprehend, eternal death. These two appear to be the only reward and punishment, ultimately promised and threatened in the divine law, as the proper retribution of obedience and disobedience. in the great kingdom of Jehovah. As this subject will naturally be brought up to view, when I come to consider the sentence pronounced on the offenders, I shall dismiss it for the present. What motives could possibly have greater influence on a thinking mind than these? With what force, especially, must they be addressed to such a mind as that of Adam; unbiassed by any influence of sin, loving obedience entirely, accustomed only to happiness, entitled to immortal life, and yet capable of losing finally this glorious state? What a contra t between these two objects; how affecting, how amazing!

REMARKS.

From these summary considerations it appears,

1. That God acted, in establishing the probation of our first parents, not only justly, but kindly and bountifully.

In forming our own estimate of this subject, we are prone to consider chiefly, and often solely, the issue of their trial; which we cannot but acknowledge, as well as feel to be, in the most striking point of view, incomprehensibly melancholy and dreadful. In this consideration also, we are partial, as being deeply interested judges, since we are involved in the calamities flowing from their transgression. But neither of these things ought to have any influence on our judgment concerning this subject. We ought to inquire only concerning the circumstances in which they were placed, and the conditions prescribed to them. If these were reasonable and just, then God was reasonable and just in prescribing them; and that they were so, even we cannot deny.

That it is, in the nature of the case, right for God to try all his intelligent creatures, cannot, I think, be rationally doubted; and that the trial of our first parents was eminently reasonable, in all its circumstances, appears to me unquestionable.

Their situation was clearly a strong proof of the bounty and kindness of their Maker; and was composed of abundance, peace, ease, and enjoyment, and attended by the living and delightful hope of superior good, unceasingly filling their continually enlarging faculties, views, and desires. It was necessary that they should be employed; and their employment was such, as ever since, notwithstanding the toil and suffering by which it has been accompanied, has been most congenial to human nature, and most delightful to the human heart. How much more desirable must it have been in a state to which toil and suffering were absolute strangers! Idleness would render even virtuous beings useless, and, so far as I see, worthless. Virtuous action is all the real worth of intelligent beings. Without it, there can exist no self-approbation, no peace of mind, no inherent dignity, no consciousness of excellence, no desert of esteem. To be employed, therefore, was indispensable both to the character and to the happiness of our first parents.

Their advantages for obeying, and their inducements to obedience, seem to have been in the best manner suited to such beings as they were, and peculiarly expressive of the goodness of God. It is difficult to imagine how [illegible] introduced into existence, could have [illegible] proceed in a more advantageous [illegible]

Of [illegible] to be bound to judge, [illegible] Had Adam stood [illegible] the equity of the [illegible] with reason, any more [illegible] of this subject ought [illegible] the conditions and cir-

cumstances themselves; as we should have formed it, had the conditions and circumstances been presented to us before the issue. In this case we should not have hesitated to acknowledge either the justice or the goodness of the Creator. Whenever we now judge otherwise, our judgment does not proceed from reason and evidence; but is the mere offspring of prejudice and feeling.

2. These considerations teach us also the extreme error and perverseness of those men, who, in the language of sneer and contempt, declare that God cannot be supposed to have condemned mankind for the mere eating of an apple.

I have here adopted the language which has been often used concerning this subject, not by infidels only, but by multitudes of such as profess to believe the Scriptures. It is, however, not the language of reason and common sense, but of partiality and passion; of a most unhappy nature, and existing in a very censurable degree.

Nothing in which God is concerned, or is supposed to have been concerned, can be the proper object of contempt or sneer, of sport or ridicule. Every thought concerning this great, pure, and awful Being, ought to spring from the most profound reverence; and whenever expressed, ought to be uttered only in the most reverential terms. Especially are we bound to exclude all levity of mind from a case of such deep importance and amazing concern, as the apostasy of man; an event which not only exposed the immediate subjects of it to the divine wrath, and the final sentence of reprobation, but entailed also an endless multitude of miseries, as well as an endless course of depravity, on their sinning progeny. The exposure of a single human soul to the anger of God, and to the miseries of perdition, is a subject too solemn to be taken up by a trifling mind, or discussed with a thoughtless tongue. When we are considering sin and condemnation, the guilt and miseries of the present life, or the endless corruption and sufferings of the life to come; whatever else may be in unison with these subjects, sport and sneer are only discordant; and jar and grate upon the ear of a sober man with a harshness, equally unsuited to the nature of the subjects, and distressing to every rational feeling. He who can adopt sentiments of contempt and ridicule; and still more, he who can utter them, in a case where his all is at stake; is a madman, much fitter to grope in bedlam, than to mingle with rational society.

The phraseology here adopted is totally unjust and unfounded, totally false and hollow. It insinuates, and intentionally insinuates, that God was influenced in his condemnation of our first parents by a resentment, excited only by the value which he placed on the forbidden fruit; and that, as exhibited in this part of the Scriptures, he was moved by these weak and pitiful passions with which men at times violently and foolishly resent the loss of their own property. As the value of the fruit was insignificant, [illegible] thing: these men conclude, that God [illegible] as to be angry at the [illegible] punishment, much less so [illegible] gressors. Were [illegible] fess to argue, [illegible] admit, that God cannot [illegible] them at all for the [illegible]

But the principle itself [illegible] subject; the argument deriv[illegible] out a foundation. The Scriptures, neither here, nor elsewhere, present us with any such views of God. Nothing is more remote from the story actually told, or from the doctrines really expressed. Every thing which is taught by the Bible concerning this subject, is highly solemn and affecting.

Our first parents were condemned, because they disobeyed their Maker, revolted from his authority, and rebelled against his government. Whatever was the mode, whatever was the instrument of the rebellion, the sin was substantially the same. The same authority was denied, the same obligation broken; and, of course, the same guilt was thus far incurred. There is however a difference in transgressions, and a plain one, which renders the guilt greater in proportion to the smallness of the temptation. That disposition which disobeys under the influence of a small temptation is certainly worse than that which, resisting such a temptation, yields only to inducements which are very great. This rule of judging is universal; and in other cases, is acknowledged without a question. It ought to be acknowledged here. Had Adam disobeyed, to gain the dominion of the universe, or admission into heaven; these men would have pronounced the trial unreasonable: because the temptation was evidently too great for his faculties, and disproportioned to his ability to resist. On the same principle they ought now to acknowledge, that the trial was wholly equitable; because it allowed of no temptations, except such as were insignificant and trifling. Thus the argument is directly against them, and unanswerably refutes their favourite doctrine.

The fruit, whatever it was, was plainly of no importance in the possession, to Him who, at his bidding, can in a moment call into existence a world, or a million of worlds, with all their furniture and beauty. Nor has it, in this sense, the most remote relation to the subject in hand. The guilt of our first parents lay solely in rebelling against the will of God, their Creator, Sovereign, and Benefactor. For this rebellion they were justly condemned, if God can justly condemn a rebellious creature.

3. We are taught by this passage of Scripture, in one important particular, the views which God entertains of sin.

The sentence here denounced against disobedience, is denounced against the first act. 'In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.' The death threatened in this law, is threatened to a single transgression. Accordingly, for a single transgression they were afterward condemned.

How different is this exhibition of the mind of God, concerning this subject, from the views which we are accustomed to cherish! We are prone to believe, that even after numerous transgressions, nay, after the sins of a whole life, God will still regard us with so much favour, that we shall scarcely be condemned. Our first parents eat the forbidden fruit, and were condemned. How many things, apparently much more aggravated, have we done! Yet how greatly are we at ease concerning the divine anger, and our approaching destination. Under the persuasion that we are not so sinful as others, and indeed, that we are scarcely sinful at all, we hear the law, the transgression, and the penalty, awfully resounded in our ears; and hardly suppose ourselves interested in either. To the final judgment, and

the final condemnation of the wicked, we turn a careless, self-satisfied eye; as objects which, however interesting to others, have little or no reference to ourselves. Thus flattered and supported by views of our guilt, utterly opposed to the Scriptures, and wholly contrary to those of God, we go on in the commission of sin without any serious alarm, and persuade ourselves, that whether 'the Lord will do good' to us or not, 'he' certainly 'will never do evil.' In this deplorable manner life is spent, the day of repentance trifled away, and the hope of redemption and forgiveness lost for ever.

But let every sinner in this house remember, that he was condemned for his first sin, for the second, for the third, and for every one which has followed. Call to mind, then, I beseech you, the amazing number of transgressions actually charged to the account of every sinner present. Think how many have been committed in a single day; how many more in a week, in a month, in a year. How astonishing must be the sum of those which are committed in a whole life! The same God, who condemned Adam for one transgression, regards every sin of which *you* have been guilty, with the same abhorrence. How awful was the sentence of condemnation pronounced on him! What then can remain for you in your present condition, but 'a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation!'

SERMON XXVII.

PROVIDENCE.—THE TEMPTATION AND FALL.

Now the serpent was more subtile than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: but of the fruit of the tree, which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: for God doth know, that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened: and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat; and gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat.—Gen. iii. 1—6.

In the last Discourse, I considered the situation of our first parents in the state of trial, in which God was pleased to place them; and the conditions of the law or covenant under which they were placed. These, I endeavoured to show, were just and reasonable; and such as clearly spoke the benevolence of God.

In the text we are informed of the result of this trial, viz. that they transgressed the law, fell from their original purity, forfeited the favour and blessing of God, and were condemned to suffer the penalty of the law.

In this remarkable passage of Scripture, four things especially claim our serious attention:—

I. The character of the tempter:

II. The manner of the temptation:

III. The character and circumstances of the persons tempted; and,

IV. The consequences of the temptation.

I. *The character of the tempter demands our attention.*

The tempter is exhibited to us here by the name of the Serpent; or, as in the Hebrew, 'that Serpent.' This phraseology naturally leads us to imagine that a part of this discourse, as originally written, has been lost; altered perhaps by Moses, according to the command of God; or afterwards by some prophet, according to the same command; because the passage had answered the end intended by it, and was not henceforth a necessary part of the canon of Scripture. Or perhaps it was originally differently written, and the present language is owing to some mistake of a transcriber. Of this Serpent, St John declares that he was Satan; the head or leader of those angels, 'who kept not their first estate,' but revolted from God, and threw off their subjection to his government.

This exalted being, unsatisfied with his dignity and glory in heaven, appears to have aspired to a station still higher, and to have chosen to hazard the loss of all which he possessed, rather than to continue in that in which he was placed; a station, not improbably, the first in the created universe. In thus aspiring, he fell from this height to the lowest depth of degradation, guilt, and misery; and completely verified the declaration of Christ, that such as have been 'first,' will in various instances be 'last' in the great kingdom of God.

After his fall, the evil passions which began to influence him in heaven, appear to have gained an entire ascendency. All his purposes have, since that event, been evil, mischievous, and abominable; and the means by which he has laboured to accomplish them have been base, grovelling, and suited to the nature of the purposes.

That upon which he now entered was probably as base, as baneful, as unjust, and as cruel as was ever formed: and it will perhaps be more remembered with [illegible] unless we are to [illegible] successfully solicited [illegible] the crucifixion of the [illegible]

[illegible] to this work [illegible] such as these. [illegible] provoked at the [illegible] as men, possessing [illegible] to his own; because [illegible] and consequently happy

also; because they stood higher in the approbation of God, and the estimation of angels; and because they were, in prospect, the heirs of immortal life and endless enjoyment.

His *resentment* against God, which fired his rebellious spirit at all times, now saw and seized what he thought an advantageous opportunity, to disappoint his great Enemy of his favourite design; to overcast the face and glory of his new creation, to dishonour his name, to disturb again the peace of his kingdom, and to frustrate purposes which seemed to be near, if not nearest to his heart.

His *pride* also was, doubtless, greatly gratified with the prospect of being able to disappoint his Maker; to counteract his designs, and to prove that his wisdom was not so great as to secure him from being thwarted and vanquished by the sagacity of his enemy.

Nor was his *malevolence* probably less concerned in this enterprise. He had now become the professed, habitual, and eternal enemy of God, and of his creation. Good he regarded, wherever he saw it, with an evil and malignant eye, and an aching heart. That others were happy, was, to his debased feelings, a certain source of misery. The only emotions which resembled happiness in his mind were now those, which, in the true fiend-like manner, exulted in overcoming others, in destroying or lessening their enjoyments, and in reducing them to the same level of deformity and wretchedness with himself. These emotions could not but be strongly excited by the prospect of ruining a world of happy beings; such as were, and were to be, our first parents and their offspring.

For the gratification of these abandoned dispositions, he was prepared to employ any means. Accordingly, he chose rather to inhabit and animate a serpent, and ally himself to the brutes, than to fail of his design. In the body of this serpent he approached and accosted Eve; doubtless expecting what actually took place, that both himself and his purposes would in this way be effectually concealed.

II. *The manner of the temptation was remarkably distinguished by art and subtlety.*

He accosted the general mother of mankind when she was alone, and of course most unguarded. Had Adam been present, it seems unquestionable, that both would have assisted each other; and that their mutual strength might have resisted with success the insidiousness which was sufficient to prevail over one.

He began his address to her with a question which involved in it apparently, not impiety, but surprise; and which was calculated in the highest degree to excite her attention and curiosity, without raising in her mind any alarm or even suspicion. 'Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?' Can this be possible? What [illegible] answer [illegible] what purpose were these fruits [illegible] to be eaten, and eaten by you? [illegible] is it possible [illegible]

Had [illegible] the honest [illegible] and fled [illegible] said just [illegible] Hence she [illegible] him in his [illegible] all. The [illegible] suspected by her, [illegible] themselves dangerous, and leading easily to a fatal issue.

Eve, in the native simplicity and integrity of her heart, replied, 'We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden. But of the fruit of the tree, which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, nor shall ye touch it, lest ye die.'

This answer brought the subject immediately to the point, which the tempter wished; and gave him a fair opportunity, without directly denying the divine prohibition, to seduce the heart of his victim. He replied accordingly, 'Ye shall not surely die. For God doth know, that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened; and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.'

Nothing could, in such circumstances, be more artfully conducted. It was not a difficult thing in itself to persuade Eve that she should not die. Death was an evil, whose nature she could but very imperfectly comprehend, and of which she had known no example. But of the pleasantness of the fruit, its fragrance and beauty, she had a distinct comprehension. She also in all probability knew, in some degree, the character of those '*gods*,' (*Elohim*, that is, angels,) to whose nature, knowledge, and dignity, she was to rise by eating the prohibited fruit. At the same time, he applied directly to the only object which was likely to be to her an object of desire. She and her husband were surrounded with good; and had nothing to regret, and nothing to fear. Their only danger seems to have been on the side of coveting more, because they already had so much; and of wishing, because they were now so wise and happy, to become wiser and happier. The tempter, by his own experience, perfectly understood the power of this mode of attack, and the proper avenue, through which to introduce the temptation. Eve knew that angels were superior to her, as she was superior to the brutes; and probably knew not, but that this was the way in which they became angels. These views would naturally make her consider the tree, as wholly to be 'desired to make one wise;' and lead her to forget the danger of disobedience.

At the same time, the boldness and impudence of the tempter's assertions, probably astonished and confounded her. There is something in the confidence with which, at times, assertions are made, which has always more or less commanded belief in the ignorant and inexperienced; such as she was at this time. To her he appeared to understand the subject in a manner, of which she had never before formed a conception; and the boldness and peremptoriness of his declarations gave them such an air of truth and wisdom, as she was unprepared to resist. Nor did he fail to avail himself of the influence of that passion which is so universal, so easily kindled, and so powerfully operative in the minds of all her descendants: viz. *jealousy*. 'God doth know, that in the day ye eat thereof, your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods.' In this speech he artfully but evidently insinuated, that the true reason why the tree was forbidden, was that God knew this to be its nature and efficacy; that the prohibition was therefore insincerely and unkindly made; and that the whole proceeding, on the part of God, was sinister, selfish, and oppressive.

This proceeding gave an entirely new aspect to the [illegible] and conduct of God; and to a mind beginning to be tinctured with jealousy, rendered that cha-

racter unamiable, and that conduct suspected and unworthy.

When this was accomplished, and Eve had let go her hold on her glorious Benefactor, till then absolutely loved, venerated, and trusted; she was prepared for every thing which could follow. A little contemplation of the fruit itself, after she had begun the course of infidelity in her heart, led her, as temptations have always led the heart of unbelief, to direct transgression and open rebellion. To eat it, she now perceived, would at once gratify her taste, and raise her to the envied distinction which was promised.

Such is the summary account which God has thought proper to give us in his word, of one of the two most important transactions which this world has ever seen. A part only, and not improbably a small one, of the events which actually took place, is recorded. That various other things passed on this occasion, cannot be doubted. Besides the abruptness of the introduction, the first question appears to be asked in consequence of something which had preceded. These outlines the great English poet has filled with several natural and interesting circumstances, which, or something like which, may, not improbably, have happened. It is not difficult to believe that the serpent may have alleged, that he himself had eaten of the fruit, and had not died; but on the contrary had gained, from its mysterious and happy influence, the powers of understanding and speech, with which he appeared to be elevated above his kindred brutes.

Be this as it may; it seems evident that the story, as here told, is either the close, or the epitome, or both, of a full account of the transaction. Yet, as it is, it is a specimen of consummate art, insidiousness, and fraud. The manner of address, on the part of the serpent, is calculated insensibly to insinuate and inspire jealousy and irreverence towards God; uneasy and repining thoughts of the condition in which man was placed by him; ardent ambition to be like angels in knowledge, happiness, and glory; and longing desires to eat the forbidden fruit for this end, together with strong hopes that no evil consequences would follow the transgression.

III. *The character of the persons tempted was probably singular.*

They were newly created; were innocent, were holy; and, considering the short period of their being, were undoubtedly possessed of no small discernment in divine things. They loved truth, were free from all biasses and prejudices, possessed a vigorous understanding, and thus were prepared for a ready reception of every truth, and for a rapid progress in useful knowledge. The progress which they actually made must have been great, under such advantages, compared with what, at first thought, may seem probable.

Still they were imperfect beings, without experience, and destitute of knowledge in many particulars, which would naturally be wished in a case where art and falsehood were employed against them; and, although furnished with a clear comprehension of their own duty, were totally ignorant of the character, and unable readily to conjecture the designs of their adversary. The first deceit which they ever knew, was now practised on themselves; and the first falsehood, of which they ever heard, was now directed to their own destruction. Of the rebellion of the angels, they probably knew nothing; and of the character of the tempter, they would not naturally form even a suspicion. Accustomed to hear only truth, they would not easily expect a lie; and habituated only to faithfulness and friendship, fraud and malevolence were, in their approach to them, assured of a necessary and sufficient disguise. That artless, child-like simplicity, which so delights the mind, and embellishes the pictures of the historian and the poet; which adorned the life, and endeared and enforced the lessons of the Redeemer himself; and which now constitutes no small part of evangelical excellence; was then a principal trait of their character. In the peculiar kind of wisdom which we call prudence, they certainly had made little progress; and caution must have been known to them only in lessons of instruction.

Thus they were, in several important respects, beings fitted for imposition, and not unnaturally the victims of insidiousness and cunning. The same means, at the present time, insnare persons of the same character; and it is not in the nature of things, that superior sagacity, however employed, should not possess the power of influencing, more or less, the same simplicity. Firm obedience, such as they were bound to render to their God, a prompt, undeliberating refusal, and an original, steadfast determination not to listen, would have secured them from yielding; but when they began to hear, and to investigate, they began to be exposed; and their danger increased with every step of their progress in inquiry.

In the meantime, it seems that neither of them thought of supplicating the aid of their Creator. A single prayer would have put the tempter to flight, and dissolved the charm of the temptation. A single recollection also of his commands, his kindness, and his instructions, might easily have produced the same effect. But neither prayer nor recollection was summoned to their assistance. Like their descendants, when forgetful of God, and, in a sense forgotten by him, they were weak, frail, and exposed to every danger.

IV. *The consequences of the temptation were, as you well know, eminently unhappy.*

Eve, pleased with the appearance of the prohibited fruit, and warmed with the thought of becoming wise; of leaving her present humble station, and assuming that of an angel, rashly ventured on the forbidden ground; disobeyed the command of her Creator, defiled herself with sin, and yielded her title to immortal life. In the same manner, Adam also partook of the transgression, and of all its miserable effects; lost his innocence, and resigned his dominion, glory, and happiness. The remoter consequences of this event, I shall have occasion to consider in a future discourse. The remainder of this, I shall occupy with some considerations on two great questions, often and earnestly asked, concerning this subject, and with a few practical remarks.

The first of the questions to which I have referred, is this: Since our first parents were entirely holy, how could [illegible]

[illegible] proper form, is no [illegible]

[illegible],

[illegible] of God?

[illegible] philosophical an-

[illegible] embarrassed

[illegible] been attempted.

[illegible] has been in a great mea-

sure abstract: and being supposed to have meaning when it had none, and to convey ideas which it did not contain, has served only to bewilder, where it was intended to instruct.

The common method of conducting the investigation of this subject has been, to seek for some cause in the nature of man, styled a *principle of action*, to which this effect might be fairly attributed. As the principles of moral action in Adam must have been holy, and could in no degree have been sinful; it is inquired, How could a holy principle be the cause of a sinful action?

It will be obvious to a careful examiner, that in this inquiry the word, *principle*, is intended to denote a fixed, unchangeable cause; productive only of effects, of the same moral nature; and is supposed to exist, and to operate, during the interval of transgression. On this foundation the inquiry is made; and if the foundation be solid and just, the inquiry cannot be answered; because, in the actual case, viz. the case of our first parents, there was no other principle of action, beside a holy principle.

But in this scheme of thought there is a plain and important fallacy: not improbably originated, and certainly established, by the use of the word, *principle*. I do not deny, on the contrary, I readily admit, that there is a cause of moral action in intelligent beings, frequently indicated by the words, principle, affections, habits, nature, tendency, propensity, and several others. In this case, however, as well as in many others, it is carefully to be observed, that these terms indicate a cause which, to us, is wholly unknown, except that its existence is proved by its effects. There is, as every man who does not embrace the doctrine of casual or contingent existence must admit, a reason why one being is holy and another sinful, or why the same being is holy at one time and sinful at another, as truly as that there is a reason why he exists. There is also a reason why a being is, at some times, more strongly inclined to a regular practice of sin, or holiness, than at others. Our judgment concerning moral beings, is customarily formed in accordance with these truths. We speak of human nature as sinful, intending not the actual commission of sin, but a general characteristic of man, under the influence of which he has committed sins heretofore, and is prepared and is prone to commit others. With the same meaning in our minds, we use the phrases, sinful propensity, corrupt heart, depraved mind; and the contrary ones, holy or virtuous disposition, moral rectitude, holiness of character, and many others of the like import. When we use these kinds of phraseology, we intend that a reason really exists, although undefinable and unintelligible by ourselves, why one mind will, either usually or uniformly, be the subject of holy volitions, and another, of sinful ones. We do not intend to assert that any one, or any number of the volitions of the man whom we characterize, has been or will be holy or sinful; nor do we indeed design to refer immediately to actual volitions at all. Instead of this, we mean to indicate a state of mind generally existing, out of which holy volitions may, in one case, be fairly expected to arise, and sinful ones in another: such a state as that, if it were to be changed, and the existing state of a holy mind were to become the same with that of a sinful mind, its volitions would henceforth be sinful, and *vice versa*. This state is the cause, which I have mentioned; a cause, the existence of which must be admitted, unless we acknowledge it to be a perfect casualty, that any volition is sinful rather than holy. This cause is what is so often mentioned in the Scriptures, under the name of the heart: as when it is said, 'The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.' I have already remarked that this cause is unknown except by its effects. From these however we learn, that it is not so powerful, nor so unchangeable, as to incline the mind in which it exists, so strongly to holiness as to prevent it absolutely from sinning, nor so strongly to sin as to prevent it absolutely from acting in a holy manner. Both revelation and facts, the only sources from which we derive any knowledge of the subject, place this truth beyond a reasonable debate. Beings who have sinned, have afterwards become holy; and beings who have been holy, have afterwards sinned: and nothing more seems necessary to explain this subject to us sufficiently, than barely to suppose, what we cannot avoid supposing, that a temptation actually presented to the mind, is disproportioned in its power, to the inclination of that mind towards resistance.

I have now, I flatter myself, prepared the way for introducing the only intelligible, and in any degree satisfactory method of examining this subject, which is, to consider the man, and the facts; and not the abstract principles.

In this view, the case stands thus: God created a moral being, capable, in the nature of things, of either sin or holiness. Originally, this being was holy; that is, disposed to obey the will of God; possessing a state of mind propense to virtuous, and opposed to sinful conduct. Fitted by his moral nature to be operated on by motives, as all moral beings are, he was placed in a world filled with motives, of which some induced to obedience, and others to disobedience. Wherever the means of happiness and misery exist, such motives exist of course, and of both kinds; for these means themselves are the motives, or perhaps more properly, the happiness and misery are the motives. Now it is plain, that in such a world (and all possible worlds except a world of perfect misery must be such) motives of both kinds must, at times, be present to the view of such a being. It is equally evident, that some of the motives to sin may, considered by themselves, become to such a being stronger inducements to action, than some of the motives to holiness. In other words, higher enjoyment may be found, or expected, in some courses of sin, than in some courses of holiness. That to a mind capable of contemplating one or a few things only at once, and of feeling with different strength at different times, the motives to sin may chiefly or alone be present, will not be doubted. For it is apprehended, no finite watchfulness is sufficient to realize, with absolute certainty, the full presence of the motives to holiness at all times; nor to keep out of view all the motives to sin. Of course, every such mind may, for aught that appears, be induced by some supposable motive, or combination of motives, at some times and in some circumstances at least, to yield to temptation and disobey.

There is no proof from the nature of things, that finite strength and stability are sufficient to resist all possible motives to sin. From facts we are irresistibly led to admit the contrary doctrine. Angels, though entirely holy, yielded to such motives; as did our first parents also, who possessed the same virtuous character. These

facts furnish a strong presumption at least, that it is not within the limits of created perfection to resist temptation in all possible cases; and that the final perseverance of saints and angels, both in a state of trial, and in a state of reward, is derived ultimately from the almighty power of God.

In a former discourse I observed, that there were three methods in which sin, or moral evil, is supposed to have been introduced into the universe. The first is, that he permitted it to exist. One of the remaining two is, that God could not, without destroying the free agency of his creatures, prevent them from sinning: the other, that he creates their sinful volitions.

To the former of these methods of accounting for the introduction of sin, it is unanswerably objected, that God has actually preserved some of the angels from falling; and that he has promised to preserve, and will therefore certainly preserve, the spirits of just men made perfect, and that this has been and will be done, without infringing at all on their moral agency. Of course, he could just as easily have preserved Adam from falling, without infringing on his moral agency. To the second scheme I object,

1. That it is wholly without proof.

But a doctrine of this magnitude ought not to be admitted, without the most ample evidence.

2. It is unnecessary.

All the satisfaction which this subject admits, is capable of being derived as completely from attributing this event to the agency of creatures, as to the agency of God. At the same time it is as easy to conceive, to evince, and to admit, that man is an agent, as that God is an agent. No difficulty attends the former case, which does not in an equal degree attend the latter. If man is an agent, then there is no necessity of tracing his actions beyond himself. We find no necessity, when we think of God as an agent, of tracing his actions beyond himself. There is no more necessity of tracing human actions beyond man; nor is there, so far as I can perceive, any additional light thrown on the subject of human agency, by referring our actions to God. That God created us; that he can, and does, influence our actions in various ways as he pleases; and that even we can in various ways influence the actions of each other, must be admitted on all hands. But I see no proof, that God is the author or agent of human actions; nor the least difficulty in believing, that he has made us capable of being the agents and authors of them ourselves.

3. It increases the difficulties which it professes to remove.

It is at least as difficult to conceive how God can be the author of actions, existing in a human mind, as how that mind can be the author of them. Here, therefore, no advantage is gained. On the other hand, difficulties are multiplied without end. No conception is more perplexing or distressing than this: that God creates our sin by an act of his omnipotence, and then punishes it.

4. The Scriptures nowhere assert this doctrine.

The passages commonly alleged in support of this doctrine, appear to me at least to be forced from their natural, obvious interpretation, for this purpose. Nor ought it to be admitted, that a doctrine of this importance would be taught in ambiguous and obscure passages only. A strong support of this opinion is found in the copiousness, variety, and explicitness of the passages, in which the Scriptures teach us the agency of God in our sanctification. This important distinction between the two cases, ought to have its full weight with our minds; and should, I think, be considered as decisive.

Should it be here objected, that the scheme which I am contending for, is opposed to the doctrine of God's agency in our sanctification: I deny the objection to be true. The Scriptural doctrine of sanctification does not, I apprehend, teach us that he is the author, or creator, even of our holy volitions. On the contrary, Scriptural regeneration is the creation, not of our volitions, but of such a state, temper, or disposition, that the mind itself produces other volitions, than those which it would have produced in its former state. After regeneration, God affects the mind in sanctifying it, in the manner commonly denoted by the word influence; and not by a work of creation, continually carried on in the mind. Hence God is said to sanctify his children by his word, as well as by his Spirit. But it is impossible that his word should any way be concerned with the creation of new volitions.

To these observations it ought to be added, that several of the objections heretofore alleged against the doctrine, that the soul is a mere chain of ideas and exercises, lie with equal weight against this. These have, however, been too lately mentioned to demand a repetition.

The second question to which I have referred, and which, like the other, affects not the sin of Adam only, but all sin, is this: Why did God permit Adam to fall?

Before I attempt to answer this question, it will be proper to observe, that according to all the schemes of accounting for the introduction of moral evil which have been mentioned, the fall of Adam was permitted, that is, was not hindered by God. It may be also proper to state the difference, which in my own view exists, between permitting or not hindering sin, and creating it. It is this: In the former case, man is the actor of his own sin. His sin is therefore wholly his own; chargeable only to himself; chosen by him unnecessarily, while possessed of a power to choose otherwise; avoidable by him, and of course guilty, and righteously punishable. Exactly the same natural power is in this case possessed by him while a sinner, which is afterward possessed by him when a saint; which Adam possessed before he fell, and which the holy angels now possess in the heavens. This power is also, in my view, perfect freedom; a power of agency as absolute as can be possessed by an intelligent creature.

In the latter case, the volitions of man are immediately produced by omnipotence; are the acts of God himself, and not at all of man; are merely annexed to man, as accidents; are in the natural sense necessary, and irresistible; and, so far as I can see, are in no sense chargeable to man.

In the former case, God is supposed to create beings, possessed of the full power to originate any, and every moral action; in the natural sense, able to stand, as well as liable to fall; and falling, only because they did not make the best use which they could, of their power to stand. In the latter case, he created their apostasy. Their fall therefore was irresistible unless it should be proved that a creature can resist omnipotence.

With these things premised, I observe, in answer to this question, that a state of trial supposes of course a capability of falling, and cannot exist without. That, in this state, God is obliged to secure his creatures from falling, has not hitherto been proved; and certainly

ought not to be admitted without proof. If he rewards them with happiness proportioned to their obedience, so long as they continue obedient; I see not how any thing farther can be demanded at his hands. Perfect justice seems, in this case, to be satisfied.

Still it will be asked, why God suffered a thing so evil and distressing as sin to exist?

Probably the best answer ever given to this question in the present world, is that which was given by Christ, concerning one branch of the divine dispensations to mankind; 'Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight.' It was a dispensation approved by infinite wisdom, and seen by the omniscient eye to be necessary towards that good which God proposed in creating the universe.

The restless and roving mind of man is, however, often unsatisfied with this answer. I will therefore add by way of explanation, and I hope with that profound reverence which all creatures owe to their Creator, and that diffidence which becomes a creature of yesterday, that if Adam had not fallen, Christ would not have redeemed mankind: for had there been no apostates, there could have been no Redeemer, and no redemption. The mercy of God, therefore, the most perfect of his attributes, and the consummation of his excellence, would have been unknown to the universe. All the blessings bestowed on mankind, would have been the reward of the obedience of Adam and his posterity. But the blessings bestowed on glorified saints, are the rewards of the obedience of the eternal Son of God. These rewards could not have been given, had not Christ obeyed: and Christ could not have obeyed, had he not become the substitute for sinners, or the Mediator between God and apostate creatures. These rewards, also, will differ from those in the former case, as the respective persons, who obeyed, differed in the excellence of their characters, and the value of their obedience.

Had Adam obeyed, it is, I think, highly probable that the original world would have continued, and the present heavens. The new earth and the new heavens, which will be created after the Mediatorial kingdom is finished, would never have been. No human beings would have been admitted into heaven. None of that joy would have been experienced, which now springs up in heavenly minds over the repentance and salvation of sinners, and which will increase and brighten for ever. None of those things, 'into which angels desire to look,'* would have been brought into being; nor would that glorious purpose of the creation of all things, mentioned by the apostle, the knowledge acquired by 'principalities and powers in heavenly places, concerning the manifold wisdom of God,' disclosed in his dispensations to his church, † have ever been accomplished.

By the redemption of Christ, heaven as well as earth, angels as well as men, are materially changed from their former circumstances and character, Nay, the whole immense and eternal kingdom of Jehovah, by means of this amazing work, assumes a new aspect; and both creation and providence are invested with a new character. God is seen by his intelligent creatures in new manifestations of beauty, glory, and loveliness. Throughout never-ending ages, virtuous minds will be enlarged with knowledge, exalted in holiness, and improved in dignity and happiness, beyond all which would have otherwise been proper or possible; and their affections, obedience, and praise, become more refined and more elevated, in a rapid and regular progress. The former legal system, therefore, of which the primitive state of Adam was a part, had comparatively 'no glory, by reason of the excelling glory' of the system of redemption.

How far these observations may contribute to the satisfaction of the inquirer, I will not presume to determine. That the system of divine dispensations is now, and will for ever be, widely different from what it would have been, had the work of redemption not taken place, must, I think, be acknowledged. I will only add, that as 'we are of yesterday,' and, consequently, 'know nothing,' it is not, and cannot be, strange, that things of this extent should be so 'high,' and so vast, that 'we cannot attain to them.'

Should an emmet, from the top of his ant-hill, undertake to survey the world around him; and to descant on the beauty or deformity of the landscape, the suitableness of the soil, climate, and accommodations, for the settlement, health, husbandry, and commerce of men; and propose plans for the improvement of some of these things, and the reformation of others; we should probably consider him as a very imperfect judge of such subjects; and smile both at his presumption and his philosophy. With respect to the subject in hand, we are emmets; and take our survey only from the top of an ant-hill. When it is considered, that the consequences of this event reach through eternity, and that such wonderful consequences have already followed it, a small share of modesty will induce us to confess our inability to judge concerning it, and to take the station of humble learners at the feet of our Divine instructor rather than to ascend the chair of philosophical judgment and haughty decision.

REMARKS.

1. In this difficult part of the history of man, we cannot, I think, fail to see, how superior the Scriptural account of the introduction of moral evil into the world is to every other.

The Scriptural account is summarily this. Two beings, the parents of mankind, created holy, and placed by God in a paradise of good, were deceived and seduced by the insidious art of an evil and superior being, permitted, for wise and good purposes, to have access to them.

The two principal schemes of philosophy on this subject, are these:—(1.) That the soul was created holy, and was contaminated by being united to matter; because matter is the seat of sin and pollution:—(2.) That the soul was created holy, but apostatized in a pre-existent state.

Of the first, it is sufficient to say, that it is contrary, not to truth only, but to possibility: since it is clearly impossible that any being, except a thinking, voluntary one, should be the subject of either virtue or sin.

On the second, it is to be observed, that all the difficulties attend it, which attend the supposition of an apostasy in the present state. The difficulty does not at all lie in the fact, that man apostatized here, but in the fact, that he apostatized at all. Of course, whether we suppose the apostasy to have taken place in this world or in another, the difficulties involved in it still

* See 1 Pet. i. 12.

† See Eph. ii. 9, 10.

remain possessed of their full strength, and without being in the least degree obviated.

Besides, that man did pre-exist is a mere assumption, of which there is not a shadow of evidence; and against which even the light of nature furnishes strong probability.

2. In this story we see the amazing evil of sin, manifested in the conduct of the tempter.

What a disposition was that which was exhibited in the seduction of our first parents from their obedience. From what a state of innocence and happiness did it plunge them and their posterity! At the same time, no personal resentment operated, no revenge burned in his breast against them; for between him and them there had never been a controversy, nor even a connexion. They were ignorant that such a being as himself existed, and had never done nor wished him any evil whatever.

But he envied, he hated their virtue, their happiness, and their prospects. Under the influence of these infernal feelings, he laboured to destroy them, and a world with them; and voluntarily entailed on countless millions of intelligent beings, sin, and wrath, and ruin. How vast, how wonderful, how dreadful, is this malice! How hateful is he in whom it resided! Such is the true nature of all sin. In degree it may differ, in kind it is the same.

Let it be here remembered, that every tempter is employed substantially in the same manner. Every tempter, in seducing a fellow creature, is influenced by sin, and tempts to sin. The person tempted is induced to disobey God, to become guilty and odious, to incur his anger, and to expose himself to the miseries of the second death. What a dreadful employment is this! Yet how common, how evidently universal! No language seems sufficiently forcible to describe the turpitude of a murderer or a traitor. But how guiltless does the murder of the body seem, when compared with the murder of the soul. What treachery can be named with that which cheats an immortal being out of heaven, and deceives him into hell!

Nor is the mode in which temptations are usually conducted any other than that recited in the text. In every temptation, the truth of God is denied; his wisdom or goodness questioned; his conduct exhibited as strange, and his commands as unreasonable. Obedience is always represented as exposed to disadvantages, and sin as the true road to real and exquisite enjoyment. Jealousy is thus naturally kindled, discontent excited, and the man induced to repine at his lot; to murmur, in thought at least, against his Maker, and to covet and seek forbidden enjoyments.

In the meantime, the soul is flattered perpetually with the hope of safety in sin; is taught to expect exemption from punishment, and is boldly informed, that 'it shall not surely die.' Thousands and millions of times has this story been told, and repeated through every age, from the apostasy to the present hour. Thousands and millions also of foolish and unhappy wretches listen to the tale, because it is loved; and receive it on a tenth part of the evidence which they would demand, to enforce on their minds a single truth, or a single duty; or rather, they receive it first, and wait for the evidence till some future time. Eve is often censured for yielding to a tempter of finished cunning. How many of her descendants yield to fools and blockheads, to gross and blundering solicitations; unfurnished with even a plausible pretence, or that miserable consolation to sinners, an apology for the compliance. Let no one cast the first stone at our common parent, who is not conscious that he himself has not sinned in the same manner.

3. We learn from this story, that the only time of successful resistance to temptation is the moment when it is presented.

I have already remarked, that had our first parents promptly refused to listen, they would in all probability have escaped the snare. What is true of them is true of all their posterity. The very act of deliberating, results from want of sufficient faith in God, and sufficient firmness in our duty. In our deliberations, also, we are exposed to many dangers. We are ignorant, yet believe ourselves knowing; foolish, yet are vain of our wisdom; weak, yet are always ready to confide in our strength. Hence we form false conclusions from miserable premises: yet we think both the premises and conclusions sound, because they are devised by such sagacious beings as ourselves. In our love to sin, we have an enemy within us, of whose presence, or even existence, we are usually not aware, ever ready to aid the assaults of the enemy without. From our ignorance we are easily perplexed, from our vanity easily flattered, and from both easily overcome. Of our perplexity, every tempter takes advantage, while he covers the hook with a bait for our vanity. The more we reason, the more we plunge ourselves into difficulties, and the less hope do we find of an escape. The longer the assault continues, the more feeble, embarrassed, and irresolute do we become; and the more bold, powerful, and assured, our seducer: till at length, that resolution and understanding which at first would have gained an easy and certain victory, become an unresisting prey. 'Resist then the devil,' resist every tempter at first, at the moment of solicitation, 'and he will flee from you.'

4. We are also taught by this passage of Scripture, that the ultimate safety of mankind, when they are tempted, lies in God only.

Had Eve sought the protection of God, when she was assailed by the adversary, she had never fallen. Had she remembered the character of God, she had never believed the declarations of the tempter. Had she admitted no jealousy, no suspicion, of the divine wisdom and goodness, she had in all probability kept her happy state.

The same dangers attend all her descendants. If we wish to overcome, or escape temptations, it is indispensable that we remember the presence, and acknowledge the character of God; that we distrust in no degree his sincerity or kindness, and that we go directly to him for the succour which we need. The closing petition in the prayer taught by Christ to his disciples is, 'Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil:' that is, Suffer us not to be led into temptation: but should this danger betide us at any time, deliver us from the evil to which we shall be then exposed. Of six petitions only, of which this prayer consists; a prayer taught by him who knew all the dangers and necessities of man, this is one. So necessary did he determine this assistance and guardianship to be; and so necessary our continual prayer that it might be afforded.

In the first temptation, we see the doctrine strongly illustrated. Here no prayer ascended for aid. Here,

therefore, no aid was given; and here, left to themselves, the miserable victims were of course destroyed. Let us then learn wisdom, both from their example and their end. Let us avoid the one, that we may escape the other. For protection from tempters and temptations, both within us and without us, let our prayers unceasingly rise with fervent repetition. Especially, when the serpent approaches, when the charm is about to begin, and when his mouth is ready to open and swallow us up, let our cries for help ascend to heaven, that He, who is swift to hear, and always prepared to pity and relieve, may mercifully extend his arm, and snatch us from the jaws of destruction.

SERMON XXVIII.

PROVIDENCE—THE SENTENCE PRONOUNCED ON MAN.

And the Lord God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field: upon thy belly shalt thou go; and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life. And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel. Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception: in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee. And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake: in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life. Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.—Gen. iii. 14—19.

In my last Discourse, I considered at length the Temptation of our first parents, and their consequent Fall from holiness, and from the favour of God. The next subject which, in a system of theology, invites our attention, is the sentence which followed their transgression.

This sentence is contained in the text, and naturally divides itself, for our consideration, into three parts:

I. The sentence pronounced on the tempter:

II. That pronounced on the woman: and,

III. That pronounced on the man.

The order in which this subject is exhibited to us, is the same which existed in the temptation itself, and in the transgression also. The serpent first sinned in tempting the woman; the woman sinned next, in yielding to his solicitations, and eating the forbidden fruit; and the man last, in yielding to the solicitations of the woman.

On the sentence, as here pronounced, it will be proper to remark generally, that it is not a mere repetition of the words of the law. Nor is it to be considered, as in fact involving the whole of the sentence contained in the law. That sentence seems to have been left by God as it was originally denounced; and nothing more to have been now intended as a threatening, except to disclose to our first parents various evils, attendant on the state of guilt and degradation to which they had reduced themselves, and to remind them of the mortal condition in which they were now finally fixed. On the serpent indeed, a sentence new, and before undisclosed, was declared. The evils which he was to suffer in consequence of this sin, were announced: while in the same threatening was included also, a promise of great and singular benefits to those whom he had most wickedly seduced.

The original threatening of the law, or covenant, under which our first parents were placed, involved all the evils which they and their posterity were ever to suffer. The sentence now passed on the transgressors, unfolded, particularly, several distresses which they were hereafter to experience under this original threatening; and at the same time, furnished them with consolations of high importance.

I. *The sentence passed on the serpent claims a twofold consideration; in its literal meaning, and in its principal meaning.*

In the literal meaning of this denunciation, the serpent is 'cursed beyond all other beasts,' is doomed 'to creep on the ground, and to eat dust all the days of his life.' Perpetual war, it is declared, shall exist between 'his seed and that of the woman;' in which 'he shall bruise the heel' of his adversary, while his adversary 'shall bruise his head.'

This, which I have chosen to call the literal meaning of the sentence, is, I acknowledge, rather an application of it to the literal serpent. The language in which it is explained is, I think, plainly figurative; and involves, generally, a state of peculiar degradation and suffering. It has been supposed, and I apprehend justly, that the original condition of the serpent, as an animal, was superior and distinguished. Ancient opinions considered the serpent as winged, beautiful, and privileged above other animals. If these opinions be allowed to be just, it will be easily seen that the degradation was remarkable, and altogether calculated to convince our first parents of the miserable tendency and influence of transgression. In every view the condition specified is a condition deeply degraded, and suited obviously to show the proper effect of sin on all the instruments by which it was accomplished. Whatever the serpent lost, as well as whatever he suffered, was an infliction, properly evincing the hatred of God to every thing concerned in the seduction of mankind; and to show to their progenitors, in immediate consequence, both the

evil of which they had been guilty, and the certainty of their future punishment.

The enmity which was announced, and which has existed between the seed of the woman generally, that is, mankind, and the seed of the serpent, has been a source of innumerable evils to the serpent. Animals of this kind have ever been peculiarly hated and hunted, peculiarly attacked and destroyed, from the beginning. Even the harmless ones do not escape. A war of extermination has plainly been declared against them, and carried on through all generations with unrelaxing and unceasing animosity. In consequence of this hostility, millions of them have probably perished, which otherwise might have continued through the date allotted by providence to their being. In the meantime, not a small number of the human race have fallen victims to the enmity of these venomous beings; and have usually been wounded in the very part of the body mentioned in this prediction.

The principal meaning of this sentence, or its application to the allegorical serpent, the real tempter, is however of infinitely more importance, and has a totally superior claim to our attention.

The tempter and the woman were, in the transgression, united together as rebels against their Creator. In the eye of the tempter, this union was begun, only to be strengthened and perpetuated. He had once sinned, and was finally rejected by God. He therefore naturally, and in a sense, necessarily concluded, that rebellious men would be rejected also. No event had hitherto happened in the universe, which, to the view of a created being, rendered it possible for a rebel against his Maker to be restored. Satan therefore of necessity concluded, that sinning man would never be restored; and that God, who had created man holy, and destined him to endless enjoyment, would be wholly disappointed of his own favourite designs. At the same time, he confidently saw the whole race added to his own kingdom, and the regions of sin and misery enlarged, and peopled, by the inhabitants of another ruined world.

But he now, for the first time, was solemnly informed that a part, at least, of his expectations would perish. Man, he was here told, would on the one hand, be still his enemy, throughout succeeding ages; and himself, on the other, be made to suffer new and unknown, yet very alarming evils, from a descendant, or descendants, of this very woman whom he had beguiled into sin. 'His head,' the chief, the vital, the percipient part of himself, 'was to be bruised,' or crushed, by some one or other of the progeny of those whom he had insnared. That he understood the real and full import of this threatening, cannot be supposed; but it is obvious that he could not but perceive some very great and alarming punishment to be in store for his new and flagrant guilt. Thus all his hopes, like those of every hypocrite, were blasted in a moment; and were changed into that painful suspense and constant alarm, which are always more dreadful than any misery, except final and eternal woe.

From the actual fulfilment of this prediction, and the comments of the scriptural writers on the threatening contained in it, we are able to determine its full import with precision and certainty. The 'seed of the woman,' we know, was the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and the Redeemer of mankind. We are expressly taught that he, although by the instigation of the original tempter nailed to the cross and 'bruised' thus in 'his heel,' his inferior part, his flesh yet 'triumphed and made an open show of principalities and powers' in his crucifixion, and thoroughly 'led captivity captive,' after he had effectually spoiled them of all their glory.' In this great event, he not only vanquished 'death, but also destroyed him that had the power of death; that is, the devil.'

In this great event, he disappointed and ruined all the hopes and designs of this proud and malicious spirit. His future lot he rendered far more shameful and wretched than before; lowered his pride for ever in the dust; turned his malevolence backward on himself; mortified his envy anew, and inexpressibly; and made the race whom he had seduced, the instruments of completing his degradation and ruin.

From man, that is, from penitent, returning, and reformed man, this divine person 'took away the sting of' the threatened 'death;' and chiefly, the death itself which was threatened. The grave he opened anew, and forced it to surrender its captives to himself. For all those of this numerous race, who are willing to confide in him as their Redeemer, he opened the gates of immortality; of a new and far more glorious immortality than that which they had lost. He purchased for them the sanctification of the soul, the forgiveness of their sins, and 'an inheritance undefiled and eternal' among the very angels, to whose rank and character Eve, by eating the forbidden fruit, expected to arise. They indeed, in a manner, however, far different from that which was in the tempter's thoughts, 'will become as gods,' or angels; as the same Saviour has informed us; and will, together with them, receive felicity in a 'body, fashioned like unto his glorious body,' and inconceivably superior to the refined dust which composed the forms of our first parents. In a state perfectly sanctified and cleansed, they will enjoy a happiness, ennobled and expanded beyond all that heaven itself imagined, before the mediation of the Son of God; a happiness, suited to reward his infinitely meritorious obedience in the work of redemption. Thus the sum of happiness to the universe will be undoubtedly increased, and to an immense extent, by the very means which this haughty, malignant spirit employed for its destruction.

The character, the station, the residence, the employments, the honour, and the happiness of man will be wonderfully exalted; the exhibitions of the divine glory will be supremely enhanced; and the mercy of God, before unknown and unimagined, will be displayed with infinite and eternal splendour. God, in the new, peculiar, and most endearing relations of Father, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, far more intimate and affecting than those of Creator and Ruler, will be more nearly united to his intelligent creatures; and will be seen in more venerable and lovely exhibitions of his supreme excellence: while the themes of contemplation, gratitude, and praise, will be far more noble and interesting than could have been proper or possible, had not our first parents lost their primitive station and happiness. Thus the providence of God will wear a new and more glorious aspect; the divine kingdom assume a splendour and importance before unknown; and the universe become a different, and incomparably more exalted scene of being.

In the meantime the tempter himself, at the close of this earthly system, when all his wickedness shall have been acted, and all his wiles exhausted, will, together with his debased and wretched companions, be con-

signed to 'everlasting chains,' to total disappointment, to extreme humiliation, to eternal darkness, and to woe and despair, endless and inexpressible.

II. *The sentence pronounced on the woman, next demands our attention.*

This consisted of two parts: The pain and sorrow which were to attend her in bearing and bringing forth children, and her subjection to her husband. Neither of these would have had any being, had she resisted the temptation. She would have been a mother, but without pain and anguish; and she would have been a wife, but without any humiliating inferiority to her husband.

Now her state in both respects was entirely changed. Here life became full of sorrow, and largely acquainted with grief; and a great proportion of all her sufferings were to arise from these peculiar sources.

III. *The sentence on the man is the last proposed subject of consideration.*

This consists of four distinct parts; toil, sorrow, humiliation, and death.

In the original state of man, he laboured, but without toil. The earth brought forth its fruits spontaneously, and abundantly; and supplied him with food, without any necessary care or exertions of his own. He was formed to industry, that he might be useful, and of course dignified and virtuous, and not merely that he might eat. His faculties also were firm and undecaying, unsusceptible of weariness, and incapable of suffering. His labour was therefore voluntary and delightful; a privilege, and not a calamity. The sources of sorrow also were not then opened, and man had not learned to drink of its bitter streams. Fear, scorn, disease, bereavement, and all the moral causes of distress, were not yet appendages of this new world. Intemperance, sloth, impurity, falsehood, treachery, broken friendship, and iron-handed oppression, together with a long train of their miserable companions, were yet strangers to man.

His station, as well as his character, was in the meantime noble and dignified. Angels did not disdain to own and converse with him, as their friend and fellow servant. All his views, pursuits, wishes, and employments, were refined and elevated; and were suited to the immortal life and unspotted holiness in which he was created.

Death, the offspring of sin, had hitherto been an entire stranger to the great kingdom of God. All his creatures, and man as truly as any of them, were possessed of life literally endless; and looked forward through the perpetual succession of ages, without anxiety and without fear.

In all these great particulars, man was now destined to a total change of being. He was condemned to hard and painful toil, to a course of life in which a great proportion of the changes were merely varieties of suffering, to a degradation from all his honours and hopes, to a state of deep humiliation, and to death as the end of his earthly being, accompanied with a train of the most affecting distresses and horrors. In this toil, these afflictions, this degradation, and this melancholy end, both sexes shared in most respects alike. Both were henceforth sinful; both were degraded, both were unhappy, both were mortal.

A question of no small importance in theology, and often canvassed by divines, as well as other Christians, will very naturally be asked in this place; viz. what was the extent of the curse or original penalty, threatened in the covenant made with Adam?

That temporal death was threatened in this sentence will not be questioned. In my own opinion, spiritual death and eternal death, were also included.

That eternal death constituted a part of this sentence, appears to me evident; because,

1. Adam was plainly threatened with the loss of immortal life.

Whatever else was contained in the threatening, this must be allowed to be a part of it. It follows, therefore, that either eternal death was threatened, or annihilation, or temporal death, followed by eternal happiness. The last will not be pretended. The second, viz. annihilation, could not be threatened, because it was certainly no part of the design of God in the creation of man. It seems evident, therefore, that the first is the true and only scheme of this part of the Scriptures, because these three are the only possible interpretations of the passage.

2. In the sentence, a direct promise is made of the redemption of Christ, as the remedy for the curse which is here denounced.

But the redemption of Christ was not a remedy for that part of the curse, which denounced temporal death as the reward of the apostasy. Men still die, Adam died, notwithstanding the redemption of Christ. The remedy, therefore, mentioned in the sentence, did not refer to any thing contained in it, if temporal death was all which it contained. On the contrary, it referred to something of which Adam had heard, and at the time knew nothing. Yet it is plain that both he and his wife, in some good measure, knew the import of the remedy; for he, immediately after the sentence was pronounced, 'called his wife Eve,' or Chavoh, 'because she was the mother of all living;' that is, of all who should live for ever, by means of 'the seed of the woman;' and she, at the birth of Cain, says, 'I have gotten a man, the Lord;' that is, the promised Lord, or seed, who was 'to bruise the serpent's head.' As then they knew what was meant by the remedy; so I think it clear that they knew what the curse intended; and this, according to the view of the subject here presented, can be no other than eternal death.

That they understood, in some good measure, the meaning of both the remedy and the curse, is also evident from the fact, that they became penitent, and were accepted of God. There can be no repentance, where there is no hope of acceptance. Despair here, is the only predominant emotion; and with despair, repentance cannot, in the physical sense, co-exist. Without an atonement, repentance cannot be accepted. As an atonement was here promised, I cannot see how the repentance of our first parents could be accepted or offered, unless with a direct reference in their minds to that atonement, as the ground of their acceptance.

3. The apostle Paul appears to me to have settled this point, in the fifth chapter of his epistle to the Romans.*

As I cannot comment at this time on the passage at large, I shall refer you only to a single verse, which appears to me, in this respect, a summary of the whole. In verse sixteenth he says, 'And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one

* See from verse 12 to the end.

to condemnation: but the free gift is of many offences unto justification.' The judgment here mentioned is, unquestionably, the judgment originally passed on 'the one that sinned,' viz. Adam, and subsequently on all others, who have sinned after him. This is said to have been unto 'condemnation,' a condemnation from which we are delivered by the justification specified, and styled, in the next verse but one, 'the justification of life.' By this justification we are delivered from eternal death. Of course this is the death to which we, and Adam before us, were condemned by the judgment mentioned in this passage.

4. The death which rewards sin in fact, and which would have rewarded the sin of Adam, if Christ had not become a Mediator, and he a penitent, is eternal death.

The true import of the threatening is, I think, certainly learned from its execution. But this is an infliction of eternal death. The consequence is obvious and irresistible.

I do not, indeed, suppose our first parents to have been distinctly possessed of the exact meaning of the sentence. I consider them as only informed of the general import; and as being taught that they were to suffer, if disobedient, the perpetual loss of the favour and blessing of God, and to undergo the manifestations of his anger throughout their future existence. To this they were able to come as near in their views as they could, to adequate conceptions of temporal death.

That spiritual death was also threatened in this sentence, appears to me sufficiently evident for the reasons to be alleged, after I shall have mentioned the chief objection, which, so far as I am informed, has been made to this doctrine. It is this: Spiritual death is the very state which sinners, as such, love, the prime object of their choice, and what especially constitutes them sinners. To this I answer,

(1.) Spiritual death ought, in relation to this question, to be considered as threatened to Adam, and not as threatened to those who were already sinners.

Spiritual death, or habitual and immovable sin, in the view of Adam, a holy, spotless being, and hating wholly every sin, might, I think, be regarded not only as not chosen or loved by him, but as an object of supreme dread and horror. Let it be, for a moment, only considered how such a being must feel, under a sense of losing his holy character for ever, and of being confirmed, beyond recall, in a perpetual hatred of God, and a perpetual love and practice of sin; and, I believe, all serious persons will agree, that this debased, odious, and contemptible character must appear to him an evil literally infinite. To sin once, was, to him, an object of horror; but to be consigned for that sin to habitual and eternal rebellion and iniquity, and to become thus for ever hateful, vile, and despicable, must be on the one hand a loss, and on the other a suffering, dreadful beyond all conception except that of experience. It was, therefore, capable of being the subject of threatening or penalty, and that to any supposable degree.

(2.) Spiritual death is plainly the chief evil which is, or perhaps can be, suffered by guilty beings.

Perpetual and habitual sin, or that depraved state of soul which operates only in sinful actions, is an evil greater, if considered only as mere suffering, than perhaps all others.

It is, in the first instance, the source of all the opposition, or rather is itself all the opposition, of the soul to God: the alienation from God, consciousness of his disapprobation and wrath, fear of his vengeance, and that miserable murmuring and repining against his government and dispensations, which is felt by every sinful being.

It is also the source of the hatred, malevolence, envy, revenge, deceit, violence, and injustice, which so universally and dreadfully distress and destroy intelligent creatures in the present world; and in every world where these dispositions prevail. It also cuts up by the roots all inclination, in rational beings, to befriend each other; and prompts them to become, as much as possible, the means of each other's misery.

Finally, the several emotions of the soul in this state, are, in themselves, misery. This will readily be acknowledged, concerning many of these emotions. It is true of them universally. If we suppose them to be increased to a given degree and to rage without gratification, nothing more is, or can be necessary to complete the misery of a creature. Is not envy alone sufficient to make wretchedness complete? Is not murmuring against God? Is not the consciousness of being perfectly and eternally hateful and despicable? Is not any vehement and ungratified desire; if, at the same time, that desire is felt to be unlawful, base, and vile? Consider all such affections as invariable and endless; and, what they are clearly known to be, most unworthy and abominable; and so inwrought into the soul that they cannot be separated from it but by annihilation; and I think you will acknowledge readily, that a more perfect curse cannot be named.

(3.) The things which in various places are said in the Scriptures, concerning the state of damnation, in which this penalty is actually inflicted, seem fully to imply that spiritual death is a part of the curse.

In the first chapter of Proverbs, Wisdom, that is, Christ, in denouncing the same curse against the impenitent, particularly under the gospel, closes the threatenings with this remarkable declaration; 'Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices.'

In this passage the curse may be said to be repeated and explained; and here one part of the explanation is, that the impenitent shall be 'filled with their own devices.' The devices of a man are his aims, pursuits, and plans, in which his affections are all exerted. With these, and all of them, the very pursuits and plans which are their own; that is, which have in this life been their own; Christ declares, the impenitent shall not only be afflicted, but 'filled.' Thus, also, Solomon says, 'The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways; and the good man from himself;' that is, from his own mind, affections, and character; from the remembrance of what he was, and the consciousness of what he is; the wicked and the good man shall either suffer or enjoy hereafter, in an eminent manner.

Again: Wisdom, or Christ, addressing himself to sinners, in the eighth chapter, says, 'All they that hate me, love death.' It can hardly be said that sinners love either temporal or eternal death, considered as mere suffering; but that they love spiritual death is unquestionable. But the death here loved is, I think, clearly the death beyond the grave.

The fact is also undoubted, that the damned are not only unhappy, but wicked. Nor will it be denied, that

they are thus judicially; that they are given over by God to this character, in the same manner as persons are judicially given up to blindness, hardness of heart, and final ruin, in the present world. It will also, I presume, be readily conceded, that their misery will in a great measure arise from their own sinful affections and pursuits, and those of their companions in woe. These facts appear to be a comment on the curse of the law, and to explain to us in this particular its true import.

REMARKS.

(1.) This subject affords strong proof of the divine origin of the Scriptures.

The manner in which the declarations in this sentence have been already fulfilled, is certainly a very interesting testimony to the truth of the history of which it is a part; a history of a vast comprehension, and involving a great proportion of all the things contained in the Bible; and a history, probably more objected to by infidels, than any other found in revelation.

Of the fulfilment of the sentence on the serpent, literally understood, there cannot be a question. A hostility, totally singular, has always existed between him and mankind, and a war has always been carried on with peculiar enmity. To destroy this animal has been a settled pursuit in the heart of man, through every age and every country. The manner in which this destruction has been accomplished, has also been continually that which is here predicted; and the extent of the destruction has been in a sense without bounds. It has not been originated by a spirit of self-defence, but of hatred. It has been a war of the kind which the Romans describe as carried on *ad internecionem:* or to the final destruction of one or the other of the combatants. The cause of this will in vain be sought for in conviction and contrivance. Serpents are certainly far less mischievous to mankind than many other animals, which yet are not thus hunted and destroyed. Their shape is such, and their whole appearance, as in other cases is regarded not only without disgust, but with pleasure. Yet the sight of a serpent is instantly productive of a dread, a horror, a chill totally singular, and extended to all the race of Adam. An enmity innate and irremovable exists between us and them, felt even at the mention of the name, and strongly and proverbially expressed in a great variety of forms. Even those serpents which are known to be harmless, are, like the rest, hated in the same manner, seen with the same horror, and killed with the same eagerness. How striking an exhibition is this of the reality of the sentence! How strong a proof, from fact, of the truth of the history!

Of the fulfilment of this sentence on the serpent, figuratively considered, we have no knowledge, except from the Scriptures themselves. In them, as I have already shown, we have a full account of the complete and wonderful accomplishment of it in the redemption of man. In this account, although contained in the Scriptures, we are presented with high evidence of their divinity. It is not conceivable, it is not possible that Moses, unless inspired, should have written this prediction, with even a conjecture that it would afterwards be thus fulfilled. Nor is it much more consistent with possibility, that the apostles should have contrived the subsequent story so, as thus wonderfully to have accorded with this singular prophecy.

The fulfilment is here as complete as it is wonderful; and, although dependent on myriads of events, these all appear in one perfect system, tending always to this end, and in this end consummating the scheme of the prophecy. He who can believe these things to have been accidental, or to have been contrived by mere human ingenuity, must have a peculiar facility of believing at his pleasure; and must be wholly freed from the shackles of evidence, whether certain or probable.

Nor is the fulfilment of the sentence on the woman less remarkable. In all ages, countries, and climates of the world, women have been distinguished from every species of animals, by the pains and sorrows which they have experienced in bearing and bringing forth their offspring; a striking proof that the human race have forfeited and lost their original supremacy over the inferior inhabitants of the earth. A great part of all the dangers and sufferings of the tender and delicate sex are plainly derived from this source. No experience, no watchful observation, no medical skill, however laboriously exerted, and however long continued, have been sufficient to lessen this great portion of human woe, or materially to prevent the entire fulfilment of the sentence pronounced on the general mother of mankind. The same sorrow, pain, and fear, still remain; the same dangers still betide, the same diseases still ravage; and death, in the same humiliating and distressing forms, and in the same proportion and number of instances, still triumphs over one half of our species, in exact accordance with the threatening of the text.

Nor has the other part of the prediction been less wonderfully, or much less affectingly accomplished. Throughout all savage nations (and savage nations have constituted a great part of mankind in every age of the world with which we are acquainted), women have been reduced to extreme humiliation, dependence, and distress, by the stronger sex. Brutal strength and agility are the only attributes valued by savages; and women being inferior to men in these attributes, have by savages been universally depressed. Of course they have been destined and compelled to all those employments which men disliked, or contemned. The very feebleness of frame, which in the view of men rendered them inferior to themselves, might, one would think, naturally excuse them from the fatigue and hardship of severe labour, and plead for them an exemption from business, to which their strength was totally unequal. Still it has pleaded in vain. They have been made mere drudges, and doomed to the most toilsome, distressing, and servile offices, for the mere convenience of men. Men, when not roused to the pleasures and glories of hunting and war, have in the savage life spent their time in sloth, in sleep, and in diversion; while women have been forced to plant and gather their corn, to make their utensils, and to perform besides all the domestic business. They have also been obliged to bear most of the burdens, and to carry the children, while infants, in their various journeys.

All the savages of the several parts of the globe, have pursued one course of life in this respect. In some nations, women have been condemned to such wretchedness, in consequence of their subjection, as to expose their female children to destruction, in order to prevent them from suffering the same misery with themselves; esteeming an untimely and violent death a happier lot than life, when doomed to suffer such dreadful oppression.

In all the Mohammedan nations also, and throughout the vast empires of Hindoostan and China, women have suffered in a manner not much less humiliating. In Mohammedan countries they are bought and sold like cattle, are considered as mere property, are imprisoned, as they are in China also, for life; and are regarded universally and only as instruments of amusement and pleasure, by their brutal masters.

Christianity has indeed, in a great measure, in this as well as in other respects, reversed the curse. In 1 Tim. ii. 15, the apostle, speaking of women, says, 'Nevertheless she shall be saved in' (that is, by means of) 'child-bearing, if they continue in faith, and charity, and holiness, with sobriety.' I apprehend the true meaning of this passage to be, that child-bearing shall eminently prove the means of salvation to the sex, through the influence of that system of Christianity which was intended to be the general reversion of the curse. According to this declaration of the apostle, we actually see that the danger and distress to which women are peculiarly exposed, are the means of their piety and salvation. Women are usually pious in far greater numbers than men. The late President Edwards, of Nassau Hall, considered the proportion within the limits of his information, as at least two to one; and various other divines, of great knowledge in the religion of mankind, have concurred with him in this opinion. This interesting fact is probably owing chiefly, if not wholly, to the danger, sorrow, and death, to which the sex are especially exposed; and which, always before their eyes, operate as solemn and effectual monitions of their speedy departure to the eternal world. In this way they are usually more sober-minded, more attentive to spiritual and eternal things, and more disposed to give them their due influence than men; and thus, far oftener become the subjects of piety, and the heirs of endless life.

In Christian countries also, women have risen from the miserable state of humiliation and servitude which I have described, to their proper importance and dignity. In such countries, to a great extent, they are educated, informed, refined, and elevated to the character of respectable, rational, and moral beings. The character which they sustain, and the treatment to which they are entitled in the gospel, are highly becoming its refined and noble character. Refined and elegant tenderness was unknown, until it was made a part of the revealed system. There it is enjoined in the strongest of all terms, and by the noblest of all allusions. 'Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it,' is the affecting language of the great apostle of the Gentiles, on this interesting subject; and such language as was never used by any other man. Accordingly, in Christian nations, and in Christian nations only, are women restored to the blessings which, among the rest of mankind, they have lost: and in many of them, are as far restored to them as, in so imperfect a state of being, can be rationally expected.

The sentence passed on the man, is also fulfilled in the same perfect manner.

We see 'the ground cursed, and bringing forth thorns and briers,' instead of the living fruits of paradise. We see man destined to labour for his bread, and to 'eat that bread in the sweat of his brow.'

We see him also 'of few days and full of trouble.' Fears of ten thousand dangers and distresses haunt him every day, and on every side; pain and disease, derived from earth, air, and ocean, from his birth and his food, his exercise and his rest, and affecting every nerve and every pore; sorrow for every disappointment of his hopes, and for every frail and vanishing enjoyment which he attains, and extending through all the days of his life: embitter their whole progress, and render his continuance in this world often so undesirable, that, with Job, he is ever ready to cry out, 'I would not live always.'

Nor do we see him less fallen in his character, station, employments, happiness, and universal condition. Of a prince, the lord of a world, he is become a drudge, a poor dependent wretch; dependent on every person and thing around him; and in the evils which betide and those which threaten him daily, is reduced far below the condition of the brutes. In the happiest countries of the world, how clearly is this the state of man? How much more strikingly in those which are scorched with heat, or stiffened with frost, around the year; in those which are cursed with drought and sterility; and in those which are haunted by the pestilence, and all its dismal attendants? This part of the sentence is, however, less commonly regarded as a strong exhibition of the truth of this history, than the others: I think, without propriety or justice. The real reason undoubtedly is, that we consider the present condition of man as his only condition, and are reluctant to admit that he was ever placed in any other. Of this, however, there is no evidence, and no substantial probability. The tradition of all ancient nations teaches directly the contrary doctrine, and amply supports the history of Moses. Nor is it reasonable to believe, that man came from the hands of God the same frail, miserable being, which we now behold him; or the world, that mass of inclemency, barrenness, and confusion, which we see in its present state. A paradise is, to the first view of the mind, the proper state of a world; and unspotted virtue and happiness, the proper state of rational beings, as they come from the hands of the Creator. All things betoken a world and a race of inhabitants in ruins; and such has been the decision of all the ancient nations; a decision, unquestionably derived by tradition from the real facts.

In this view, every thing which respects man is a lively fulfilment of the prediction in the text; a fulfilment exact and complete; and exhibiting in the strongest manner, the truth of the history in which it is contained.

(2.) In this story is presented to us a glorious manifestation of the mercy of God.

Before God proceeded to utter the sentence of condemnation on the man and woman, and while he was declaring the punishment of the tempter, he disclosed the future designs of redeeming and forgiving love.

The Lord Jesus Christ was the person who here passed sentence on these offenders. As 'the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son;' as 'no man hath seen God the Father at any time, nor can see him and live;' it is certain that God, as here spoken of, was no other than the second person of the Trinity; the Redeemer of mankind. This divine person even now began the work of redemption, in the very moment when the first objects of it first existed; thus early showing that 'the Lord is gracious,

and full of compassion; slow to anger, and of great mercy.'

What a divinely amiable character does the Redeemer here exhibit! The first opportunity, the first moment of that opportunity, he seizes, to make known to apostate man his design to 'save his people from their sins.' As if he feared that the sentence would overwhelm the poor unhappy culprits, he prepared them to support the terms of it, by publishing their recovery before he declared their condemnation and ruin.

Adam and Eve appear to have clearly understood that they and theirs, although under sentence of death, were even by this sentence to find life. As soon as the denunciation is made, Adam, who in the paradisiacal state had called his wife Woman, even when immortal life was secured to them; now, as I have before observed, called her Eve, which signifies *living*, or *communicating life*; and adds this reason for the name, 'because she was the mother of all living;' that is, of all who, according to the gracious declarations of this sentence, were to be restored to immortal life. Eve herself, also, on the birth of her first son, expresses her full faith in the prediction, when, after naming him Cain, she says, as has been already observed, 'I have gotten a man, the Lord;' not 'from the Lord,' as in our translation; but, *a man, who is the Lord;* 'the seed of the woman, who is to bruise the serpent's head.' Thus it is evident that they well understood the prediction, and realized the consolation which it conveyed.

What instance of divine mercy can be conceived of more tender, more condescending, more like redeeming love, than this. How much does the Saviour of mankind appear like himself! How early he began 'to seek and to save that which was lost!' He perfectly knew that he himself was to die on the cross, to accomplish this redemption: yet he utters the glad tidings to mankind with eagerness and haste, as if impatient to make known to them the salvation which he was to purchase with his blood.

As when he came in sight of Jerusalem, at the Mount of Olives, 'he wept over' that guilty, ruined 'city;' so here he may be naturally considered as taking a solemn and compassionate view of a ruined world, and all the lost myriads of the race of Adam; as weeping over their destruction, and as saying, not, 'How often would I gather,' but, 'I will gather you,' fallen and perishing sinners, 'as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings.' 'Behold, I bring you glad tidings of great joy: for unto you shall be born a Saviour, even Christ the Lord.' 'Beautiful on the mountains shall he come, bringing good tidings, publishing peace, bringing good tidings of good, publishing salvation, and saying unto Zion, Thy God reigneth.' Lost as ye are, oh ye children of Adam, 'unto you I call: I rejoice in the habitable parts of the earth, and my delights are still with the sons of men.' 'Glory still shall be to God in the highest, and on earth peace, and good-will towards men.' 'Sing, oh heavens, and be joyful, oh earth; and break forth into singing, oh mountains; for the Lord hath comforted his people, and will have mercy upon his afflicted.' 'The heavens shall drop down from above, and the skies shall pour down righteousness; the earth shall also open, and bring forth salvation.

SERMON XXIX.

UNIVERSALITY OF SIN PROVED FROM REVELATION AND FROM FACTS.

Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death hath passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.—Rom. v. 12.

In the three preceding discourses, I have considered the Trial, Temptation, Apostasy, and Sentence of our first Parents. The next subject in a theological system is, *The effect of the apostasy on their descendants.* The consideration of this subject I shall therefore begin in the following discourse.

In the text, independently of all comments and criticisms, three things are directly asserted:

I. That by one man sin entered the world.

II. That in consequence of this event all men have sinned.

III. That death, as the consequence of sin, hath passed upon all men.

Concerning the last of these assertions there is no debate. The two first, therefore, will occupy the present discussion; and these, for the sake of convenience, I shall reduce to the single following proposition:—

That in consequence of the apostasy of Adam all men have sinned.

Before I enter on the examination of this doctrine, I shall premise a few observations, which I hope will in some degree be useful towards accomplishing the general design proposed in this sermon.

Perhaps no doctrine is more reluctantly received by the human mind, than that which I have just now stated. Accordingly, it has been strenuously contended against, and resolutely rejected, not only by infidels, but by a considerable part of the Christian world, ever since it became a topic of public debate. Nor, when we remember the present character of man, can we think it strange that such opposition should exist. The doctrine in question, more than any other, humbles the pride, awakens the fears, and lessens the happiness, of every child of Adam. A common interest, therefore, naturally summons all men to oppose it; and not unfrequently bears down the evidence by which it is supported. Christians feel this interest as truly as other men; and under the influence of this feeling, resist or forget, the proof of the doctrine. At the same time the doctrine itself, it must be acknowledged, is connected

with many things very mysterious, and very perplexing. These, adding embarrassment to reluctance, have in many instances persuaded men to refuse the doctrine, in spite of the testimony of experience and revelation. For myself I readily confess, that if I saw any mode of avoiding the evidence by which it is established, I would certainly reject it also.

But it can never be wise, it can never be vindicable, to deny truth, or reject evidence. If the doctrine be true, it is our interest to know it; if it be clearly evinced, it is our duty to receive it; and that, however reluctant we may be, and however mysterious the doctrine. To every sober man, this duty will appear of high importance, and indispensable obligation, if he finds that God has taught him this doctrine, as one of the truths which he has been pleased to require mankind to believe. To the interest always involved in the performance of our duty, he will find also superadded, the solemn concern of coming to the knowledge of his own guilt and danger, that he may be induced to avail himself of the only means of pardon and safety. While he feels himself 'whole,' he certainly can never suspect his 'need of a physician:' while he is unaware of his guilt, he cannot be supposed ever to look to Christ for deliverance.

With these things in view, I hope that every member of this audience will readily open his mind to the discussion of this subject, melancholy and painful as it is; whilst, in proof of the doctrine, I allege the following arguments, derived partly from fact, and partly from revelation.

From Revelation I allege,

1. The text, as decisive proof of this doctrine.

This proof is twofold. First, the doctrine is directly asserted, 'All have sinned.' Lest there should be any doubt, whether an absolute universality is intended in this place, the apostle has exhibited his intention in the most decisive manner. 'So death hath passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.' Here we are taught, that all sin who die. As therefore every child of Adam dies; so, according to the sentence of the apostle, every child of Adam is a sinner. Secondly, the apostle proves the doctrine by argument, and, in my view, unanswerably. Death cannot be the reward, or allotment, of virtuous beings. It is plainly a punishment, and a dreadful one; and can of course be, in no possible sense, a testimony of the divine approbation. But the approbation of God is invariably given to obedience. If then all men were obedient only, not one of them could suffer death, or any other evil. Accordingly, Adam, while obedient, was assured of immortal life. In the same manner also 'the angels, who kept their first estate,' are immortal and happy.

But death befalls all the race of Adam: therefore every one is a sinner.

2. After Adam had lost the image of God, we are informed, that he begat a son in his own likeness.

'The image of God,' in which Adam was created, has been heretofore shown to be divine knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness. 'The likeness of Adam' is, by unquestionable analogy, the moral character which he possessed after his apostasy. In this likeness, Seth is said to have been begotten. That Cain was begotten in the same likeness will not be disputed. The same thing is indirectly, but decisively, asserted also concerning Abel: for he is declared to have lived and died in faith, that is, in the future Redeemer. But Christ, as the Redeemer, could not have been an object of faith to Abel, had he not been a sinner; or, in other words, had he not borne the likeness of apostate Adam. But, if this was the nature of the immediate children of Adam, it cannot even be suspected that it is not equally the nature of his remoter progeny; or that they do not all bear the likeness of their common parent. Not a shadow of reason can be given, why one law should have governed the birth and character of his immediate descendants, and another, the birth and character of the rest.

3. St Paul in the three first chapters of the Epistle to the Romans, has argued this point at large, concerning both Jews and Gentiles.

On this argument he himself is, undoubtedly, the best commentator; and his comment is given to us in the following terms. 'What then? Are we (Jews) better than they (Gentiles)? No, in no wise; for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; as it is written, There is none righteous, no not one. There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no not one.'

4. The same apostle declares, that by the works of the law, no flesh shall be justified in the sight of God.

But if sinless men, if even one sinless man, existed in this world, he could not fail to be justified by the works of the law; for the law itself says, 'He who doeth these things,' that is, the things required in the law, 'shall live by them.' As, therefore, 'no flesh,' no child of Adam, 'shall be justified by the works of law;' it follows irresistibly, that every one is sinful.

Of the same purport is the declaration of Christ to Nicodemus, 'Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.' The only use or effect of the new birth is, that in it holiness is implanted in the mind. But if any man were sinless, he could not need regeneration, nor be regenerated. He would already perfectly possess that holiness which is imperfectly communicated in regeneration; and of course, would 'see the kingdom of God,' as certainly and easily, at least, as those who possessed less holiness than himself.

In the like manner St Paul argues, 2 Cor. v. 14: 'For,' says he, 'we thus judge: that if one died for all, then were all dead;' that is, in trespasses and sins.

To these Scriptural exhibitions on this subject, I might add a vast multitude of others. In truth, no doctrine of the Scriptures is expressed in more numerous or more various forms; or in terms more direct, or less capable of misapprehension.

What the Scriptures declare in so pointed and ample a manner, facts elucidate with such clearness and force as to be, at least in my opinion, incapable of being rationally resisted.

1. The laws of all nations are a strong proof, that the human character is universally sinful.

Human laws are made only to repress and restrain sin; are derived only from experience, and are forced upon mankind by iron handed necessity. They exist in every country, and restrain sin of every kind which human laws can affect, or human tribunals can prove and punish. The penalties by which they attempt this restraint, are various and dreadful; are the most efficacious which experience can suggest, or ingenuity devise;

and are changed continually, as they are found to fail of their effect, by the substitution of others which promise greater success. Still they have always fallen short of their purpose. The propensity to evil in the heart of man, has defied all their force and terror; and boldly ventured on the forbidden perpetration, in the sight of the pillory and the prison, the gibbet and the rack. No ingenuity on the one hand, and no suffering on the other, has in any country been sufficient to overcome this propensity, and so far to change the character of man, as to exterminate even a single sin.

To this head ought to be referred all the means, furnished by law, of safety to our persons and our property: the bolts, bars, and locks, by which we endeavour to defend our houses and their contents, our persons and our families, especially in the night, against the inroads of theft and violence: the notes, bonds, and deeds, by which we endeavour to secure our contracts, prevent the mischiefs of fraud, and compel dishonesty to fulfil its engagements: the jails and dungeons, the chains and galleys, by which we endeavour to confine villains, and prevent them from disturbing by their crimes the peace of society: the post, the pillory, and the gibbet, by which we punish some culprits, and labour to deter others from repeating their perpetrations: all these, and the like things, are gloomy and dreadful proofs of the corruption of the world in which they exist. They exist wherever men are found, of sufficient capacity and in proper circumstances, to attempt a regular opposition to crimes, a continual preservation of peace, and a general establishment of personal safety. The sinfulness, therefore, which they intend to resist, is equally universal. In a world of virtue they could have no place, because they could not be of any possible use; the spirit of the inhabitants supplying infinitely better, the peace and safety which they so imperfectly secure.

2. The religion of all nations is a forcible proof of the same doctrine.

The religion of every nation has been expiatory; that is, it has been so formed, as intentionally to make satisfaction for sin, and to obtain reconciliation with a God, acknowledged to be offended. Of this nature, obviously, are sacrifices. The victim was always intended to be an offering for sin, and the means of regaining forfeited favour. The more valuable the victim, the more efficacious was supposed to be the atonement, and the more certain the favour solicited. Accordingly, when inferior offerings were found or believed to fail, human sacrifices were substituted for them; and these, not unfrequently, of the highest estimation: youths, nobly born, possessed of eminent endowments, and educated in the manner most advantageously fitted to insure mental distinction. Sacrifices of this general nature were offered by all the ancient heathen nations, and have been offered by many still existing. In Hindostan they appear to be offered at the present time.

Nor did the other offerings of the heathen speak any other language. The fragrance, the beauty, the costliness, the frequency, and the multitude of these, were plainly intended to conciliate the good-will of the god who was supplicated; a good-will confessedly estranged, but supposed to be capable of being acquired anew.

According to the same scheme also were formed their prayers, which either implicitly or explicitly acknowledged the sins of the suppliant, and besought the restoration of the favour which he had forfeited.

On the same principle, tedious pilgrimages, consuming at times a length of years, and traversing no trifling part of the breadth of the globe, were undertaken and executed. The burning heat, the parching drought, and the excessive perils of an Arabian or a Nubian desert, were quietly and even cheerfully sustained by hosts of wanderers, who had voluntarily exiled themselves from their friends, families, and country, with the hope of obtaining the remission of sin, considered as absolutely necessary, and supposed to be unattainable by any means less dangerous and distressing.

Ablutions speak the same design in a manner still more direct and unequivocal. To wash away his guilt, the Egyptian plunged himself in the Nile; and the Hindoo in the Ganges. From these waters, invested by popular superstition with the transcendent power of removing moral pollution, each expected to come out cleansed from all his turpitude, and entitled anew to the complacency of the god, whom he was conscious of having offended. On this ground, the holy streams were resorted to by immense multitudes with incredible eagerness and anxiety, and were supposed to furnish a certain passport to future blessings.

To ablution was added penance, as very hopeful means of obtaining the same desirable object. This unnatural resort existed in a great variety of forms; all of them humiliating, forbidding, and dreadful. Hunger, thirst, the heat of summer, and the frost of winter, nakedness, weariness, extreme want, and excruciating pain, have been undergone by millions of the human race without a groan, a murmur, or a sigh, from an expectation that this voluntary suffering would shelter the criminal from the demands of future justice. It ought to be remarked, that the length to which this self-denial has often proceeded, shows in the strongest manner not only the reality, but the intense degree of guilt, with which the subject of it supposed himself to be stained.

All these were regarded as essential duties of religion, and as indispensably demanded of every man. In performing them, every man confessed that he was stained with the common guilt, and that he needed an expiation.

3. The same doctrine is proved by the writings of all nations, among whom writings are found.

The history, both of nations and individuals is, professedly, a true account of their actions and characters. It is also rarely written by men who are not at least candid towards those, concerning whom they write; and often by those who are strongly prejudiced in their favour; men of the same nation or party, or for some other reason partially inclined towards the individual or the cause which is the subject of their history. There is also in most historians a strong, prevailing inclination to cover the defects and crimes of those whose actions they record; lest by a full disclosure of them they should render the history less entertaining than they wish to their readers. From all these causes, history is often a mere panegyric; and almost always, perhaps always, a much more favourable account of the conduct of men than truth would warrant. The history of the Bible, being dictated by Inspiration, presents its subjects more generally darkened and deformed, in a great proportion of instances; both because it was designed to unfold the moral characters of men in an especial manner, and because it is true. Hence, we commonly suppose the

people of Israel to have been more depraved than other nations. This, however, is an erroneous opinion, as any man who reads the first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans will easily discern. Had prophets written the history of the rest of mankind, there is but too much reason to believe, that nations and individuals generally, who have been the subjects of history, would have presented features equally disgusting and monstrous with those of the Israelites.

But favourable as all these causes are to the human character, powerfully as they have influenced writers to present, and that with many adventitious ornaments, only the bright, and to conceal as much as possible the dark, side of man; history is still a satire upon our race, scarcely less severe than any of those professedly written under this name. Should we, contrary to all probability, or in better language, to absolute certainty, acknowledge the portrait to be an exact, unflattering, likeness; we must still be obliged to confess the whole aspect to be misshapen and monstrous; without symmetry, beauty, or loveliness. Man, as described by history, is undeniably, and always has been, an evil, odious being; disobedient and ungrateful to his Maker; unjust, insincere, and unkind to his fellow man; and far removed from the character which the Scriptures demand, which conscience approves, or which, even in our opinion, God can be supposed to love.

With history, moral and philosophical writings have abundantly concurred. I will here pass all those which have been immediately directed to the point in question, and have either declared or argued it, in form; their aid being unnecessary for the present purpose. Those which have been conducted with other designs, nay, those which have intentionally opposed this doctrine, have nevertheless served to establish it. This they have done in many ways; particularly by the feebleness of their arguments advanced in opposition to it; by the pains which they have taken to disguise human turpitude by fair names, flattering ascriptions, and false justifications; by the gross moral sentiments which they have abetted; and by the deformed dispositions which they have thus disclosed to the public view. Their very confessions also, of what they in vain attempt to deny, furnish no small evidence of its truth; while their efforts not unfrequently wear the appearance of a concerted design to carry a point, scarcely supposed to be tenable; of an artful and insidious struggle to gain converts, and achieve a victory, rather than of an honest endeavour to establish a truth, of which the author is sincerely convinced. Upon the whole, in spite of all the exertions made to cover this humiliating truth, and hide from the perception of man an object so offensive, the fetor still escapes, and forces itself upon the senses in a manner so disgusting as to compel a conviction of its existence.

Poems, plays, novels, and other books of entertainment, written professedly only to amuse and please, are necessitated to unfold the same truth in a still clearer manner. All the characters almost, are characters mixed with sin: and the few unmixed ones which they have attempted, are perceived by mere taste, unaccompanied with intellectual examination, to be dull, lifeless, and unnatural. Accordingly, rational criticism has everywhere condemned them as improperly introduced, because they have no originals in fact. The sentiments also thrown out in these productions, are evidential of the same truth. In innumerable forms they declare, and appeal to, the universal corruption of mankind, as the object about which they are extensively occupied; and the only source, in a great multitude of instances, from which they are derived. Were not human nature corrupted, a great part of them could never have had either existence or meaning.

4. The conversation of all men abundantly declares the same truth.

All men continually ascribe sin to all men, except themselves; and few, very few, have ever dared to deny even themselves to be sinners. The best of mankind readily confess and deeply lament their own sins, in terms of the greatest humiliation and sorrow. Paul declares himself to be encompassed with a 'body of sin and death.' Jacob, Job, Moses, David, Hezekiah, Daniel, Jeremiah, Peter, James, and John, all acknowledged their own guilt, without hesitation or concealment. Good men in every succeeding age have followed their steps, in this frankness and integrity, so suited to their general character, and have with a single voice declared their own share in the common corruption. Could this fact have taken place, if the corruption were not universal? If Job, Daniel, Paul, and John, were not sinless, we must seek in vain for persons of this character among men: for no men have by their conduct ever proved themselves to approximate nearer to this enviable character. If the doctrine of this discourse be not true, on what principles shall this conduct be explained? Can it be supposed that men distinguished for their virtue, have thus violated their integrity by confessing guilt, with which they were not chargeable; and become gratuitously wicked, merely for the sake of persuading others that they were wicked? Have men of the fairest reputation assumed a scandalous character, merely for the sake of acquiring that character? Nothing is more clear, than that men would never ascribe sin to themselves, and voluntarily pronounce themselves deformed and hateful; especially men of distinguished sincerity, and possessing the fairest means of escaping such an imputation; unless they were compelled to this ascription by the real state of the fact, and the irresistible conviction of their own consciences.

Another class of persons, however, at times deny themselves to be sinful, and employ various expedients to support themselves in this denial; such as labouring to prove that they are mere machines, the subjects of no moral attributes, and utterly incapable of any moral action; and attempting to disprove all distinction between right and wrong. But this denial, instead of proving the authors of it to be sinless, is an unquestionable proof that they are peculiarly sinful. Their general sinfulness of character is, in all instances, unanswerably evident from the general tenor of their conduct. Were they not the subjects of that blindness which is the result of sin only, they could not fail to confess their true character; a character, to all with whom they have intercourse, so obvious, that they never deceive any one by this denial except themselves. Accordingly, no one gives credit to their assertions. On the contrary, all around them regard them as more sinful than other men, and as unanswerably proving their peculiar depravity by this very denial.

In the mean time, the conversation of mankind proves the truth of the doctrine, with the same clear evidence, in another manner. All men ascribe sin to all other

men. The sin either exists in those to whom it is ascribed, or it does not. If it be acknowledged thus to exist, the debate is at an end. If it do not exist in those to whom it is ascribed, the ascription itself, being a gross act of injustice, is sin in the ascriber. As all are concerned in making this ascription, all are certainly sinful; whether one or the other side of this dilemma be chosen. Indeed, if our fellow men were not too evidently sinful to admit of any debate, all men would regard such an ascription with horror and detestation. So palpable and malignant an act of injustice could not be tolerated for a moment. Ministers particularly, when preaching in a solemn and pungent manner on this subject, would be considered only as designing to slander and abuse their audiences: and to say the least, would never be able to assemble a congregation a second time. Still few, a very few of mankind, pretend to be offended with them, for the plainest exhibitions of this subject. On the contrary, hardly any sermons are more popular or better received, than those which pourtray the human character as deformed, guilty, and odious; if at the same time they wear evident proofs of sincerity, solemnity, and concern; and are not conducted in a strain of invective. Whence can this arise, but from the fact, that the preacher 'commends himself to every man's conscience by manifestation of the truth?'

Very few men also think of resenting this ascription, as made in the common intercourse of mankind, unless when made with some appearance of contempt or malignity. All men hear it continually, yet no man ordinarily conceives it to be unjust or false, unkind or uncivil, nor even as extraordinary or unexpected. On the contrary, it is plainly considered as a thing of course, and is listened to without emotion. Could this be, were the doctrine untrue?

To the evidence, furnished by the consideration of these facts, it ought to be added, that they contain the direct confession of the whole human race, that the doctrine is true; a confession made in several different forms; all of them unequivocal, solemn, and decisive. Of course, it expresses the real opinion of the whole human race concerning this subject. But it is undoubtedly true, that in all cases where mankind have sufficient ability and opportunity to understand a subject, where they examine and decide without partiality, and especially where they decide against every bias of human nature, their decision is true, and to be admitted without a question. The present case is absolutely of this nature. We have sufficient opportunity and discernment to determine whether we ourselves, and our fellow men, are sinners or not. It is certain that every bias of our minds inclines us to believe ourselves free from sin; and that in pronouncing ourselves sinful we oppose every prejudice, and every personal interest. But all men have thus pronounced. The decision is therefore just, and is expressed in such a manner as to admit neither of doubt nor misconstruction.

5. No man has been ever yet produced as an example of complete holiness in the present world.

Amid a race of beings so generally sinful as mankind, a person perfectly holy could not fail of being distinguished, as wholly extraordinary, by his fellow men. Amid the numerous, flattering, panegyrical accounts which have been given, and which have strongly evinced the disposition of their authors to say the most favourable thing concerning human nature, it is incredible that we should not find some one spotless subject of their panegyric, if such a one had ever existed. Such a character in the present world would be so extraordinary as to excite the utmost attention of our race, and the story could not fail of being recorded. Particularly, the opposers of the doctrine which I am attempting to establish, must certainly have known the fact, had any such character existed; for many of them are very industrious and learned men. But no such character has ever been mentioned by them, or by any other person. Yet, according to their system, many such ought to appear in every country, and in every age. Their system is therefore false, otherwise these facts could not exist.

The Lord Jesus Christ is the only person that ever appeared in this world, 'who knew no sin.' Accordingly, he is totally distinguishable in his character from all the children of Adam; and has actually been thus distinguished to such a degree, that no other person has been imagined to approximate at all towards his perfection. In the whole history of man, no single solitary instance of this nature has been ever found. Time has rolled on for six thousand years; the world is, and long has been, filled with myriads of myriads of inhabitants; yet even now a spotless man would be regarded as a prodigy, and the knowledge of so extraordinary a person would be carefully treasured up for the instruction of succeeding generations.

6. This doctrine is proved to every man who examines his own character, by the state of his own heart and life.

The evidence, furnished to the doctrine from this source, may be advantageously exhibited under the following heads.

(1.) Every such man is, at times, the subject of serious apprehensions concerning his future state. These apprehensions certainly prove the mind in which they exist, to be sinful. No man probably ever believed that God will or can make sinless beings unhappy hereafter; particularly, that if himself were sinless, God would make him unhappy. It is, I think, discernible by reason, that 'perfect love,' or holiness, necessarily 'casteth out fear;' or in other words, that these apprehensions cannot exist in a sinless being. However disposed, therefore, any man may be to combat this doctrine, and however satisfied with his arguments against it; he will find, if he attends to his own thoughts, that he still secretly believes it; and proves that he believes it by his fears concerning his own future existence. Were an angel from heaven to declare to him that he is free from sin, and that through life he would preserve this character; all his fears would unquestionably vanish, and leave him perfectly undisturbed, concerning every thing which lies beyond the grave.

(2.) Every man is conscious that he does not perform all his duty. It will be observed, that I here suppose all men to acknowledge, in their minds, the distinction between right and wrong. There are those indeed, as I before observed, who openly deny this distinction; but as these men use exactly the same language with others, when speaking of their own excellencies and those of their friends, or complaining of the conduct of their enemies; I consider them as admitting this distinction, in their thoughts, equally with the rest of mankind. Certainly no persons more strenuously insist on their own rights, or complain more bitterly of the wrongs, which they suppose themselves to suffer.

It cannot be denied, that we are fairly bound to do all the good which is in our power. But there is not a man living, who will soberly assert that he has acted in this manner. The knowledge of those around him, concerning his life, would refute the assertion, and cover him with blushes for the folly and disingenuousness which it evinced. The testimony of his conscience also, concerning his thoughts, would declare it to be false; and accuse him of having added to his former guilt, by the insincerity of this assertion.

(3.) Every man living is conscious of having committed many positive sins. This truth may be sufficiently established by two obvious modes of illustration.

No man living durst recite every transaction of his life, even to his nearest and best friend. There are things in the story which he cannot bring himself, by any consideration to disclose. This is true concerning his external conduct. Still more it is true concerning his thoughts; because in still greater numbers and higher degrees, they have violated his sense of moral obligation; and contravened what he secretly believes to be the will of God. Nor is there probably a man living, who has not often rejoiced that some, both of his thoughts and actions, are now known to himself only, and concealed effectually from his fellow men.

Again, no man can go into his closet, and solemnly declare to his Maker, that he has not been guilty of positive sins. Even the impudence and pride of the self-righteous Pharisee, 'who went into the temple to pray,' did not stretch so far as this. The utmost which he ventured upon was, to 'thank God that he was not as other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or publicans.' He durst not thank God that he was not so sinful as Abraham, Job, or Moses; all of whom he still knew to be sinful. Much less durst he, or any other man, declare himself before God to be absolutely free from moral pollution.

But were we sinless, it would be perfectly easy, safe, and natural, for us to declare the inmost thoughts of our hearts, so far as their moral nature only was concerned, to our fellow creatures; for we are never afraid to disclose to them, unless in cases where mere prudence prevents, any of our conduct which we are assured has been right. With the same ease and consciousness of propriety should we also assert before God, that we were without sin if we felt assured that this was our true character.

Were any man who was taught the nature of the final judgment, informed by an angel that it would commence this day, and find him in his present state; he would tremble at the information. If an exception ought to be made, it must be of him only, who by a living faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, a sincere repentance of his sins, and a laborious preparation to give up his account with joy, has acquired strong confidence towards God, and a vigorous hope of evangelical justification. It hardly needs to be observed, that every such person acknowledges in the fullest manner, his own sinfulness, and that of all men.

4. Every man who makes the attempt to do his duty, and abstain from sin, finds the attempt attended by many difficulties. 'When he would do good, evil,' very frequently at least, will be 'present with him;' and he will 'find a law in his members, warring against the law of his mind, and bringing him under captivity.' 'The good which' for some reason or other 'he is desirous to do,' he will often fail of doing, and 'the evil which for some reason or other 'he wishes not to do,' he still will often 'do.' To say the least, he will often find an uncomfortable and guilty reluctance to do his duty, and an equally unhappy and guilty disposition to practise sin.

Often, very often do the best of men, when summoned by their circumstances, and warned by their consciences to perform acts of piety to God, or beneficence to mankind, of opposition to their lusts, or resistance to temptations, find one sin and another 'easily besetting,' and many a 'weight' hanging heavily upon them. The character of God appears less lovely and venerable than it has done at other times; and the heart is less open to acts of justice, truth, charity, and forgiveness. Temptations approach with more charms, and sin is stripped of no small part of its deformity. The world assumes new importance, beauty, and power. Evil examples solicit with stronger influence; and evil suggestions awaken doubt, uneasiness, and discouragement. Mysteries, at such seasons, become converted, without much difficulty, into errors; and that which is inexplicable is suspected to be untrue. Self-denial is felt in many instances to be hard, unnecessary, and scarcely a duty; while indulgence, on the other hand, seems not only inviting, but excusable; not only pleasant, but safe. Accordingly, the duty in hand is left undone, or performed with difficulty and by halves. The feet drag heavily in 'the strait and narrow path;' or turn aside to find relief in a way less steep, rough, and forbidden.

If such is the case with the best men, it will not be wondered at, that others find their difficulties still greater. In all Christian countries there are multitudes who are not sanctified, and who yet intend to obtain eternal life: men taught in their childhood to know and fear God, to reverence their duty, and to perform it in every external manner: to attend on the worship of God, to read and believe his word; to deal justly, kindly, and truly with their fellow men: to watch and resist their spiritual enemies within and without, and universally to respect the dictates of their own consciences. Men habituated to such a course of life from the beginning, are often decent, amiable, and highly respected. Yet every such man when convinced of sin, will, in unbosoming himself to a minister of the gospel in whom he confides, freely confess that he has never really done his duty in a single instance; but has always been a sinner merely; that he finds not in his heart a disposition ever to pray in such a manner as his conscience tells him God requires, and much less a preparation of soul to perform his duty at large.

Men of profligate characters are in still more deplorable circumstances. They do not even attempt to perform their duty at all: find no struggle between conscience and inclination; slide down the declivity of sin without an effort to stop their dangerous career; and satisfied with the smoothness and slipperiness of their course, give themselves no concern about the gulf which yawns at the bottom.

Whence do these things arise? Certainly not from external circumstances. The profligate has no more external difficulties than the conscientious man; and might, if he pleased, be equally decent and amiable.

The conscientious man has no more external difficulties than the man of piety; and might, if he pleased, be a Christian also. The Christian has no more external

difficulties at one time than at another; and might, if he pleased, perform his duty with the same exactness and ease, and be always equally virtuous. By this I do not mean indeed, that in the metaphysical sense, their external difficulties are precisely the same; but that they are so much the same as in no case to prevent them at all from performing their duty, if they were suitably inclined; or in other words, if they possessed the disposition of angels. The heart undoubtedly is in each of these cases the only essential bar to obedience. Were the heart right with God, the Christian would be perfect at all times; the conscientious man would become a Christian, and the profligate would cease from his abandonment, and become not only decent and amiable, but a Christian also. This reluctance to duty, therefore, these difficulties found in attempts to abstain from sin, prove the character to be corrupt, and the heart to be sinful. As they attend all men, they prove the common nature to be polluted; and evince, unanswerably, the sinful character of all the children of Adam.

SERMON XXX.

UNIVERSALITY OF SIN PROVED BY MAN'S REJECTION OF THE WORD OF GOD.

The wise men are ashamed; they are dismayed and taken: lo, they have rejected the word of the Lord, and what wisdom is in them.—JER. viii. 9.

The wise ones are confounded,
They are dismayed and ensnared;
Behold, they have spurned at the word of Jehovah;
And as for wisdom, what is there in them?
BLAYNEY'S TRANSLATION.

IN my last Discourse, I proposed to consider at length, the following Scriptural doctrine: That in consequence of the apostasy of Adam, all men have sinned.

In pursuing this design I exhibited the Universality of Sin:—1. From Revelation; and, 2. From Facts.

From each of these sources I adduced a series of proofs, which appeared to me to furnish a complete establishment of the doctrine. Still it will be useful to examine so important a subject in a variety of modes, and to learn in what manner other sources furnish evidence of this great Scriptural declaration. I propose therefore to illustrate the doctrine, at the present time, from another fact: viz. the rejection of the word of God by mankind.

In the verse preceding the text, the people of Judea are exhibited as saying, in the midst of all their apostasy and wickedness, 'We are wise, and the law of the Lord is with us;' that is, we are holy, or virtuous; and the law of the Lord is possessed, understood, and obeyed by us; is in our hands, in our minds, and in our hearts. To this arrogant declaration the prophet replies, 'Lo, certainly in vain made he it; the pen of the scribes is in vain;' that is, 'To you God has given his law, or word, in vain; the false pen of the scribes hath converted it into falsehood.'* 'The false interpretations of the law by the scribes have changed the law itself, in the form in which they teach, and you receive it, into falsehood; and to you, therefore, notwithstanding its excellence, it is in vain.'

'The wise men' themselves, he proceeds to observe in the text, 'are' by these means 'ashamed' or confounded, 'and taken' or ensnared, in their own false interpretations and reasonings on the law; and can form no consistent, no safe scheme, either of doctrine or practice. Nay, their mode of understanding and explaining the word of God is, in effect, an absolute rejection of it. Consequently 'there is no wisdom,' no holiness or virtue, 'in them.' Their rejection of the word of the Lord is a plain proof that they are totally destitute of all moral good.

What was true of these wise men or scribes, is unquestionably true of all other men in the like circumstances. To the scribes the word of God was offered, and was enjoined on them with divine authority. They disliked and rejected it. This conduct proved them to be void of holiness. In like manner it has been offered to immense multitudes of other men, who have disliked and rejected it also. The consequence follows irresistibly, that they, as well as these Israelites, are void of holiness.

Holiness is plainly the only virtue or moral excellence, the only character which can recommend intelligent beings to God. The Scriptures know of no other; and although they call this character by different names, such as holiness, righteousness, goodness, and wisdom, they still mean always the same thing. Nor can reason devise any other excellence of this nature. Holiness and virtue are synonymous.

The doctrine of the text then, generally expressed, is this:

The rejection of the word of God is decisive proof, that those who reject it are destitute of virtue, or moral excellence.

To illustrate this doctrine will be the object of the present discourse; and the illustration will be derived from three considerations.

I. The nature of the word which is rejected:

II. The manner in which it has been rejected:

III. The doctrines which those who have rejected it have preferred to it.

I. *The nature of the word which is rejected, strongly illustrates this doctrine.*

Under this head I observe,

1. The word which is thus rejected is the law, or preceptive will, of the Creator and Ruler of all things.

As God created us, he has the highest possible pro-

* Blayney.

perty in us, and the most absolute right both to us and our services. This right can be bounded by nothing but his pleasure. Whatever is his, he has an unlimited right to dispose of as he pleases; nor can any one warrantably say to him, in this respect, 'What doest thou?' Hence his right to prescribe the manner in which we and all other creatures shall be employed and disposed of, is plainly supreme.

If then we refuse to render to him the obedience which he requires, in all or any of the cases or degrees prescribed by him; we are guilty of refusing to render to him that which is his own. No injustice, no fraud, no robbery, can be more palpable or extreme than this. No injustice to man can be compared with it; for nothing is man's by a right which can be compared with this right of God.

2. This law, in all its requisitions, is perfectly reasonable and just.

It is contained in the two great commands, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart,' and 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.'

Both these precepts are in the highest degree, and in the most obvious manner, just and reasonable; and would demand our obedience with unanswerable propriety, if the nature of the precepts only were regarded. Men, in obeying them, would act in the best manner possible for themselves; and would most promote both public and personal happiness. Nay, there is no other manner of acting which can be justly called desirable. Every departure from conformity to these precepts is of course evil, and of malignant influence on the well-being of the universe.

God is infinitely excellent, as well as infinitely great and awful; and on account of this excellence most clearly deserves, and most justly claims, the highest love of his intelligent creatures. Nothing more is therefore demanded by this law, than ought cheerfully to be done, if no such law existed.

3. The law of God is good, as well as just; profitable to those who obey, as well as honourable to him who is obeyed.

Obedience to this law constitutes the only real worth of rational beings; and is the sum of all those affections and their consequences, which form the internal happiness of man; the most essential and valuable part of his happiness. The true loveliness, dignity, and excellence of man is nothing, besides that state of the mind, which is in exact conformity to this law. From this character, and from this alone, spring the peace and self-approbation, the internal harmony and delight, which are the proper 'prize of virtue;' the independent and eternal possession of every good mind.

In the same degree is the usefulness of rational beings formed. Man is useful only when he is voluntarily useful. Obedience to the law of God is all that is intended by voluntary usefulness. Love to God is the great and only source of usefulness to him in his kingdom; and love to man is the only source of voluntary beneficence to man. 'The love which is the fulfilling of the law,' is a vital and immortal principle of doing good to all men, both friends and enemies, at all times, and in every manner. Nor is there any real and voluntary beneficence, beside what springs from this principle. Rational beings, wholly under its influence, would form a perfect state of happiness in any world; and such beings, freed from all restraints, would, if destitute of it, create consummate misery. He then who refuses obedience to this law, is guilty of gross injustice to God, relinquishes all personal excellence, peace, happiness, and worth; and renouncing all voluntary usefulness on the one hand, prepares himself on the other, to become a nuisance to the universe.

4. To this obedience an endless and perfect reward is annexed.

Were the law hard in its requisitions, and obedience to it severe and distressing; yet, if crowned in the end with a reward ample and abundant, the whole of the requisitions taken together would not be unreasonable, nor undesirable. The time, during which we are here required to obey, is but a moment; the reward, on the contrary, is eternal. The hardship of obedience must therefore be transient and trifling; while the reward would be endless, and therefore immense in its value.

To obedience then, reason and wisdom direct and urge with motives of infinite power; and from disobedience, with similar motives deter. Nothing of course can be a reason for disobedience, were our present happiness only concerned, except a disposition so depraved as to prefer sin, without a future reward, to holiness with immortal glory.

5. To disobedience a punishment is threatened, which is also endless.

Every creature who disobeys, therefore, chooses to hazard endless woe for the pleasure of disobeying, rather than to gain eternal life with the pain found, or supposed to be found, in obeying. So plainly do men 'choose death rather than life;' and in 'sinning against God, wrong their own souls.'

In this state of sin and wretchedness, however, God did not leave them to perish, as they chose; but he sent his own 'beloved Son, the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person,' to become their atonement and intercessor. Through his mediation he proposed to them to repent of their former disobedience, and to return to obedience, to virtue, and to his everlasting favour. On these conditions he promised to receive and bless them, notwithstanding their apostasy.

In this situation he placed them in his word; and commanded them, in what may be called a new law, a law of grace and mercy, to believe in Christ, to repent of their sins, and return to holiness. The gospel is a law, and of equal authority and obligation with the moral law. 'God commandeth all men everywhere to repent.' 'And this,' saith John, 'is his commandment, that we believe on him whom he hath sent.' The proposals of the gospel are, therefore, not merely declarations or promises, but a law; compliance with which is the highest duty of mankind.

What then is the nature of this duty? In the most summary language, it is this: That we renounce our sins, and return to God, and to obedience; committing ourselves with an affectionate confidence to Christ, as our instructor, intercessor, and Lord; and as an all-sufficient and acceptable propitiation to God the Father. This done, our sins will be forgiven; and our title to endless life renewed, enlarged, and made sure beyond defeat and danger.

To beings ruined and destroyed as we are, reason would naturally conclude, any escape from the terrible evils to which we are certainly exposed without hope by our apostasy, would be not only acceptable, but transporting. Nothing, it would seem, would be asked or

wished, but to have the way pointed out, and the conditions made known. This only being done, all the miserable beings who are thus exposed, must, one would expect, hasten with rapture and amazement to comply with the terms of reconciliation, and 'lay hold on the hope set before them.'

But the terms, instead of being thus hard, are the easiest which can be wished, and the most reasonable of which we can form a conception. They are in the highest degree desirable for their own sake, even if they were to be followed by no reward. The faith, the repentance, and the holiness required, are themselves the beginning and the consummation of the best of all characters, and the springs of a happiness far more exquisite and sincere than any other. Besides, they are indispensably necessary to all other good. No permanent, no sincere good can be enjoyed by him who does not thus believe, repent, and obey. God cannot love, nor bless him. He cannot be approved and peaceful within, nor useful and happy without. Nor can a world, inhabited by such beings, be a happy world at all. On the contrary, all the mischief found in this world, would revive beyond the grave, and disturb and desolate heaven itself, were impenitent, unbelieving, and disobedient men to become its inhabitants. Happiness springs from the voluntary exertions of rational beings. But beings not holy, as none of the human race can be, without faith and repentance, never voluntarily do good, but always evil. Thus God requires nothing but what is necessary, absolutely necessary for man, when he demands these as the conditions of their acceptance and happiness.

In the mean time, this happiness is not merely offered, but enjoined. All the authority of the eternal God is employed to enforce compliance. Nay, he goes farther, and daily condescends to entreat us to be thus reconciled to him. But to all these we return a peremptory refusal, and a scornful indignant rejection of this benevolent and glorious word of the Lord.

What reason can be assigned for this conduct? Not argument: for all arguments plead most powerfully for our compliance. Not common prudence, or a wise regard for our well-being: for we disregard and destroy it. Nothing but sin, and the love of sinning; mere corruption, mere depravity. No higher evidence can be given that there is no wisdom or virtue in men.

II. *The manner in which the word of God is rejected by man, is another striking proof his destitution of virtue.*

Particularly, the word of God is rejected with unbelief.

Unbelief, with respect to any object of our faith, has no rational, no vindicable ground, except the want of sufficient evidence. But the word of God is attended with all the evidence which can be supposed to attend such a subject; all that ought to be wished, or asked; and much more than could, without actual proof, be rationally expected. Accordingly, all good men to whom this evidence has been proposed, have without an exception acknowledged the evidence itself, and admitted the word which it supports, to be that of God.

When it is once admitted to be his word, his own veracity is the highest possible proof of the truth of every thing which he has spoken. Whenever it is rejected in this case, it is rejected because it is disliked; not because it is not proved. The evidence is rejected because we dislike the truth; not the truth because we dislike the evidence.

Unbelief is either speculative or practical. In speculative unbelief we deny the truth of the word of God: in practical unbelief we admit its truth, but reject its influence.

In the speculative unbelief of men, the unworthy manner of rejecting the word of God is manifest in the following particulars:—

1. It is rejected on the ground of vain and deceitful arguments.

This will appear from a variety of facts.

The arguments on which one unbeliever relies, do not appear to have satisfied other unbelievers. Every new infidel writer advances his own scheme of refuting the evidence, or rather his own objections (for refutation there is none), and evidently places no reliance on the schemes of his predecessors. This has been the constant progress of infidelity, from the beginning to the present time. No instance occurs in which any infidel has thought it proper to come forward with a defence of the works, or arguments of any former infidel. The arguments of each appear important, and perhaps satisfactory to himself; but are visibly of little force in the eye of his successors. All, except his own, are tacitly at least acknowledged to be unavailing in the eye of each; and his own, in the eyes of all who follow him.

But if these arguments were sound, they would be acknowledged, felt, and insisted on by all; and would anew be pleaded with confidence, supported and relied on by others, as well as by the inventor.

2. When these objections have been completely and often refuted, they still allege them again, without taking any notice of the refutations.

These refutations have been multiplied so much, so openly, and so often alleged, and so triumphantly urged, that nothing but despair of replying with success could prevent unbelievers from attempting a reply. Yet we find it wholly neglected, and unattempted by their successors. They now allege anew the old objections, and plainly because they can find no others: the whole circle being exhausted, and nothing remaining to modern infidels but a reiteration of what has been done by those who went before them. While any thing new remained they laid no stress on what had been done before. Now they are contented to repeat the old threadbare objections over and over, without placing them in a new light, or supporting them with any new evidence; although so often and so completely answered, as to make the renewed advancement of them ridiculous. Were they honest men, they would first reply to the answers heretofore given to these objections; and then, but not till then, allege them anew.

3. They rarely attempt to argue at all; but attack their antagonists, and defend themselves, chiefly with contempt, sneers, and ridicule.

Sneers, contempt, and ridicule, are not arguments, and were never needed to defend a sound cause. The cause which can find sound reasons, will never be supported by these means. Yet infidelity has made these her chief engines throughout her whole progress, and relied on them supremely in all her assaults upon revelation.

Wherever this conduct appears, wherever argument is deserted and forgotten, and ridicule sneers, and con-

tempt, are the weapons of attack or defence; a strong suspicion of the goodness of the cause exists of course, and a solid reason is furnished for believing it to be unsound and false. Infidelity has always thus done, and has therefore always laboured under very strong suspicions of this nature.

4. Men have exhibited violent hatred to the word of God in this rejection.

This hatred, from the beginning to the present time, has been manifested by all classes of men who have rejected the word of the Lord; and by most, if not all, the individuals who have thus rejected it.

This hatred has been strongly manifested in the contempt, ridicule, and sneers, of which I have already spoken. It has strongly manifested itself in an uninterrupted course of obloquy against God, the Redeemer, the Scriptures, the sabbath, and the sanctuary; against the church, the ministers, the worship, and the character of God; against religion at large, against conscientiousness, morality, and duty of every kind; against all that is virtue, and all that are virtuous.

Nor has it been less abundantly manifested in an immense train of oppositions and persecutions. The Jews began the course in the most furious cruelty against Christ and Christians. The Heathens, Mohammedans, and Papists, have continued it. Infidels are now treading in their steps; and although perpetually railing against persecutions, have proved the most bloody and vehement persecutors that have existed since the world began.

One spirit has animated them all, and one conduct characterized them all, from the beginning to the present time. No more deformed, odious, depraved exhibitions have been ever made of the human character: no more flagrant or convincing proofs of human corruption have been ever presented to the eye of man. All, also, who have been concerned in this rejection, have uniformly displayed a vile, depraved, personal character; a love of sin, a hatred to holiness, pre-eminent and wonderful. The more spiritual and heavenly, the more holy and excellent, any doctrines or precepts of the word of God are, the more they have been hated, maligned, and blasphemed. Yet all that God hath done and spoken in his word, has been highly glorious and becoming to a God, highly beneficial and necessary to man, and productive of no other end but making man virtuous and happy. On the contrary, all this opposition has sprung from sin, and been marked with gross and dreadful depravity, in every stage, and in every form.

The practical unbelief of mankind has been substantially of the same character, and distinguished by the same deformity. But here the unbeliever has openly condemned himself by acknowledging the word of God in speech, and denying it in practice. An inconsistence and shame attend him therefore, which do not, in the like circumstances, attend the speculative unbeliever. In the meantime, his rejection of the Scriptures as the rule of his obedience, and means of eternal life to himself, is as absolute as that of the professed infidel. His speculative views are different, but his heart is essentially the same. His 'carnal mind,' as truly as that of the infidel, 'is enmity against God: not subject to his law, neither indeed can be.' It is not strange, therefore, that we see unbelievers of both kinds, exhibiting their rejection of the word of God substantially in the same manner.

III. *The truth contained in the text, is strongly illustrated by the doctrines, both speculative and practical, which those who have rejected the Scriptures have preferred to them.*

The four great classes of men who have openly rejected the word of God, are Jews and Mohammedans, Heathens and Infidels. Each of these I shall consider summarily, in the order specified.

1. The Jews, although professedly receiving the Old Testament as the word of God, yet as you well know, rejected, and still reject, Christ and his gospel, and of course the system of religion which he has taught to mankind. In rejecting Christ they reject of course, all the types which shadowed, and all the prophecies which foretold his character, advent, and mediation. As those types and prophecies terminate only in Christ, so without him they have no real meaning. Their true import therefore was denied by the Jews. In rejecting the gospel, they set aside all the evangelical declarations and doctrines contained in 'the law and the prophets;' particularly the gospel as preached to Abraham and his posterity, and all those just and spiritual exhibitions of the law delivered to us by Christ and his apostles. With these things in view, it must unquestionably be conceded, that the Jews are fairly numbered among those who openly reject the word of God; not less truly so than those of their ancestors, who apostatized to heathenism.

It is unnecessary for me to dwell, in detail, on the doctrines substituted by these people for those in the word of God. You well know from the Scriptures themselves, that they placed their holiness and their hopes in a mere round of external services; such as long prayers, ostentatious fastings, ablutions, and other external purifications; 'tithing mint, anise, and cummin;' and many other things of the like nature. In all these the heart was utterly unconcerned, and the whole scheme of religion was confined to a course of mere external actions; from which integrity, justice, benevolence, and piety, were wholly excluded. Instead of these things, they licensed and practised the most abominable opposition to God, and the most scandalous hatred and persecution of their fellow men. A considerable part denied a future existence, and justified all the indulgence of pride, avarice, and sensuality, which have every where been connected with that denial. Another part openly sanctioned disobedience to the fifth command, by permitting a son to devote that part of his property which was necessary for the subsistence of his parents, to the service of the temple; and warranting him to withold from them, in this manner, all the duties of filial piety. At the same time, they persecuted with the fury of maniacs, men of real piety: bound heavy burdens; shut up to their countrymen the access to religious knowledge; devoured widows' houses, and wallowed in every species of sensual pollution. For all their iniquities, at the same time, they found a sanction in some 'tradition of their elders,' or some invention of their own; and those who taught these things were believed by their countrymen to be men of distinguished virtue. Such were, summarily, the doctrines, both speculative and practical, which the Jews preferred to the word of God. The spirit which could even acquiesce in such doctrines as these, much more which could deliberately prefer them to the law and gospel of Jehovah, can plainly have been no other than that of 'a sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil doers.'

2. Mohammed, it is well known, adopted, according to his own testimony, the religion of Moses and Christ; and professedly republished it in a new form to mankind. But in this republication he left out, wholly, the spirit of the scriptural religion, and in many respects did not preserve even 'the form of godliness.' His two great doctrines were, *That there is but one God, and that Mohammed is his prophet.* By the latter doctrine he secured to himself the right of dictating to his followers just what he pleased. Accordingly he delivered to them a collection of precepts, requiring nothing but a course of external services, without the least goodness of heart; and promised heaven to prayers, ablutions, fastings, alms, pilgrimages to Mecca, and circumcision. Religion he considered as founded on cleanliness, which he declared to be 'the one half of faith, and the key of prayer.' Fasting he pronounced to be 'the gate of religion.' He allowed four wives to every one of his followers, and as many concubines as each was able to maintain. Heaven he converted into a mere mansion of debauchery, and changed the mild and rational mode of propagating religion, taught by Christ and his apostles, into a regular system of the most brutal and barbarous persecution. In a word, his doctrines flattered and licensed every human corruption, every sordid lust, every sinful indulgence.

3. The doctrines of Heathenism are still more deformed, and still more expressive of opposition to God. Instead of one God, the heathen, as you know, believed in many. Instead of the perfect Jehovah, they 'heaped up to themselves gods after their own lusts;' debased by filial impiety, fraud, theft, falsehood, injustice, treachery, murder, and lewdness, indulged in every manner which can debase an intelligent nature. They worshipped men, beasts, birds, fishes, reptiles, and insects. They prostrated themselves before trees, shrubs, plants, stocks, and stones. They sacrificed human victims, prostituted men and women in religious services, and sanctioned every violation of purity, justice, kindness, and piety. Read the first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, and you will find a short but exact and affecting account of what they not only did, but justified, licensed, and enjoined.

4. Modern Infidelity has, in various instances, strongly commended the ancient heathenism, both partially and in the gross: and in publishing its own doctrines, has shown that the spirit by which it is actuated, is no other than the very spirit of its predecessors. It has denied the existence and perfections of God, at times partially, at other times wholly. It has admitted his existence, and denied his providence; the accountableness of man, a future state, the distinction between right and wrong, or holiness and sin, piety and rebellion; has declared all that men can do with impunity, to be right; has licensed wrath, revenge, murder, pride, oppression, gluttony, drunkenness, fornication, adultery, and incest. Surely it is unnecessary for me to observe, that the spirit manifested in the doctrines which teach these things, is in the highest degree hostile to God, to truth, and to righteousness.

To Jews and Infidels, the gospel has been directly published in form. To a great part of mankind it was published in the days of the apostles, and has been extensively offered to many nations in succeeding periods of time. That it has not made a universal progress over the globe, has been owing to the fact, that those to whom it has been offered have in so many instances refused it acceptance. Had the ancestors of the present generation of men given the religion of the Bible a welcome admission to their hearts, in the days of the apostles, it would long since have been preached to every family under heaven. Men, therefore, have stopped its progress, and not God.

But as the fact has been, the gospel has been published to a great part of the human race; and by a great proportion of these it has been rejected. So general has been this rejection, as entirely to determine the true nature of the human character; for it cannot be pretended that there is one original nature in those who have heard and rejected the gospel, and another in the rest of mankind.

It ought to be added on this part of the subject, that many of those who have professedly received the word of God in the Christian world, have, in instances innumerable, in every country and every age, exhibited the same disposition in the same manner. These men have almost universally denied the real import of the book, which they have professed to receive. Its spiritual and heavenly doctrines they have, in forms very diverse, but in design and spirit wholly the same, lowered continually down, so as to suit, or at least so as not to disgust, the taste of a sinful heart. The extent also and purity of the scriptural precepts, they have contracted and debased, so as to license, in a professed consistency with them, a great part of those evil practices which are gratifying to a polluted, sinful mind. The doctrines of the gospel they have with one consent reduced to the level of mere natural religion; and that the natural religion, in substance, which was taught by the graver heathen philosophers, and is now echoed by the more decent infidels. The precepts of the gospel also they have taught to speak a moral language, undistinguishable, as to its import, from that of Plato, Seneca, and Herbert. Thus, in truth, notwithstanding their professed belief of the word of God, they have rejected both the law and the gospel; and rejected them for the doctrines and precepts which they thus inculcate. That such is the real design of all these men, I am convinced by this remarkable fact; viz. that when driven from one error, they always take refuge in another; and never come a whit nearer, however often confuted, to the reception of the truth. The sum of the argument then is this: God has given to mankind a law for the government of their moral conduct, which is not only reasonable and just in itself, but dictated by infinite benevolence on his part, and supremely profitable to them: a law demanding of them, that they 'love him with all the heart,' and that they 'love each other as themselves.' This character, which is no other than the image of his moral perfection, is the supreme excellence, and the only moral excellence, of intelligent beings. In itself it is high and indispensable enjoyment to every such being; and in its efficacy it is the only voluntary cause of all other enjoyments: a cause existing originally and supremely in Him, and by derivation existing extensively in them.

This law, therefore, is a perfect law, and worthy of Jehovah. Were men virtuously disposed; were they not depraved, were they not sinful; their obedience to its commands would be immediate, universal, and absolute. Instead of this, wherever it has been proposed to them, they have chosen to disobey it, notwithstanding the glorious and eternal reward promised to their obedience,

and the awful penalty threatened to disobedience. What stronger proof of their depravity can be demanded?

There is, however, one proof still more affecting. In the miserable situation, into which men brought themselves by their apostasy, God regarded them with infinite compassion, and undertook to rescue them from their sin and misery. For this end he sent his own beloved Son into the world, to live here a humble, painful, and persecuted life, and to die an accursed and excruciating death, 'to make' in the human soul 'an end of sin, to finish transgression, to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness.' In consequence of his atonement, God has offered, anew, to receive the fallen race of Adam into his favour, on the conditions of faith and repentance in the Redeemer; conditions in themselves indispensable to their return to God, and to obedience: indispensable to their own comfort, honour, and virtue; and, beyond expression, easy, reasonable, and desirable. As he foresaw that they would still resist this boundless love, and would fail of it through their corruption, ignorance, error, and prejudice; he published his gospel to enlighten them, and sent his Spirit to sanctify them, that by all means they might be saved. Still, in a multitude of instances almost literally endless, a multitude so great as to prove this to be the common character of all the children of Adam, they have rejected these most merciful proffers of boundless good, 'crucified his Son afresh,' cast contempt on his cross, 'accounted the blood of the covenant wherewith they were sanctified an unholy thing, and done despite to the Spirit of grace.'

And now, my friends and brethren, 'judge, I pray you, between God and his vineyard. What could have been done to his vineyard, that he has not done in it? Wherefore, when he looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth poisonous berries?' * Wherefore brought it forth 'the grapes of Sodom, and the clusters of Gomorrah?' Every tree is known by its fruit. This † vine is plainly, therefore, of 'the vine of Sodom, and of the fields of Gomorrah. Its grapes are grapes of gall; its clusters are bitter. Its wine is the poison of dragons, and the cruel venom of asps.'

Were man virtuously disposed, it is incredible, nay, it is plainly impossible, that he should not yield himself to this law, as soon as it is proposed to him. As obedience to this law is the only excellence of conduct, so a virtuous state of mind, a virtuous disposition, a virtuous character, by all of which phrases we intend that unknown cause heretofore specified, which gives birth to virtuous rather than to vicious conduct, would, so soon as this law was proposed to it, render, in a sense instinctively, an immediate, cheerful, and universal obedience.

Were such a mind also to apostatize, and yet to retain a disposition in a preponderating degree virtuous; were it afterward to be informed of a method by which it might return to obedience, and the favour of God; it would be plainly impossible that such a mind should not receive this information, and embrace this method of returning, with readiness, and even with rapture. If, at the same time, the terms of its reinstatement in obedience, and in the divine favour, were in themselves eminently easy and reasonable, and in their efficacy productive of its highest future amiableness, dignity, and enjoyment; if they were such as rendered it peculiarly lovely in the sight of God, and prepared it to be peculiarly useful to its fellow creatures; such a mind would, beyond a doubt, seize the terms themselves with delight, and the divine object which they secured, with ecstasy.

The rejection of the word of God, of the law and the gospel alike, is therefore entirely inexplicable, unless we acknowledge that the disposition by which it is rejected, is a disposition directly opposed to that of a virtuous mind; wholly unlike that with which Adam was created, and the genuine moral likeness of Adam after his apostasy.

* Lowth. † Deut. xxxii. 32

SERMON XXXI.

DEPRAVITY OF MAN: ITS DEGREE.

Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.—Eccles. viii. 11.

In the two last discourses, I proposed for consideration the following doctrine:—*That in consequence of the apostasy of Adam, all men have sinned;* and endeavoured to prove the universality of sin in the former of these discourses;—1. From Revelation;—and, 2. From Facts. And in the latter, from the great fact, that mankind have rejected the Word of the Lord.

It is now my design to examine, in several particulars, *the degree in which the sinfulness of man exists.* On this subject I observe,

1. That the human character is not depraved to the full extent of the human powers.

It has been said, neither unfrequently, nor by men void of understanding, that man is as depraved a being as his faculties will permit him to be; but it has been said without consideration, and without truth. Neither the Scriptures, nor experience, warrant this assertion. 'Wicked men and seducers,' it is declared, 'will wax worse and worse; deceiving and being deceived.' During the first half of human life, this may, perhaps, be explained by the growth of the faculties; but during a considerable period, preceding its termination, it cannot be thus explained: for the faculties decay, while the depravity still increases. Nations, also, are declared to be, at some periods of time, far worse than at others; although it cannot be pretended, that during that period

specified their faculties were superior. Saul appears to have been a man of more talents than Jeroboam; Jeroboam than Ahab; and Uzziah than either; yet Ahab was a worse man than Jeroboam; Jeroboam than Saul; and Saul than Uzziah. The 'young man' who came to Christ, to know 'what good thing he should do to have eternal life,' was certainly less depraved than his talents would have permitted him to be.

Like him, we see daily, many men who neither are nor profess to be Christians; and who, instead of being wicked to a degree commensurate to the extent of their faculties, go through life in the exercise of dispositions so sincere, just, and amiable, and in the performance of actions so upright and beneficent, as to secure a high degree of respect and affection from ourselves, and from all with whom they are connected. It certainly cannot be said, that such men are as sinful as many others possessed of powers far inferior: much less that they are as sinful as they can be. We also see individuals at times assume, without any visible enlargement of their faculties, a new and surprising degree of depravity at once; and become suddenly far more fraudulent, false, lewd, cruel, revengeful, impious, and universally abandoned, than at a period not long preceding. In the families of which we are members, we have abundant opportunity to learn from so intimate a connexion, the true characters of all who compose them; and are furnished daily with decisive evidence, that they are far less profligate than, with their faculties, they might become. Those who make the assertion, against which I am contending, will find themselves, if they will examine, rarely believing, that their wives and children, though not Christians, are fiends.

2. There are certain characteristics of human nature, which, considered by themselves, are innocent.

Such are hunger, thirst, the fear of suffering, and the desire of happiness; together with several others. All these are inseparable, not only from the rational, but also from the animal nature, as existing in this world; and accompany the Christian through every degree of holiness which he attains, as truly as the sinner. The two last, the desire of happiness, and the fear of suffering, are inseparable from the rational, and even from the percipient, nature.

3. Some of the natural human characteristics are amiable.

Such are natural affection; the simplicity and sweetness of disposition in children, often found also in persons of adult years; compassion, generosity, modesty, and what is sometimes called natural conscientiousness; that is, a fixed and strong sense of the importance of doing that which is right. These characteristics appear to have adorned 'the young man,' whom I have already mentioned. We know that they are amiable, because we are informed that Jesus, 'beholding him, loved him.' In the same manner we, and all others, who are not abandoned, love them always and irresistibly, whenever they are presented to our view. They all, also, are required, and exist in every Christian; enhancing his holiness, and rendering him a better man. Without them it is not easy to perceive how the Christian character could exist. Accordingly, St Paul exhibits those who are destitute of these attributes, as being literally profligates.

4. These, and all other qualities of the mind are, however, means either of virtue or sin, according to the nature of that controlling disposition or energy which constitutes the moral character.

By this disposition or energy, I intend that unknown cause whence it arises, that the actions of the mind are either sinful or virtuous. On this energy depends the moral nature of all actions, and the moral character of every mind. This character, and these actions, are variously and extensively modified by the attributes abovementioned. But the moral nature is not changed. So far as they have a prevailing influence, a sinful disposition is checked, and prevented from operating in the worst manner and degree. Under the prevalence of a sinful disposition, these attributes are partly extinguished, and partly converted into instruments of sin. In a virtuous mind, they all become means of virtue, and increase the energy of such a mind.

5. There is not in the mind by nature, or in an unregenerated state, any real moral excellence, or evangelical virtue.

'For I know,' says St Paul, 'that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing.' 'The carnal mind.' says the same apostle, 'is enmity against God, not subject to his law, neither indeed can be.' And again, 'The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned.' 'That which is born,' saith our Saviour, 'of the flesh, is flesh.' 'Without faith,' says St Paul, 'it is impossible to please God.'

6. The heart of man, after all the abatements are made which can be made, is set to do evil, in a most affecting and dreadful manner.

Of this truth, the text is a direct and very forcible assertion. The word which is rendered, 'fully set,' in our translation, is used by Ahasuerus, Esther vii. 5, to express the daring presumption with which Haman had risen up to destroy Esther and her nation. It is also said to denote being filled with a violent propensity, as the sails of a ship are filled, when borne along by a powerful blast. A strong tendency to evil in the heart of the sons of men, therefore, is here asserted in very forcible terms.

In considering the degree of iniquity indicated in this and similar passages, it is not my design, nor within my power or wish, to settle this point with mathematical exactness. In the Scriptures, God has exhibited this subject in an indefinite, and yet in a more impressive and affecting manner, than any which mankind have substituted. No views of human corruption are so affecting or so awful, as those which are presented to us in the word of God. This example may be confidently followed; and no man is required to limit this subject more exactly, than it has been done by his Maker.

With these observations premised, I shall proceed to adduce several proofs of the doctrine, expressed in the text.

1. The Scriptures directly assert this doctrine in the fullest manner.

'Every imagination of man's heart,' saith God, 'is only evil, continually.' Of the Gentiles, the apostle declares, that 'they are without excuse: because that when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations; and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools. Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the

creature, more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. For this cause God gave them up to vile affections. And as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them up to a reprobate mind. Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: who, knowing the judgment of God (that they which commit such things are worthy of death), not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.'

Of the Jews, the same apostle says, Rom. iii. 9, 'What then, are we better than they? No, in no wise; for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin. As it is written, There is none righteous; no, not one. There is none that understandeth; there is none that seeketh after God; they are all gone out of the way; they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their mouth is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips. Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness; their feet are swift to shed blood. There is no fear of God before their eyes.'—'Now we know, that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law; that every mouth might be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God.'—'Therefore, by the deeds of the law shall no flesh living be justified.'

Such is the character of men, given in form, and in the course of the most important logical discussion contained in the Scriptures, by the apostle Paul. Consonant with this representation, are all the exhibitions made in the Old and New Testament, of this subject. The depravity represented, is not only declared to be universal, but also to be of this high and dreadful malignity. Mankind are not exhibited as prone to one sin only, but to all these, and all other sins; and not prone to these sins merely, but filled with them as attributes, and executing them swiftly and dreadfully as practices.

II. *The same truth is evident to every man, if he examines the subject faithfully, from the state of his own heart and life.*

This very extensive field of evidence can now be explored only in a very imperfect manner: but a little attention to it will in no small degree illustrate and prove the doctrine.

1. Every man who scrutinizes his own heart at all, knows that, naturally, he in no sense obeys the first and great command of the law of God; Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart.

This is the first, and altogether the most important duty of intelligent creatures; and is plainly that duty, separated from which, no other can be performed. All possible motives in the highest possible degrees conspire to induce a rational being to perform it. If then these motives do not influence the heart; if we love not our Creator, Preserver, and Benefactor, the author of all good, and himself the Infinite Good; we cannot be imagined to love with right principles any other being. If we perform not our plain duty to Him, we cannot be supposed to perform our duty to any other.

2. All men are daily reproached by their own consciences, as being greatly and continually guilty of sin.

The fear of the anger of God, and of future punishment, and the pride which every man feels in thinking himself of a good and honourable character, are biases which strongly influence us to reject, as much as possible, so humiliating a doctrine as this. But in spite of both, our consciences irresistibly impelled by the truth, declare the greatness of our depravity every day; and we cannot hide our eyes from the humiliating declaration. Were it possible to avoid the acknowledgment, we should certainly avoid it; but the truth is so obvious and so undeniable, that we cannot escape.

The only exception to this remark proves the truth of the doctrine still more strongly. The man whose conscience does not thus testify, is plainly of a peculiarly depraved character; not merely because his conscience does not thus testify, but because he is always guilty of gross sin in various other respects. So common, or rather so universal is this fact, as to become the subject of proverbial remark. He, therefore, who is thus situated, is still more depraved than mankind in general.

3. The stupidity of mankind, and their hardness of heart, are strong exhibitions of the same doctrine.

That men should be thus guilty, and yet be insensible to the nature and degree of their depravity, is an event, certainly not to have been expected from the reason, of which we so continually boast. Our sins are committed against the infinite God, the eternal, unchangeable enemy of sin; and are therefore the means of exposing us in an awful manner to his wrath and vengeance. At the same time, the character is in itself debased, deformed, and hateful beyond expression. Who then can be supposed to possess any share of reason, and not be humbled beyond measure at the latter of these considerations, and equally alarmed by the former? Yet mankind by nature are universally, not only not humbled, but haughty; not only not alarmed, but stupid, as to their danger; and cheerful, gay, exulting, and insolent, in the career of their iniquity.

In the meantime, no warnings are sufficient to awaken them to a sense of guilt, danger, or duty; no counsels to persuade them to return to obedience, no motives to deter them from sin. The heart is like the nether millstone, incapable of any useful, serious, divine impression; daily becoming more and more guilty, stupid, and hardened; and wandering farther and farther from duty and from God, from hope and from heaven.

Eternal life is offered, and has been offered, to those now before me, ten thousand times. Who has accepted the offer? Their sins have been ten thousand times reproved and condemned. Who has repented, and forsaken them? Their duty has in countless instances been pressed upon them. Who has obeyed? God has called, Christ has entreated, the Spirit of grace has striven. Who has listened, complied, and yielded? To continue in sin, is to be exposed to endless misery. To repent and return to God, is to secure endless life. Every hardened, impenitent sinner declares, therefore, that in his view, sin with endless misery for its reward, is more to be chosen than holiness or obedience, with endless life. What greater proof of dreadful depravity can be given or demanded?

III. *The same doctrine is most affectingly evinced by the whole course of human conduct.*

This evidence will advantageously appear,

1. From the private conduct of mankind, as individuals.

I shall not here insist at large on the most private and retired scenes of life, where we see, in multitudes of instances, notwithstanding all the concealment and disguise with which vice hides itself from the observation of the world, innumerable forms and degrees of corruption acted out in a very painful and humiliating manner. In spite of the veil which night and solitude cast over the innumerable perpetrations of the human race, how many kinds of deformity rise up daily to our view! How many early, bitter, and unnatural contentions, even of little children! What affecting tokens even of infantine selfishness, wrath, revenge, and cruelty! How many proofs of filial impiety, ingratitude, and rebellion, in the morning of life! What unbrotherly and unsisterly coldness and alienation; what unkind and unforgiving hearts appear in those, 'who are bone of the same bone, and flesh of the same flesh!' How many jealous, hard-hearted, little, base sentiments and actions afflict the bosom of parental tenderness in those, whom nature makes inexpressibly beloved, in spite of every fault, as well as of every folly!

What a task is it to rear a single family, without leaving such faults unextirpated, as are open and infamous! How vast a labour to train up even one child to virtue and to duty; or even to prevent one from becoming grossly sinful, and finally lost! What toils and pains, what cares and watchings; how many reproofs, restraints, and corrections; how many prayers, and sighs, and tears, are employed and suffered, before this hard task can be accomplished! How rarely is it accomplished at all! What then must be the corruption of that heart which makes all these efforts necessary; and which can resist and overcome them all!

From this summary view, let us turn our thoughts to the obvious conduct of men; as it exists in our own and every other country. What amazing selfishness visibly appears in the general conduct of mankind; and how little are they, amidst all the culture of education and humanity, all the restraints of law, and all the illuminations, injunctions, and threatenings of religion, disposed to act agreeably to the dictates of truth, righteousness, and benevolence towards each other. A little property, a little power, a very humble office, or some other trifling object of ambition, will at any time make those who have been for life bosom friends, vehement and irreconcilable enemies. A furious and long continued lawsuit is resorted to, in order to decide the unsettled property; a lawsuit carried on with bitterness, fraud, and perjury; and terminated in insolent victory and sullen defeat, in riveted hatred and gloomy retaliation. The place of honour and power is sought for with electioneering, caballing, slander, fraud, and falsehood; and is enjoyed with insolence, or lost with envy, malice, and secret resolutions of future revenge.

In the common bargains between men, how rarely is it the design to exchange an equivalent for that which is received; although the only possible rule of honesty; and how generally, to make what is called a good, and what is in reality a fraudulent, bargain. How perpetual are the efforts to impose on our neighbours commodities of less than the professed value; commodities imperfect, corrupted, and decayed. How many persons obtain their whole living, and spend their whole lives, in this kind of fraud. What pains are also taken to conceal or belie the state of the markets; of our own circumstances, our real intentions, or our ability to fulfill the engagements into which we enter. What base deceptions are practised in cases of bankruptcy; and what frauds perpetrated, in order to attain legally the cha racter and immunities of a bankrupt. How difficul has it been even to make a law which can at all secure to creditors an equitable share in the actual remains of a bankrupt's property. How strange would the observations which I am now making, appear in a world of honest, virtuous beings!

Friendship is plainly one of the things, most to be looked for among rational beings: as it is one of the most profitable, and most pleasing, of all those which are in our power, To this union of affections, this perpetual correspondence of hearts, this delightful harmony of life, all our interests strongly lead us, with motives highly noble and affectingly persuasive. Yet Solomon could say, and with plain propriety could say, 'A faithful man, who can find?' Not a small part of our conversation, or of our writings, is filled with bitter complaints of frail, alloyed, treacherous, broken friendship; and of unworthy, false, and perfidious friends. Why are we not friends? Can virtue furnish any part of the reason?

The pleasures of men, their darling and customary pleasures, have ever seemed to me an affecting proof of extreme depravity in our nature.

St James directs, 'Is any man afflicted, let him pray. Is any merry' (that is, cheerful), 'let him sing psalms.' In other words, let the hours of cheerfulness be spent innocently (for such is the employment recommended), gratefully to God, and profitably to ourselves. Such are the amusements, such the pleasures recommended by an apostle.

In examining the pleasures actually sought by mankind, I shall, without any particular notice, pass by the brutal entertainments so greedily sought, so highly enjoyed, and so firmly established under the sanction of law, in Greece, Rome, and other heathen countries; the public games, in which naked men contended for superiority in feats of agility and strength; the gladiatorial shows, in which men, trained for the purpose, butchered each other for the amusement of their fellow men; and the exposures of human beings to the fury of wild beasts, while thousands enjoyed the sport of seeing them torn asunder, as a mere entertainment. I will not dwell upon the fact, that beside the vulgar and the savage, men of high rank, of enlightened minds, and of polished manners, and, what is still more humiliating and disgusting, women of the first birth, education, and character, were regularly present. I will pass by the Saturnalia, in which Rome sunk, for a week every year, into the coarsest and most vulgar brutism, and all distinction and decency were abolished. Useful, as the investigation might be, it must, for the want of time, be omitted on the present occasion.

Let me then ask, What are the actual pleasures usually sought with eager favouritism, in countries claiming the title of Christian? Go to the table, where 'provision is' professedly 'made for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof,' and you will find one answer to the question. What a circle is very frequently seated around it! Or rather, what does that circle in many instances become before the table is deserted. To pass the en-

ormous expense, care, and anxiety, with which nature and art are employed and ransacked, to gratify the demands of a sickly and fastidious palate in how many instances, throughout even the civilized and Christian world, is a feast the mere resort of gluttony and drunkenness. How swinishly are the overflowing bounties of the infinite God abused to the prostitution of man; to the destruction of his health, the waste of his time, the perversion of his talents, the neglect of his duty, the corruption of his heart, the stupefaction of his reason, the loss of his usefulness, and the ruin of his soul! How many drunkards, think you, my brethren, have been found in a single century, the most enlightened and improved, since the beginning of the world, and in the countries inhabited by Christians, around the festive boards of the well-informed and polished members of society! How many more gluttons! What a scene of low and vulgar brutism, at the same time, is daily presented by taverns, ale-houses, and dram-shops; and on days of public rejoicing and festivity.

Turn we hence to the horse-race; another darling diversion of mankind; and not of the ignorant and clownish only, but of the enlightened and polished; nay, even of the noble and dignified ranks of men. What has gathered the concourse? The professed object is to see two or more horses run a race, and one outstrip the other in his speed. Without calling in question the lawfulness of setting these animals upon the stretch of their powers for our amusement; what a picture is presented to our view by the bets which are laid, the fraud and falsehood practised; the perjuries, oaths, curses, and blasphemies uttered; the drunkenness and sloth which are indulged; the battles which are fought, and the universal prostitution of morals which is accomplished.

At a cockpit, another darling scene of amusement to vast multitudes of mankind, all these gross and dreadful iniquities abound; together with a cruelty, causeless, shameless, and horrid; a cruelty impossible to that 'righteous man, who is merciful to his beast,' and of course to every harmless creature in his power.

Of the same deplorable nature is the amusement of bull-baiting; an amusement warranted by the voice of law, and the deliberate decisions of senatorial wisdom and royal dignity. The strength and courage of this animal are here made the very means of torturing him with the most exquisite agonies, which can easily be devised; all not only quietly suffered, but established, for the sake of guarding the palate of the epicure from offence and disappointment on the one hand; and on the other, for the purpose of slaking the thirst for pleasure, in minds which can find delight in ferocity, anguish, and death.

From these humiliating scenes, direct your steps to the gaming-table. I need not tell you how chosen a diversion, or set of diversions is found here; or to what an incomprehensible extent sought in every country, civilized and savage. Here fraud in every form begins, carries on, and closes the business. Here is the chamber of moroseness, gloom, discontent, animosity, profaneness, contention, drunkenness, and universal depravity. Here property is wickedly lost, and wickedly won. Here time is most shamefully and sinfully wasted. Here all duties are most dreadfully neglected; and here the estate, the health, the character, the family, and the soul, are consigned to perdition.

From the gaming-table, turn your researches next to the theatre. Think, first, of the almost uniform character of the miserable wretches, who are trained to create the diversion. How low are they, almost without an exception, fallen; and how low do they fall, of course, by the deplorable employment to which they are most wickedly tempted to devote themselves? If you are at a loss, read a history, or even a professed panegyric, of this class of mankind. You will find it filled up with crimes which disgrace the name even of sinful man, and with characters which are a blot even on this guilty world. Consider, next, the performances, which these unhappy men and women are employed to exhibit. How few can be read without a blush, or without a sigh, by a person not seduced by habit, or not lost to virtue, and even to sobriety. How great a part are mere means of pollution. What art, labour, and genius, are engaged in them, to garnish gross and dreadful vice; to disguise its nature and effects, to robe it in the princely attire of virtue, and to crown it with the rewards of well-doing! How often is even common decency insulted, ridiculed, and put to flight! In how many ways, and with how much art, is corruption softly and secretly instilled into the soul! In how many instances is virtue defaced, dishonoured, and like the Saviour of mankind, crowned with thorns, sceptered with a reed, and mocked with pretended and insolent homage!

Turn your eyes, next, to the audience, whose wishes and property give birth to the whole establishment. Of whom is this audience composed? Of how few persons, whom virtue ever knew, or with whom she would not blush to confess her acquaintance! Of how many, who are strangers to all good! Of how many, who are ignorant even of decency; to whom vice is pleasing, and grossness an entertainment!

Accordingly, all the course of exhibition, except a little part thrust in as a sacrifice to decency and reputation, is formed of polluted sentiments, and polluted characters; in which, whatever is not directly and openly abominable, is meant merely as the white covering, intended to shroud from the eye the death and rottenness within. Our own copious language, employed in thousands of dramatic performances, probably cannot boast of a sufficient number of such plays, as an apostle would have pronounced innocent, to furnish a single stage for a single season.

From the stage, men are directly prepared to go to the brothel. The corruption of the one fits the mind with no common preparation to direct its course to the other.

One of the first facts which here strikes, and afflicts the thinking mind, is, that these houses of pestilence and ruin, of sin and perdition, are tolerated in countries inhabited and ruled by such as profess themselves to be Christians; by those who have been 'baptized into the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.' Another is, that they are frequented by vast multitudes: and another, that these are not composed of the low, ignorant, and despised only; but in great numbers, of the wealthy, the enlightened, the polite, and even the noble and the princely. To this we must add, because truth adds, that seduction has in all instances begun the ruin of the miserable wretches who inhabit these walls of Sodom. This seduction also has been accomplished by art, falsehood, serpentine insidiousness, and outrageous perjury. The endless ruin of a soul has been the

price of a momentary and debased gratification; and the poor and pitiable victim has been solicited and induced, to sacrifice eternal life to the fiend-like persuasion of her betrayer.

In the meantime all, or nearly all those, who are authors of the deception, or haunters of these tenements of prostitution, accompany to the same perdition the miserable victims of their treachery. Of 'the strange,' or polluted 'woman,' God saith, 'None that go in unto her return again; neither take they hold of the paths of life.'

Another fact, to which your attention is called in these dreadful scenes, is, that here all sin springs up as in a hot bed; that besides the horrid debasement which is here the characteristical guilt, all possible sin is rank, luxuriant, and prosperous. Profaneness, drunkenness, treachery, fraud, and murder, haunt these baleful walls, as a collection of infernal beings in a second hell. Like that dreadful world also, its doors are barred against all return and repentance, against life and hope. Scarcely an example is found in which those, who have once entered ever make their escape. Sin and Perdition are marked on the gateway; and over the door is read, in letters of fire, This house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death.

The last subject which, in this complicated mass of iniquity, demands your investigation, is the immense extent of the pollution, and the incomprehensible numbers of mankind which it involves, and has ever involved. A prophet has recorded Sodom as a monument of eternal infamy. Were prophets to exist in every land, Sodoms would not improbably be portrayed on many pages of every historical record. The great capitals of most European and Asiatic countries are in many respects, perhaps, not a whit behind the impurity found in those monuments of the divine vengeance, 'the cities of the plain.' I wish I could say our own had a less share in this charge. Modern lewdness, although usually concealed with care from the eye of the world, has yet publicly proceeded to lengths which amaze the mind even of cool contemplation, sicken the heart of delicacy, and turn back the eye of virtue with horror. The world has become complaisant to it; and changed its very language, to give soft and imposing names to the wretches who have robbed the swine of their stye, or wallowed at their side in the mire. The prostitute is misnamed with softening appellations, intended to veil her odious character, and her enormous crimes. The lewd man is styled a man of gayety, spirit, and life; a man of the world, a liberal man, a man unshackled by fanaticism or superstition.

At the same time, means innumerable, tolerated by law, and pursued with impunity, are employed to cherish this worst, this most fatal of all evils. Houses of pollution in immense numbers are erected, allowed, and frequented. Abandoned women are brought forward to places of public and honourable resort; admitted without opposition to assemblies for amusement, made up of those who fill the upper spheres of life; seated at tables of distinction, and rolled on the wheels of splendour. Genius prostitutes its elevated powers to seduce the miserable victim, to varnish the guilt of pollution, to soothe, to torpor the wounded conscience, and to make the way to hell smooth, pleasant, and unsuspected; forms and tunes the enchanting song, to imbrute the heedless mind; fashions and animates the marble into every form of temptation; traces on the canvass its lines of symmetry and beauty, and sheds the splendour of its colouring, only to corrupt and to ruin. The shop, to complete the havoc, publicly holds out the infamous book, the alluring image, and the fascinating picture, to every passenger; and in defiance of laws and magistrates, eagerly helps forward the work of destruction.

All these are chosen and customary pursuits of mankind. Those who follow them are immortal beings, who have souls to be saved, sins to be forgiven, and endless life to be secured. All of them have heard the gospel of salvation; have been exhorted to yield themselves to the Redeemer, and have been earnestly invited to enter into heaven.

The life of all is a vapour; the day of grace and of pardon is bounded by that momentary life; and each feels his time to be so short, that he cannot find even an hour to employ on the great work of repentance, and the salvation of his soul.

Such then are the pleasures of mankind. What, it may now be asked, are those employments of men, which wear a more serious aspect?

Among these, the first which strikes the mind of a serious investigator, is their general and wonderful profanation of the word of God. To this sin, it is generally acknowledged, there is hardly any temptation. Wickedness here assumes, therefore, the character of disinterestedness; and the sin is committed from the pure love of sinning. Yet how immensely extensive is this evil practice. The Heathen and the Mohammedan, the Jewish and the Christian nations, professing widely different views in other respects concerning the Ruler of all things, quietly unite in profaning his awful name. Men of all ages and characters, however discordant otherwise, harmonize here. The sage and the blockhead, the gentleman and the clown, the nobleman and the peasant, join their voices in unison; and form one great chorus, not for the praise, but for the dishonour of God. The prince swears on his throne, and the beggar on his dunghill; the child lisps out the imperfect curse, and the tongue of the man of grey hairs trembles beneath the faltering blasphemy. From California to Japan, the general voice of mankind rises up to heaven, not 'as the odour of sweet incense,' but as one vast exhalation of impiety, infinitely disgraceful to our reason, immensely ungrateful, and immensely wicked.

The next dreadful effusion of this evil spirit is the multiform falsehood, which in such an astonishing manner clouds and disgraces this miserable world. Truth is the foundation of all virtue, and consequently of all happiness. Without it, society, in the proper sense, cannot exist. Even the dreadful bands of thieves and ruffians are proverbially acknowledged to be indebted to it for their own horrid union. But cast your eyes over this wide world, and mark how extensively 'truth has fallen in the streets' of cities, the solitary habitations of the country, and the wild retreats of the savage and barbarian. Mark how soon falsehood begins to blacken the tongue of the child, and how greatly to deepen its hue with the increase of years. Trace if you can, without intense mortification, the secret windings of the private slanderer; and behold if you can, without amazement, in endless multitudes, the impudent, unblushing lies of public newspapers. Survey with horror, for without horror you cannot survey, the perjuries of testimony, the perjuries of elections, the perjuries of the

custom-house, and the perjuries of public office. Look, with still more amazement and regret, on the falsehoods of the great and powerful. 'Truth,' said king John of France, 'if banished from the rest of the world, ought still to find a mansion in the bosom of princes.' Yet how regularly from year to year, and from century to century, courts and legislatures assert and deny successively, the same facts, without a retraction, and without a blush. Cast your eyes, and tell me if they do not sicken while you cast them, on the mountainous mass of falsehood heaped up by insidious learning, and infidel philosophy, against the word of God, and against all the interest, virtue, and happiness of man. When you have done these things, finish the humiliating investigation by gazing at the whole nation of the French, swearing eternal hatred to royalty, and eternal fealty to six successive constitutions of government, adopted within little more than six successive years, and then bowing down quietly at the foot of a despot.

From falsehood, the transition is almost necessary to fraud. On this subject, however, as on all the remaining ones, I can dwell but a moment. The laws of all civilized nations have been chiefly employed in repressing this sin, and in repressing it with every suffering which ingenuity could devise, or human nature sustain. Yet in spite of the whip, the brand, the prison, and the galley; in spite of the gibbet and the cross, the rack and the faggot; what commodity, what kind of dealing is not the subject of fraud; and what child of Adam is not its mortified object? All kinds of money are counterfeited; all kinds of instruments for conveyance, or security, are forged. Vast multitudes of mankind gain their livelihood from cheating. The beggar cheats you in his tale of suffering, the man of business in his commodity, the statesman plunders the public, the prince defrauds his subjects by false representations of his wants, and false representations of his expenditure. In London only, a very corrupt, but far from being the most corrupt city in Europe, 115,000 human beings, among whom are 50,000 abandoned females, live, according to the sagacious and upright Colquhoun, either partly or wholly by customary fraud; and annually plunder their fellow men of two millions sterling: while on the river Thames a more systematized robbery has yearly wrested from individuals no less than 500,000 pounds of the same currency; and from the crown, during a century, ten millions.

Duelling and suicide present to our view two other kindred testimonies of enormous corruption. On these however I cannot, and need not, dwell. Instead of expatiating on them, I will exhibit to you two official accounts of the moral state of the capital of France. By a public return to the government of births, deaths, &c. in Paris, in the year 1801, it appears that there were,

Legitimate births	14,829	
Illegitimate	4,841	About one quarter of the whole.
Marriages	3,826	
Divorces	720	About one sixth of the whole.
Died in their own houses	12,510	
In poor houses and hospitals	8,257	About two fifths of the whole.
Found dead in the streets	201	

In the Republican year, ending Sept. 23, 1803, by the report of the prefect of police to the grand judge for the district of Paris, the number of

Suicides was	Men	490	657
	Women	167	
Murdered persons	Men	81	150
	Women	69	
Divorces			644
Murderers executed			155
Condemned to the gallies			1210
Condemned to hard labour and imprisonment			1626
Branded with hot irons			64

Among the criminals executed were seven fathers, who had poisoned their children: ten husbands, who had murdered their wives: six wives, who poisoned their husbands: and fifteen children, who destroyed their parents.

During that year also 12,076 lewd woman had been registered, and paid for the protection of the police; 1552 kept mistresses were noted; and 308 public brothels licensed, by the prefect of police at Paris.

This tremendous recital admits no comment. The spectator shrinks from it with horror; and forced to acknowledge those comprised in the story, to be human beings, wishes to deny that himself is a man.

2. The doctrine is dreadfully evinced in the public conduct of mankind.

On this part of the subject, copious and important as it is, I shall make a very few observations only, under the following heads:—

(1.) Their government.

Under a righteous administration of government, the intense corruption of the human character is gloomily manifested by subjects, in the violation of their allegiance, and their evasions or their transgressions of law. God has made it our duty to 'render tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; and honour to whom honour.' Nor has He permitted us to perform these duties with a less scrupulous exactness than any other. Compare with this precept the reluctant payment of reasonable taxes; the unceasing and immense smuggling; the innumerable frauds practised on the custom-house; the murmurings, the seditions, the revolts, the malignant factions, and the furious civil discords, which have blackened the annals even of the freest and happiest nations; and you cannot want evidence of the depravity of that spirit, which has given birth to these enormities.

On the other hand, how often is the government itself no other than an administration of iniquity. The endless train of evils, however, which have flowed in upon mankind from this source, have been here so long the ruling theme, both of conversation and writings; the oppression, fraud, plunder, baleful examples, and deplorable corruption of despotic princes, have been so thoroughly learned by heart; as to render a particular discussion of them, at the present time, unnecessary But however frequently they have been repeated, they are not on that account less real, or dreadful manifestations of human turpitude. I know that it is a common refuge of the objectors to this doctrine, to attribute both these kinds of evidence of human corruption to the form of the government, and not to the nature of man. But this complaisance to human nature is out of place. Kings and princes are mere men; and differ from other men, only because they are surrounded by greater temptations. Their nature and propensities are precisely the same with yours and mine. Their opportunities of doing good are, at the same time, immensely greater; and were they originally virtuous, would be seized and employed with an avidity proportioned to their extent,

for this great purpose only. Were human nature pure, as is professed; were it not dreadfully corrupted, kings would be the best of men; as possessing the greatest power, and the widest means of beneficence. How unlike this has been the fact, not with respect to kings only, but to almost all men invested with high authority. Republican legislatures have been at least as oppressive to mankind as monarchs, particularly to the dependencies of their empire. Rome and Sparta ground their provinces with a harder hand than the Persian despot; and no human tyranny was ever marked with such horrors as the republican tyranny of France.

(2.) The wars of mankind are a still more dreadful exhibition of wickedness than their government.

Here, as if the momentary life of man was too long, and his sufferings too few and too small, men have professedly embarked in the design of cutting off life, and enhancing the number and degree of sufferings. War has prevailed through every age, and in every country; and in all has waded through human blood, trampled on human corpses, and laid waste the fields and the dwellings, the happiness and the hopes of mankind. It has been employed to empty earth, and people hell; to make angels weep, and fiends triumph, over the deplorable guilt and debasement of the human character.

(3.) The doctrine is not less strongly evidenced by the religion of mankind.

With this subject I will wind up the melancholy detail. Jehovah created this world, stored it with the means of good, and filled it with rational and immortal beings. Instead of loving, serving, and adoring Him, they have worshipped devils, the vilest of all beings, and alike his enemies and their own. They have worshipped each other, they have worshipped brutes, they have worshipped vegetables. The smith hath molten a god of gold: the carpenter has hewn a god of wood; and millions have prostrated themselves to both, in praise and prayer. To appease the anger of these gods, they have attempted to wash their sins away by ablutions, and to make atonement for them by penance. To these gods they have offered up countless hecatombs; and butchered, tortured, and burnt their own children. Before these gods their religion has enjoined and sanctioned, the unlimited prostitution of matrons and virgins to casual lust and systematized pollution. The same religion has also sanctioned war and slaughter, plunder and devastation, fraud and perjury, seduction and violation, without bounds. Its persecutions have reddened the world with blood, and changed its countries into catacombs. On 'the pale horse,' seen in the Apocalyptic vision, 'death' has gone before it; 'and hell following after,' has exulted in its deplorable follies, its crimes without number, and the miseries which it has occasioned without end.

SERMON XXXII.

HUMAN DEPRAVITY, DERIVED FROM ADAM.

Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death hath passed upon all men for that all have sinned.—Rom. v. 20.

From these words I proposed, in a former Discourse, to discuss the following doctrine:

That in consequence of the apostasy of Adam all men have sinned.

In the three last Discourses I have considered the universality and the degree of human corruption. The next subject of our inquiry is, the source whence this corruption is derived. In the text, as well as in the doctrine, it is exhibited as existing in consequence of the apostasy of Adam.

Before I proceed to a direct examination of this branch of the doctrine, it will be advantageous to make a few preliminary observations.

(1.) It will, I presume, be admitted that there is a cause of this depravity.

The depravity of man is either caused or casual. If it be casual, every thing else may, for aught that appears, be casual also. A denial of this position, therefore, becomes a direct establishment of the atheistical scheme of casual existence.

Besides, uniformity is in all cases a complete refutation of the supposition of casualty. That mere accident should be the parent of the same moral character in all the progeny of Adam, or of uniformity of any kind in so many thousand millions of cases, is contradictory to plain mathematical certainty.

(2.) This cause, whatever it is, is commensurate with its effects. As therefore the effects extend to all men, it follows that the cause also is universal.

(3.) The cause of this depravity is undoubtedly one and the same. This is argued irresistibly from the nature of the effects, which is everywhere the same.

(4.) This cause did not always exist. Before their apostasy, our first parents were undepraved. As the effect did not then exist, the cause plainly did not exist.

These observations must, I think, be admitted without a controversy. It follows therefore that in searching for the source of human corruption we must, if we act wisely, be guided by them: since nothing can be this source of which all these things cannot be truly predicated.

(5.) In inquiring after the source of human corruption, we inquire only after a fact.

This subject, sufficiently difficult in itself, has been almost always embarrassed by uniting with it foreign considerations. A fact, it ought ever to be remembered, is what it is, independently of every thing else. If it

be true, that the corruption of mankind exists in consequence of the apostasy of Adam, this truth cannot be affected by any reluctance in us to admit it; by any opinions which we may form of the propriety or impropriety of the dispensation; nor by any inexplicableness, arising from the efficient cause, the moral nature, or the consequences of the fact. These things may be the foundation of other inquiries, and of perplexities and difficulties ever so great; still they cannot even remotely affect the subject of the present investigation.

(6.) When I assert, that in consequence of the apostasy of Adam all men have sinned, I do not intend that the posterity of Adam are guilty of his transgression.

Moral actions are not, so far as I can see, transferable from one being to another. The personal act of any agent is in its very nature the act of that agent solely, and incapable of being participated by any other agent. Of course, the guilt of such a personal act is equally incapable of being transferred or participated. The guilt is inherent in the action, and is attributable therefore to the agent only.

So clear is this doctrine, that I presume no evidence was ever supposed to be derived originally from reason to the contrary doctrine. If therefore any evidence can be found to support this doctrine, it must be found in revelation. But in revelation, it is presumed, it cannot be found. Unquestionably it is nowhere directly asserted in the Scriptures. If it be contained in them, it must be by implication. Let me ask, Where is this implication? Certainly not in any use of the term 'impute,' commonly appealed to by the supporters of this scheme. I have examined with care every passage in which this word and its connexions are used in the Scriptures, and feel completely assured that it is used in a totally different sense, in every instance without an exception. The verb λογιζομαι, which is the original word rendered by the English word 'impute,' denotes originally and always, *to reckon, to account, to reckon to the account of a man, to charge to his account;* but never to transfer moral action, guilt, or desert, from one being to another. Thus it is said by Shimei, 'Let not my Lord impute this sin unto his servant:' that is, Let not my lord charge my sin of cursing David against me, or to my account. Thus also it is said, 'Abraham believed God; and it was accounted to him for righteousness;' that is, his faith was reckoned to him in the stead of that perfect legal righteousness, in the possession of which he would have been accepted before God.

The passage which seems the nearest to the purpose of those against whom I am contending, is 1 Cor. xv. 22. 'As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.' The words in the original are εν τω Αδαμ and εν τω Χριστω. The Greek preposition Εν signifies very often, as any person acquainted with the language must have observed, exactly the same thing with the English phrase *by means of.* The passage would, therefore, have been explicitly and correctly translated, As by means of Adam all die, even so by means of Christ shall all be made alive. Adam is therefore only asserted here to be an instrumental cause of the death specified. A parallel passage will, I think, make the justice of these remarks evident beyond any reasonable debate. In 1 Cor. vii. 14, it is said, 'The unbelieving husband is sanctified by the believing wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband.' No person will pretend that in this passage the apostle declares the sanctification of the believing wife to be transferred to the husband, so as to become the personal state or character of the husband. This is evidently not the fact, because he is still an unbeliever. The meaning plainly is, that by means of his wife he is, in such a sense, considered as sanctified, as to prevent his children from being unclean; or, in more explicit terms, from being incapable of being offered to God in baptism.

(7.) Neither do I intend that the descendants of Adam are punished for his transgression.

This doctrine is completely set aside by God himself, in Ezek. xviii. 20, 'The soul that sinneth it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father; neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son; the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him; and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.' In this passage it is, I think, as explicitly as language will admit, declared that no man shall be punished for the sin of another; particularly that the son shall not be punished for the sin of his father; and, by obvious and, I think, irresistible implication, that the sons of Adam shall not be punished for the sins of this their common parent.

Having thus prepared the way, as I conceive, for the direct discussion of the doctrine, I shall now proceed to adduce in support of its truth the following proofs:—

I. *The Text.*

Here it is asserted, 'that by one man sin entered into the world:' δι' ἑνος ἀνθρωπου; 'through, or by means of, one man.' I will not take upon me to say, that the apostle declares the sin of Adam to be the only supposable or possible cause of the entrance of sin into the world; but he plainly declares it to be the actual cause. The sin which thus entered he declares also to be universal 'even as universal as the death which entered by sin. In the 18th verse, which is separated from the text by a parenthesis only, the apostle teaches us in the most direct terms that this universal sin is a consequence of the transgression of Adam. His words are, 'Therefore, as by the offence of one' (or as in the original, δι' ἑνος παραπτωματος, 'by one offence) judgment came upon all to condemnation; and in the 19th verse, 'By one man's disobedience many' (in the original οἱ πολλοι, *the many*) 'were made' (in the Greek, κατεσταθησαν, *were constituted*) 'sinners.' The meaning of these passages is, I think, plainly the following: that by means of the offence, or transgression of Adam, the judgment or sentence of God, came upon all men unto condemnation; because, and solely because, all men, in that state of things which was constituted in consequence of the transgression of Adam, became sinners.

I have heretofore declared that the manner in which the state of things became such, is not at all involved in the present discussion. I now observe farther, that I am unable to explain this part of the subject. Many attempts have been made to explain it; but I freely confess myself to have seen none which was satisfactory to me; or which did not leave the difficulties as great and, for aught I know, as numerous as they were before. I shall not add to these difficulties by any imperfect explanations of my own. At the same time I repeat, that the fact in question is not at all affected by these diffi-

culties; and that a denial of this fact is perplexed with difficulties which are greater both in number and degree.

II. *The doctrine is evident also from the sentence pronounced on our first parents.*

In this sentence God declared, that 'the ground was cursed for the sake' of Adam, or because of his transgression; 'that it should bring forth thorns and thistles; that he should eat bread in the sweat of his brow; and that both he and his wife should lead lives of toil, suffering, and sorrow, until they should finally return to the dust, from which they were taken.' In a former Discourse it was shown that all the parts of this sentence have been regularly fulfilled from the beginning to the present day. All of them therefore constituted a sentence actually pronounced on all the progeny of Adam, and proved to be so, because it is executed on them all. The cursing of the ground, particularly, by which it was deprived of its former spontaneous fruitfulness, and condemned to perpetual sterility; by which thorns and briers were substituted for the fruits of paradise; and by which ease, happiness, and immortality, were exchanged for labour, suffering, and death, inwrought into the very constitution now given to the earth; was a fact which involved of course the punishment of all men, because all men suffer distress by means of this fact, and because no rational beings, beside sinners, are in the providence of God subjected to any suffering. Every descendant of Adam must of course be an inhabitant of the world which was thus cursed, and must of necessity be a partaker of the very evils denounced in this curse. When the sentence was declared, therefore, it was certainly foreseen that all those who would afterward share in the sufferings which it disclosed, that is, all the children of Adam, would be sinners. As all the progeny of Adam must inhabit the world thus cursed, all must necessarily partake of these evils, because they were inseparably united to the world in which they dwelt. If then it was not foreseen that they would be sinners, the curse must have been denounced against them, either when obedient and virtuous, or while their future moral character was uncertain. The former will not be admitted by any man; the latter will no more be admitted by any man, if he reflect at all on the subject; for God can no more be supposed to condemn and punish those who are not known by him to be sinful, than those who are known to be virtuous. It follows therefore that, as the world was thus changed in consequence of the transgression of Adam, and of a paradise became a wilderness of thorns and briers, so, in consequence of the same transgression, the character of man was also changed; and instead of being immortal, virtuous, and happy, he became the subject of sin, suffering, and death. With respect to one of these considerations, viz. the mortality of mankind, the apostle Paul expressly asserts the doctrine in a passage already quoted for another purpose. 'In,' or by means of, 'Adam, all die.' As neither death nor any other suffering befalls virtuous beings, this passage may be fairly considered as a full confirmation of the doctrine at large.

III. *The doctrine is directly declared by Moses, when he informs us that Adam begat a son in his own likeness.*

The meaning of the word 'likeness,' that is, the meaning intentionally attached to it by Moses, cannot, I think, be mistaken. In the first chapter of the same history he introduces God as saying, 'Let us make man in our own image, after our likeness;' and subjoins, 'so God created man in his own image; in the image of God created he him.' In a former Discourse I have shown that the likeness, or image, here mentioned, is the moral image of God; consisting, especially, in 'knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness,' as we are informed by St Paul. After dwelling so particularly on the image of God in which man was created, and on the fact, that man was created in this image, it cannot, I think, be questioned that Moses intended to inform us that Seth was begotten in the moral likeness of Adam after his apostasy; and sustained from his birth a moral character similar to that which his two brothers, Cain and Abel, also sustained. This view of the subject appears plainly to have been adopted by Job, when he asks, 'Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one' (Job xiv. 4): by Bildad, when he asks, 'How then can man be justified with God; or how can he be clean that is born of a woman' (xxv. 4.): by David, when he says (Psalm li. 5), 'Behold I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me;' and by St Paul, when he says, 'As we have borne the image of the earthly (Adam), so we shall bear the image of the heavenly' (Adam), (1 Cor. xv. 49.) But if Seth, Cain, and Abel, derived their corruption from the apostasy of their parents, then it is true, not only that their corruption, but that of all mankind, exists in consequence of that apostasy.

Accordingly, our Saviour declares universally, that 'that which is born of the flesh, is flesh;' and that 'that' only 'which is born of the Spirit,' or 'born again, is spirit.' In this declaration he certainly teaches us, that the fleshly character is inseparably connected with the birth of man, it being an invariable attendant of that birth. In other words, every parent, as truly as Adam, begets children in his own moral likeness. It hardly needs to be observed, that the moral character, denoted in this observation of our Saviour by the term 'flesh,' is a corrupt character. 'The carnal,' or fleshly 'mind,' says St Paul, 'is enmity against God; not subject to his law, neither indeed can be:' and again, 'To be carnally, or fleshly, minded is death.' In the original, the words in both passages are *φρονημα της σαρκος*; *the minding of the flesh:* the exercise of our thoughts and affections in that manner which accords with the fleshly or native character.

IV. *In exact accordance with this scriptural representation, the doctrine is strongly evinced by the conduct of children as soon as they become capable of moral action.*

Children in the morning of life are, as was remarked in the preceding discourse, unquestionably amiable; more so in many respects than at any future period; that is, whenever they do not at some future period become the subjects of sanctification. Some children also, as we are taught in the Scriptures, are sanctified from the womb. Still even these in some degree, and all others in a greater degree, exhibit from the dawn of moral action, evil affections and evil conduct. They are rebellious, disobedient, unkind, wrathful, and revengeful. All of them are proud, ambitious, vain, and universally selfish. All of them, particularly, are destitute of piety to God, the first, and far the most important exercise of virtue. They neither love, fear, nor obey him; neither admire his divine excellence, nor are thankful for his

unceasing loving-kindness. Immense multitudes of them are taught these duties from the commencement of their childhood, yet they can be persuaded to perform them by no species of instruction hitherto devised. A virtuous mind would, of course, from the mere knowledge of God, without any known law, without any other motive except what is found in his greatness, excellency, and goodness to us, admire and love, reverence and glorify him with all the heart. But no instance of this nature can be produced. I have been employed in the education of children and youth more than thirty years, and have watched their conduct with no small attention and anxiety. Yet, among the thousands of children committed to my care, I cannot say with truth, that I have seen one whose native character I had any reason to believe to be virtuous, or whom I could conscientiously pronounce to be free from the evil attributes mentioned above. In addition to this, it ought to be observed, that no child unspotted with sin is mentioned in the records of history. This, I think, could not be, had the fact ever existed. Mankind, therefore, according to the language of the Psalmist, 'are estranged from the womb, and go astray as soon as they are born.'

The opposers of the doctrine undertake to avoid the force of this argument, by attributing the corruption of children to example, and the propensity of human nature to imitation.

The power of example I readily acknowledge to be great, and the propensity to imitation strong. I acknowledge also, that from these sources we may derive a satisfactory explanation of many things, both good and evil, which are done in the world. Still, I apprehend, the objection is a very insufficient answer to the argument in question. For,

1. On beings who were virtuously inclined, a good example ought certainly to have more power than an evil one.

On beings neither virtuously nor viciously inclined, virtuous and vicious examples must, of course, be equally influential; as on beings sinfully inclined, it is acknowledged, sinful examples have an influence entirely preponderating. All this is evident, because virtuous beings must love virtuous conduct, and follow it, as much as vicious beings love and follow vicious conduct, and because neutral beings, if such are supposed to exist, can have no bias to either. If then mankind were virtuously inclined, they would follow, with a clear and universal preponderation, virtuous examples. If neither virtuously nor sinfully inclined, they would follow virtuous and sinful examples alike, and with an equal propensity to imitation. But neither of these facts is found in human experience. Virtuous examples, it is acknowledged, have some degree of influence, but all men know this influence to be exceedingly and distressingly small. This truth is seen every day, in every place, and in every person. Whence arises the superior influence of vicious example, but from the fact that it is more pleasing to the human heart? In heaven such example could have no influence.

2. If the first men were virtuous, as the objection supposes all men to be by nature, and as, according to the objection, these must have been, there could have been no evil examples, and upon this plan, no sin in the world.

Virtuous men, that is, men wholly virtuous, cannot exhibit an evil example. If then the first men were virtuous, their immediate successors had no vicious example to follow, and must therefore have been themselves virtuous. Of course, the example which they set also was only virtuous. Hence those who followed them must have been virtuous, and in like manner all their successors. Upon this plan, sin could never have entered the world. But sin is in the world, and is, and ever has been, the universally prevailing character of the human race. The objectors, therefore, are reduced by their scheme to this dilemma; either virtuous men set sinful examples, which is a plain contradiction; or men became sinful without sinful examples.

Should it be said, that after Adam and Eve apostatized, they corrupted their children by their own sinful example, who again corrupted theirs, and thus every generation became the means of corrupting those who followed them; and that in this manner the existence of a sinful character in mankind may be explained; I answer, that I readily admit the premises to a certain extent, but wholly deny the conclusion. Adam and Eve, speedily after their apostasy, that is, before they had children, became penitents. The example therefore which they exhibited to their children was such as penitents exhibit, expressive of their abhorrence of sin, and of their humble obedience to God. Such an example penitents now exhibit; and such a one, without a question, they have always exhibited. But this example, preponderating greatly in favour of virtue, must have had substantially the same influence with one perfectly virtuous. Of course, the perfectly virtuous minds of Adam's children must by this example have been strongly biassed to virtue, and according to this scheme, could not have failed of retaining their virtuous character. But this is plainly contrary to the fact. The descendants of Adam, of the first and of every succeeding generation, were evidently sinful beings, and in the course of ten generations became so universally and absolutely sinful, that, except Noah and his family, God destroyed them all by the deluge. God himself declares concerning them, that 'every imagination of the thoughts of their hearts was only evil continually; that it repented the Lord that he had made man upon the earth, and it grieved him at his heart.' In vain, therefore, do we look for the proper influence of virtuous example, on children born virtuous among the early descendants of Adam.

If mankind are born with neutral characters, not inclined either to good or to evil, the difficulty will not be seriously lessened. In this case, men ought now to be as generally virtuous as sinful: because this character furnishes exactly the same probability of the prevalence of virtue as of sin. But no such equality has at any period of time existed. On the contrary, men are now, and ever have been, without an exception, sinners.

Uniform sin proves uniform tendency to sin; for nothing more is meant by tendency, in any case, but an aptitude in the nature of a thing to produce effects of a given kind. With this meaning only in view, we say, that it is the nature or tendency of an apple-tree to produce apples, and of a fig-tree to produce figs. In the same manner we must, I think, say, if we would say the truth, that it is the tendency or nature of the human heart to sin.

It is farther objected, that the uniformity of sin in children, and therefore in all the human race, may be fairly explained by the nature of moral agency.

It is to be observed, that such as make this objection suppose the freedom of the will to lie in self-determina-

tion, the liberty of indifference, and the liberty of contingency. By persons who hold this scheme, a more unfortunate objection to the doctrine could not, I apprehend, have been easily devised.

If the freedom of the will is the freedom of contingency, then plainly its volitions are all accidents, and certainly the chances, arithmetically considered, are as numerous in favour of virtuous volitions as of sinful ones. There ought, therefore, on this plan, to be, and ever to have been, as many absolutely virtuous persons in the world as sinful. Plainly, all ought not to be sinful.

If the freedom of the will is the freedom of indifference, the same consequence ought to follow; for, if there be no bias in the mind towards either virtue or sin at the time immediately preceding each of its volitions, and the freedom of each volition arises out of this fact, then, certainly, there being no bias either way, the number of virtuous and that of sinful volitions must naturally be equal, and no cause can be assigned why every man, independently of his renovation by the Spirit of God, should be sinful only.

If the liberty of the will consists in self-determination, and the mind, without the influence of any motive, first wills that it will form a second volition, and this volition depends for its freedom on the existence of such a preceding one, then it is plain, that from these preceding volitions as many virtuous as sinful ones ought to be derived; because the preceding or self-determining volitions are, by the supposition, under no influence or bias from any cause whatever.

Thus, it is evident that, according to all these suppositions there could be no preponderancy, much less a universality of sin in the world. The state of facts is therefore contradictory to the objection, as supported by them all.

Farther: the freedom of the will, and consequently moral agency, in man in this world, is the same with that of 'the spirits of just men made perfect' in heaven; the same with that of angels; the same with that of the man Christ Jesus. Whence then does it come to pass, that the same moral agency leads or influences these beings universally to virtue, and men in this world universally to sin? This question the objectors are bound to answer.

V. *The last proof of the doctrine which I shall adduce at the present time is the death of infants.*

A great part of mankind die in infancy, before they are, or can be, capable of moral action, in the usual meaning of the phrase. Their death is attended with all the apparent sufferings usually experienced by persons of riper age, and with such suffering, at least, as plainly is often intense. Their death is also an ordinance of God; a dispensation of his immediate government. The language of this dispensation cannot, I think, be mistaken; and its meaning cannot be that of approbation. It is also the language, literally, of the curse denounced against our first parents, and the execution of that sentence, so far as this world is concerned. So St Paul has directly declared, 'death has passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.' 'The wages of sin is death.' Death, then, the fruit or wages of sin, the punishment denounced against it in the original sentence, must, I think, be acknowledged to be indubitable evidence of the existence of depravity in every moral being, that is, every being capable of depravity, who is the subject of death.

It ought here to be remembered, that death arrests infants in every form of distress and terror in which it befalls persons of riper years. They, together with others, are swept away by the immediate hand of God, in those various judgments with which he awfully punishes mankind. They are swept away by the silent, awful hand of the pestilence; are consumed by the conflagration, overwhelmed by the volcano, swallowed up by the earthquake, and wasted by the lingering agonies of famine. At the same time, they suffer from mankind, all the deplorable violence of war, and the unnatural cruelties of persecution.

With these facts in view, we are compelled to one of these conclusions: either that infants are contaminated in their moral nature, and born in the likeness of apostate Adam, a fact irresistibly proved, so far as the most unexceptionable analogy can prove any thing, by the depraved moral conduct of every infant who lives so long as to be capable of moral action; or that God inflicts these sufferings on moral beings who are perfectly innocent. I leave the alternative to the choice of those who object against this doctrine.

There are but two objections to this argument within my knowledge. The first is, That beyond the grave, infants may be compensated for their sufferings by receiving superior degrees of happiness. This objection will be easily seen to be of no validity. It is certainly unnecessary for God to make infants unhappy here, in order to make them happy in any manner whatever hereafter. Angels are made completely happy in heaven, without having suffered any preceding unhappiness. Plainly, infants might be made happy to any degree in the same manner. But, if the sufferings of infants are unnecessary, then they are causeless, on the scheme of this objection; and God is supposed to create so much misery, merely to compensate it by so much future enjoyment. I think this conduct will not soberly be attributed to the Creator, since it would plainly be disgraceful to any of his intelligent creatures.

The second objection is, That God governs the universe by general laws, and that in their operation, inequalities and evils ought to be expected. There are two answers to this objection. The first is, that God cannot be supposed to establish any general law which produces injustice, such as the suffering of virtuous beings must be acknowledged to be. The second is, that this is itself a general law, extending probably to one-third or one-fourth of the human race. The dispensation therefore, and not the exceptions, is unequal and evil according to this scheme. Surely the difficulty is not lessened by such a supposition.

It will probably be farther said, that so many difficulties attend this part of the doctrine, as to perplex and distress the mind no less than the suppositions already refuted. The difficulties attending the existence of moral evil are, I readily acknowledge, very great, and they easily become very distressing, whatever scheme of thought we may adopt concerning this subject; that is, if we pursue it to any extent. But, I apprehend, the chief of those difficulties which necessarily attend us will be found to lie in the fact, that moral evil exists. To these we may or may not, as we please, add others found in the particular scheme of doctrine which we choose to adopt. The doctrine asserted in this Discourse is, I think, unanswerably supported by Revelation, and by facts. Of course, it adds to the

original difficulties inherent in the existence of moral evil no new ones of its own. The schemes which I am opposing contain, on the contrary, a new series of embarrassments, besides those which are common to them and to the doctrine of this Discourse. The truth is, the subject of moral evil is too extensive and too mysterious to be comprehended by our understanding. Some things the Scriptures teach us concerning it, and these are usually furnished with important evidence from facts. Many other things pertaining to this subject lie wholly beyond our reach. What we can know, it is our duty and interest to know. Where knowledge is unattainable, it is both our duty and interest to trust humbly and submissively to the instrctions of him who is THE ONLY WISE.

But in this so difficult and perplexing dispensation, there is nothing more absolutely inexplicable than in many others which, because we are less interested in them, we generally consider as scarcely mysterious at all. I will mention one, out of very many. The state of the animal world, generally, is such as to baffle all human investigation. Why most animals exist at all, and why any of them are unhappy, are subjects which defy and silence the most ingenious inquiries of man. Nor is it originally strange, that the dispensations of a Being whose ways are above ours, 'as the heavens are higher than the earth,' should be incomprehensible and inexplicable by us.

It ought to be here remembered, that that which is true, is not affected by any difficulty whatever, so far as its truth merely is concerned; and that that which is known, is not rendered less certain by that which is unknown, whatever connexion may exist between them, or whatever embarrassments may arise concerning that which is unknown.

It was with these views that I chose to state the doctrine of this Discourse in the words in which it was expressed. I observed, that, 'in consequence of the apostasy of Adam all have sinned.' The universality of sin was, I trust, proved sufficiently in two preceding Discourses. In this, if I mistake not, it has been proved that the sin of mankind has existed in consequence of that apostasy. By this language, I presume my audience understand me to intend, that if Adam had not fallen, sin would not have entered this world. To this single fact I have confined all my observations, because this is the simple account given in the Scriptures; and because I supposed it capable of being easily comprehended, and satisfactorily proved.

I shall only add, that a cause of human depravity is here alleged, of which all the characteristics mentioned in the commencement of this Discourse may be truly predicated: viz. the corruption of that energy of the mind whence volitions flow, and which I have heretofore asserted to be the seat of moral character in rational beings. This cause must be acknowledged to be universal, to be everywhere the same, and not to have always existed. It must also be conceded that it began to exist, according to the Scriptures, as early as the effects, which have given birth to all our inquiries concerning the corruption of mankind.

SERMON XXXIII.

DEPRAVITY OF MAN: REMARKS.

Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death hath passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.—ROM. vi. 12.

IN the four preceding Discourses I have endeavoured to show the universality and extent of human corruption, and its existence in consequence of the apostasy of Adam. It is now my design to subjoin to the observations made in these Discourses several REMARKS, naturally arising from the consideration of this subject, and of no inconsiderable importance. The end of all doctrinal preaching is to persuade men cordially to receive truth, that they may be governed by it in their conduct; and of preaching, in any particular instance, to persuade them thus to receive one truth, in order to their reception of others.

From doctrines so important and so absolutely fundamental as those which have occupied these Discourses, very numerous inferences of great moment cannot fail to be drawn by a mind addicted to solemn contemplation. A small number of them only can, however, be mentioned with advantage in a single sermon. For the present occasion I have selected the following:

I. *It is evident from the last of these Discourses, that the corruption of man is not the result of any given form of government, nor of any given character in rulers.*

At this subject I have glanced in a former Discourse but have reserved the more extensive discussion which it merits for the present occasion.

It has been frequently and triumphantly said, particularly in modern times, that the corruption of mankind is wholly artificial, and owes its existence to civilized society; particularly to the form and administration of government, and to the civil and ecclesiastical rulers of mankind.

The method in which these orders of men are supposed to have corrupted their fellow men is, that of oppression; at least this is considered as the chief instrument of the corruption, and is supposed to operate principally in two ways; viz. keeping them poor, and keeping them ignorant.

It ought, undoubtedly to be acknowledged, that the rulers of mankind have extensively corrupted them; that they have also greatly oppressed them; and that by keeping them poor and ignorant, they have contri-

buted, in a very great and guilty degree, to the increase of their corruption. It ought to be farther acknowledged, that rulers, and other men of wealth and influence, have much more effectually and extensively corrupted their fellow men by example, art, and seduction; by exhibiting to them powerful temptations, placing within their reach the means of sin, making the path to perpetration smooth, easy, and safe, and presenting to them arguments, ingeniously and laboriously contrived to justify them in the commission, than they have ever done by both the methods alleged above. The philosophers with whom I am contending, have probably insisted less on this source of human corruption, partly because they wished to render the men in question odious, and thought this an efficacious mean of accomplishing their purpose; and partly because they were sensible that themselves were deeply implicated in the charge of corrupting mankind in the manner last mentioned. So far as argument and influence have increased the turpitude of the human character, few men are chargeable with so great a share of the guilt. Their arguments concerning moral subjects have been commonly mere means of seduction, and their example has only seconded their arguments. A host of ancient philosophers were banished from Rome as a public nuisance. Had a large proportion of modern ones lived in the same city, at the same time, there is little reason to doubt that they would have shared the same fate, for the same reason.

The form of government also, in some cases, and the peculiar administration of it in others, have undoubtedly contributed in a distinguished degree to the depravation of mankind. Monarchies have produced this effect by immense patronage; by the operations of despotic power, demanding and effectuating a slavish dependence, and a base sacrifice of principle, in their subjects; by splendour, luxury, war, and a general dissoluteness of manners. Republican governments, although in certain circumstances more favourable to virtue, have yet at times been equally pernicious, by furnishing opportunities and strong temptations for the sacrifice of integrity at elections, for caballing, bribery, faction, private ambition, bold contentions for place and power, and that civil discord which is naturally accompanied by the prostration of morality and religion. Thus Rome, in the time of Marius and Sylla, degenerated with inconceivable rapidity. This example many other republics have been but too willing to follow. The heathen priests and princes also, although generally believing in the most serious manner the miserable, demoralizing idolatry which they professed, found a deep interest in the establishment of their religious systems, and the deplorable corruption by which they were of course attended.

The Romish hierarchy, uniting in itself all authority both secular and ecclesiastical, presented immense inducements to the love of wealth, power, splendour, and sensuality, and vast means of gratifying these corrupt propensities of the human heart. At the same time, it held out the most efficacious motives to the perpetuation of these enjoyments by keeping mankind in a state of abject ignorance, slavery, and corruption. In this manner it contributed more to this dreadful purpose than any other political system which the world has ever seen. Like the mountains piled up by the giants, it seemed, for a time, to menace heaven itself with the loss of its dominion over the earth, and, like the deluge, swept from this world almost every thing which had life.

It must farther be conceded, that amongst Protestant ministers, although plainly the most unblameable and exemplary class of men who in equal numbers have ever appeared in this world, there have not been wanting those who, by means of their latitudinarian doctrines and loose lives, have exercised a malignant influence over their fellow men, and contributed in a serious degree to the depravation of the human character.

Finally: Infidel philosophers of modern times have surpassed, in the wonderful rapidity and success with which they have dissolved the human character, and destroyed the very remembrance of principle, even the portentous mischiefs of the Romish hierarchy. Were it not that such nuisances to the world are in their very nature incapable of operating with such efficacy for any long continuance, they would change the earth into a desert, where no principle would spring, and no happiness grow. Like the Genii, fabled in Arabian tales, they would enchant the towns and cities of this world with a more than magic wand, and where rational and immortal beings once lived and acted, where morals flourished, religion scattered her blessings, and the worship of God ascended to heaven as the odour of sweet incense, leave nothing but the forms of men, without motion, without life, without souls; imprisoned beyond the hope of escape within their encompassing walls, and surrounded by nothing but silence, solitude, and death.

These concessions will, it is presumed, be thought sufficiently liberal and ample. Still the doctrine against which they have been pleaded is not even remotely affected by them, but stands in full force, and on the basis of conclusive evidence. For,

1. The subjects of virtuous rulers have been deeply depraved.

Rulers, although in a great majority of instances corrupt, and in many wonderfully corrupt, have yet in many others been virtuous, and in some eminently virtuous. It will not, as with truth it plainly cannot, be denied that virtuous rulers have had a real and happy influence in reforming those whom they governed. The example and efforts of all men in high authority have ever been efficacious; if good, to encourage virtue; if evil, to promote vice. The good which virtuous rulers have done has not been here merely negative; that is, they have not merely ceased to corrupt their fellow men, but with a positive efficacy they have directly contributed to make them better. This is so evident from uniform experience, that an attempt to prove it would be only a waste of time. Example and influence are proverbially powerful even in private life, and no man needs to be informed that they are more effectual in the chair of authority than in the cottage. Nor will any man acquainted with history deny, that David, Hezekiah, and Josiah; the Maccabees, Alfred the Great, Edward VI., or the two elder Gustavuses, reformed in a serious degree the nations over whom they presided.

Still it is equally well known to all persons of information, that no ruler and no succession of rulers ever changed the native character of man in any such manner, as to make the nations whom they governed gene-

rally virtuous, or at all to lessen the evidence which supports the doctrine of universal depravity. What they have done we style with metaphysical exactness, reformation; that is, forming anew the moral character which they actually found, and which only was everywhere the subject of their efforts. In our very language we thus testify, unwillingly perhaps, that the moral character of our race is such as needs to be formed anew; or, in other words, is depraved. Even this reformation, good rulers have accomplished with great labour and difficulty; and it was confined to a number of instances in a melancholy degree moderate. Of this truth flagrant proof has been furnished in the sudden and deplorable revival of all kinds of iniquity, at the moment when the restraining influence of a good ruler has been taken away by death, and new license has been given to the free indulgence of the native human propensities, by the succession of a wicked prince to the sceptre. Such a prince has had more influence to corrupt a nation in a year, than a virtuous one to amend them during his whole reign. Manasseh pulled down in a day what Hezekiah had been building up through his life. Or perhaps, in more exact language, what virtuous princes accomplish with such vast labour, dissolves of itself, under the malignant influence of corruption universally experienced, and universally operating, whenever that corruption is freed from the restraints imposed on it by virtue seated upon the throne. Were the mind of man originally inclined to virtue, this would be impossible.

2. Those subjects who have been raised above the oppression and ignorance contended for, have not been more free than others from this depravity.

If the oppression and ignorance specified were indeed the causes of this corruption, then the corruption ought not to be extended to those subjects who were neither ignorant nor oppressed. But we do not find these men, in fact, any better than their fellow subjects.

On the contrary, the more that men have possessed the means of pleasure and sin, the more wealth, independence, and self-control they have enjoyed, the more corrupt they have usually been. How often do we see a youth, or a poor man, by coming suddenly to opulence and high personal independence, lose his former sober, decent character, and become at once grossly immoral. So common is this fact as to be proverbially remarked, and to be the foundation of important prudential maxims concerning the management of our children. All observing men, even of the most ordinary education, hold it as a fundamental doctrine of experience, that it is harder to bear prosperity than adversity.

Men of science, learning, and extensive information have, in the meantime, been to a great extent exceedingly corrupt and wicked; incomparably more so, in degree, than the ignorant; and proportionally as much so in the number of instances. The ancient philosophers, the most learned and intelligent men of the heathen world, were very generally gross examples of sin. Infidel philosophers in modern times have, in this respect, certainly not fallen behind them. Of the former of these assertions, Cicero, Plutarch, Lucian, Seneca, and Diogenes Laertius, themselves philosophers, are ample and unimpeachable witnesses; of the latter, the writings and lives of the philosophers themselves. The truth is, as any man who knows any thing of the subject readily discerns, knowledge is a thing entirely distinct from virtue, not necessarily connected with it, and without virtue, is but too often the means of ingenious, powerful, and dreadful iniquity. There is not a reason furnished by experience to induce a belief, that the increase of knowledge is of course the increase of virtue.

3. In those states of society where rulers have the least influence which is possible in the present world, men are not less vicious in proportion to their power of being vicious, than they are where rulers have the greatest influence.

For complete proof of this assertion I appeal to the state of the aboriginal Americans. In the state of society existing among these people, men are as independent, and as little influenced by power, authority, and governmental example, as men living together can be. Here neither kings, nor nobles, nor priests, have any other weight or control than that which springs of course from the mere gathering together of human beings. Yet no man who knows any thing of the morals of these people, can hesitate to acknowledge them corrupt in a degree enormous and dreadful. Fraud, falsehood, lewdness, drunkenness, treachery, malice, cruelty, and murder, acted out in the most deplorable manner, are strong and dreadful features of the whole savage character. Here then, the vice exists anterior to artificial society, and in the state nearest to that which is called 'the state of nature.' What is true of the American savages is true of all others; and universally furnishes undeniable proof of fearful depravity, originally inherent in man, and wholly independent of the causes alleged in this objection.

4. Republics have been equally corrupt with monarchies.

In republics the influence and the oppression of kings are unknown. If then republics have been no less corrupt than monarchies, regal oppression and influence are falsely alleged as the proper and original causes of human depravity; since here they do not exist. In the most absolute freedom ever found in republics, wickedness has been as truly the character of men as in kingdoms. This character also has been equally depraved, not in all instances I readily grant, but in more than enough to establish the doctrine. Carthage, Rome, Athens, Sparta, Venice, the Grison states, and republican France, are undeniable examples. It ought particularly to be remarked, that republics have usually oppressed their provinces with more unfeeling cruelty than monarchies. Their own freedom, therefore, has not made them at all more friendly, but less so, to the freedom and happiness of their fellow men. The deplorable vassalage, existing in our own country to an enormous extent, is a flagrant and melancholy, although it may be thought an invidious proof of this assertion. If then some republics have been distinguished by a higher degree of virtue, as has undoubtedly been the fact, the cause was not their freedom, for that has universally existed and operated, but something peculiar to themselves.

5. In the republics which have been most distinguished for virtue, ministers of the gospel have had the greatest influence.

Switzerland, Holland, Massachusetts, and Connecticut have long, by general acknowledgment, been placed among the most virtuous republics. But in all these, clergymen have had more influence than in any other. On the contrary, where clergymen have had little influ-

ence, there has been comparatively but very little virtue. Of this truth, instances are numerous, and at hand. They are also too clear to admit of a doubt. The general voice of mankind has decided this point, and from this voice there can be no appeal.

Hence it is evident that the influence of clergymen is so far from contributing to the corruption of mankind, upon the whole, that it has meliorated their character most where it has most prevailed, and rendered them materially better than they have been elsewhere. I speak here, it will be observed, only of Protestant ministers of the gospel. I know it has been the custom of infidels to group them together with Romish priests, to whom of all men they have been most opposed, and whom they more than any other men have contributed to overthrow: and with heathen priests, with whom they have nothing in common, except the essential characteristics of men, and a title at times applied to both; a mere generic name, formed by the same letters indeed, but meaning in the different applications, things as unlike as folly and wisdom, holiness and sin. As well might Newton, Locke, Butler, and Boyle, be united in a monstrous assemblage with Spinosa, Voltaire, Diderot, and Condorcet, because they have all been styled philosophers; Alfred twinned with Kouli Khan, because they have both been called kings; and Sydenham be coupled with an Indian Powwaw, because they have both been named physicians.

It ought farther to be observed as a universal truth, that in all Protestant countries, the countries where virtue has flourished more than in any other, the existence of virtue has been exactly proportioned to the influence of ministers of the gospel. All real virtue is the effect of the gospel crowned with the divine blessing. But wherever the gospel has the greatest effects, its ministers are the most respected and influential; for the principal efficacy of the gospel is conveyed through their preaching, candidly and kindly received. Scotland may be mentioned as a strong instance of this general truth. In that country, under a regal government, and amid the influence of a powerful body of nobles, supposed by my antagonist to be so hostile to the existence of virtue, there has, perhaps, long been less vice and more virtue, than in any European country of equal extent. Yet there the influence of clergymen has, in all probability, been greater than in any other Protestant country.

6. In a state of anarchy, virtue is uniformly at the lowest ebb, and vice most prevalent and dreadful.

In a state of anarchy all lawful authority and regular influence, both civil and ecclesiastical, are extinguished, and lose therefore whatever efficacy they may be supposed to possess towards the corruption of mankind. Yet of all situations in which society can be placed, anarchy is the most pernicious to the morals of men. Of this truth we have proverbial evidence in the great practical maxim, that 'no people can exist for any length of time in a state of anarchy.' Of the soundness of this important doctrine our own country, during the late revolution, gave sufficient proof. When the restraints of government and religion were only partially taken off, men became vicious in a moment, to a degree here unexampled. I myself have seen a number of men, commonly sober, decent, moral, and orderly in their deportment, lose, upon joining a mob, even the appearance of these characteristics, and exhibit more and grosser vice in a few hours than in many preceding years.

The restraints of government and religion are, therefore, so far from making men worse upon the whole, that without them men become so profligate as to render it impossible for them even to live together. All this is indeed very easily understood. Government, in the great body of cases, restrains men only from vice; and religion, that is, the religion of the gospel, in every case. The sanctions of government are protection to those who obey, and punishment to those who disobey. The sanctions of religion are endless rewards to virtue, and endless punishments to sin. That these sanctions promote vice is a paradox which I leave to be solved by others. He who can solve it will prove in his solution, that men are disposed to be virtuous and vicious, without motives to either; and to be virtuous only under the influence of the strongest motives to vice, and vicious only under the influence of the strongest motives to virtue. The honour of this discovery I shall not dispute with any man who is willing to claim it as his own.

The truth plainly is, and ever has been, mankind as a body are uniformly more or less wicked in proportion to the means which they possess of vicious indulgence, and to the temptations with which they are surrounded. Kings, nobles, and all others possessed of wealth, power, talents, and influence, although having the same nature with other men, are usually more vicious, because these things furnish them with ampler means of sin, and stronger temptations. Mediocrity of life, on the contrary, has ever been believed by wise men among heathens, as well as Christians, to be the state most favourable to virtue, and has, therefore, proverbially been styled the golden mean. Agur has taught this doctrine from the mouth of God. Experience and common sense have given it their fullest attestation.

Even poverty and persecution have in many instances proved favourable to morals and religion. The poverty of Sparta was a prime source of whatever was honourable in its character; and Christianity flourished amid the sufferings of its martyrs.

From these observations it is evident, that the depravity of man exists independently of every state of society, and is found in every situation in which man is found; that it exists wherever oppression is, and wherever it is not; with and without the authority or influence of privileged men; in the independent savage, and the abject slave of Asiatic despotism; in the wild Arabian, and the silken courtier: in the prince who is above all law, and the peasant who is subjected to every law. The scheme which I am opposing is, therefore, a mere plaything of doubting Philosophy, making for herself worlds as children make soap-bubbles, amusing herself less rationally, and hoping for their permanency with more egregious credulity

II. *It is evident from these Discourses that the scheme of human perfectibility is without any foundation.*

There are two methods, in which this truth may be satisfactorily evinced.

1. From fact.

Mankind have in every age laboured with great earnestness to perfect the human character. The immense toils of education have been intentionally directed to this end. Schools and colleges without number have been erected, multitudes of wise and industrious

men have laboured through life, books have been written, laws have been enacted, and magistrates have been employed in an almost endless multitude, for the same great purpose. Nay, God has himself revealed his own will; requiring with infinite authority, instructing with infinite wisdom, and urging with infinite motives, that men should become virtuous. The Redeemer of mankind was born, lived, and died; the Spirit of grace has descended, influenced, and blessed; the worship of God has regularly been celebrated through a great part of the world; and a vast succession of wise and faithful ministers have spent life, to accomplish this glorious design. Yet how little has been done! How few have been seriously amended! What one has been raised to perfection? Trace the history, search the race of man, and tell me where he is to be found.

Shall we then believe that the schemes of modern philosophy will accomplish what all preceding philosophers, and men much wiser than philosophers, what the word of God, the redemption of his Son, and the communications of his Spirit have never yet accomplished? Can human perfection be the result of a benevolence which, indeed, utters good works, but is a total stranger to good actions: which is occupied in lamenting while it should relieve; which says to the poor, the hungry, and the naked, 'Depart in peace; be ye warmed, and be ye filled;' which is exhaled in sighs, and emptied out in tears; which shrinks from the cottage of poverty, and withdraws its icy hand from the supplication of distress; which agonizes over imagined sufferers in Japan, but can neither see nor hear real ones at its own door; which deplores the disastrous fate of profligates and villains, and arraigns the justice which consigns them to the jail or the gibbet; but exults in the ruin of worth, the destruction of human peace, and the contemplated devastation of a world? Can the perfection of man be the result of intelligence which dictates, as the happiest state of society, a community of labours, in which the idle would literally do nothing, and the industrious nothing more than to supply their own absolute wants; a community of property, in which little would be earned, and much of that little wasted on mere lust, and the remainder lost, because none would preserve what none expected to enjoy; a community of wives, in which affection would cease, principle vanish, furious animosity distract, and fierce revenge assassinate; and in which children would grow up, when they did not perish in infancy, without a known father, without comfortable subsistence, without education, without worth, without a name? When men become immortal by medicine and moral energy, according to the dreams of the same philosophy, they may perhaps become perfect by the proposed schemes of its discipline.

To such persons as insist that the melioration suggested has failed, because the means used were imperfectly fitted to accomplish the end, I answer: If the end were possible, it is reasonable to believe that amid so great a variety, extent, and continuance of these means, directed to this end by the highest human wisdom, some one system would have succeeded. As these have all failed, it cannot be rationally doubted that all others will fail. Those, particularly, which are now offered as substitutes, promise not even the remotest degree of success; and are, on the other hand, fraught with the most portentous threatenings of absolute ruin. To these things I will add, that the authors of them, on whom their efficacy ought first to be proved, are farther removed from virtue than mankind in general. Until their own character, therefore, is materially changed for the better, they may be unanswerably addressed with the forcible Jewish proverb, 'Physician, heal thyself.'

2. It is also clearly evinced by the nature of the case.

The depravity of man is a part of his constitution, of his nature, of himself. To perfect his character, it would be necessary to change him into a new creature; and separate a part of that which makes him what he is; viz. his moral character. It would be equally rational to say, that man in the present world can become a flying creature, as that he can become a perfect creature. If he can be turned into a bird, he may also, perhaps, be changed into an angel. All that has been hitherto done, and therefore all that will hereafter be done, is to confine one class of his desires, viz. those which are sinful by their excess, within juster bounds; and to prevent in some measure the risings of the other, viz. those which are sinful in their nature. Until more than this shall be effected, the world will be equally and justly astonished at the folly which could persuade Godwin that a plough could be made to move through a field of itself, and that man could be rendered perfect by his scheme of discipline.

III. *From these Discourses it is evident, that the fundamental principle of moral and political science, so far as man is concerned, is his depravity.*

It will not be questioned, that virtuous and depraved beings differ from each other radically, nor that the science of the one must, of course, differ in its fundamental principles from the science of the other. A philosopher might, if possessed of competent knowledge, describe exactly the character of an angel, and yet scarcely say any thing except what pertains to a moral being as such, which would be at all applicable to the character of man. A book, displaying the whole nature and conduct of our first parents in Paradise, would contain scarcely any thing descriptive of their apostate descendants. But all science of this nature is founded in facts, and is formed of facts, and the relations which spring from them. The first great fact in the science of man is, that he is a depraved being. This is the first and fundamental fact, because out of it arise, and by it are characterized, all his volitions, and all his conduct. Hence every thing pertaining to man is coloured and qualified by this part of his moral nature, and no description of him can be true, and no doctrine sound or defensible into which this consideration does not essentially enter; equally true is it, that no system of regulations can be practically suited to him, or fitted to control his conduct with success or efficacy, which is not founded on the same principle.

From these observations it is evident, that much of what is published and received as moral and political science, is only 'science falsely so called.' It considers man as originally a virtuous being, accidentally, and in some small degrees, warped from the path of rectitude, and always ready to return to it again; deceived and abused by insidious and peculiarly corrupted individuals, but, left to himself, designing nothing beside what is good, and uttering nothing but what is true. This indeed is a character 'devoutly to be wished:' but the picture is without an original; in the language of painters, a mere fancy-piece: and it would be as easy to find the human character in a gryphon of Ariosto, or

the sylphs, gnomes, and nymphs of Rosicrucius, as in a library filled with this species of philosophy.

Were these systems to terminate in speculation only, their authors might be permitted to dream on without disturbance. But unhappily, their doctrines are made the foundation and directory of personal conduct, and public administration. Rules of private life, municipal laws, and other governmental regulations, are drawn from these pleasing, but merely hypothetical doctrines; and are intended, and expected actually to control men and their affairs, so as to effectuate good order, peace, and prosperity. Here the influence of systems, which proceed according to this scheme, becomes eminently dangerous, malignant, and fatal. All the measures founded on them are fitted for the inhabitants of some other planet, or the natives of fairy-land, or the forms which haunt the dreams of a distempered fancy, with an incomparably better adaptation than for men. Of course they can never become practical or useful to such beings as really exist in this world, impatient even of necessary restraints; selfish, covetous, proud, envious, wrathful, revengeful, lewd, forgetful of God, and hostile to each other. Open your eyes on the beings around you; cast them back on the annals of history; turn them inward upon yourselves, and you will find ample and overwhelming proof of the truth of these observations.

On this fundamental folly was founded all those vain, empty, miserable systems of policy which, in a portentous succession, deluded republican France into misery and ruin. In the treatises, laws, and measures brought into being in that nation, during its late wonderful struggle to become free, the people were uniformly declared to be good, honest, virtuous, influenced only by the purest motives, and aiming only at the best ends. These very people, at the same time, were employed in little else except unceasing plunder, uniform treachery, the violation of all laws, the utterance of all falsehood, the murder of their king, nobles, and clergy, and all the boundless butchery of each other. In a state of immorality, in a prostration of all principle, at which even this sinful world stood aghast, this despicable flattery was continually reiterated, and the miserable objects of it very naturally concluded that, as they were praised while they were doing these things, they were praised for doing them. Of course they were fixed in this conduct beyond recall. Every malignant passion was let loose, the reins were thrown upon the neck of every sordid appetite, the people became a collection of wild beasts, and the country a den of ravage and slaughter. In this situation nothing could restrain them but force. The wretches who by their songs and incantations had called up the fiends of mischief, could not lay them; but became, in an enormous and horrid succession, victims of their own spells, and were offered up by hundreds to the sanguinary Moloch which they had so absurdly and wickedly idolized.

Sound and true policy will always consider man as he is, and treat him accordingly. Its measures will be universally calculated for depraved beings, and it will, therefore, never hesitate to establish every necessary restraint. Whatever is good in man it will regard as the result of wise, careful, efficacious discipline, realized and blessed by God. Such discipline, therefore, it will regularly establish, protect, and encourage. Honest, well disposed, and orderly citizens, it will protect; the violation of private rights, and the disturbers of public peace, it will punish. Nor will its restraints and punishments stop, until they have gained in some good measure their end.

IV. *From these Discourses it is evident, that the redemption of Christ was absolutely necessary to mankind.*

If man is a depraved creature, it is plainly impossible that he should be justified by the law of God. When he comes before his Maker, to 'be judged according to his works,' he must be declared to have done evil, because he has in fact done it. The law has declared, that 'the soul which sinneth shall die:' by the law, therefore, he must die, because he has sinned. Of course God cannot pronounce him just, or acquit him of guilt, because he is guilty. Under mere law, the only situation in which he can be, independently of the redemption of Christ, he can never be justified nor rewarded, but must be condemned and punished. In this situation, an atonement for his sins, such as God with propriety can and will accept, is just as necessary for man as his salvation. No being in the universe could, so far as we are able to discern, render this atonement except Christ. All other beings are, in the nature of things, under every possible obligation to render to God all the services in their power, as their own proper obedience, an obedience indispensably necessary for their own justification. A supererogatory service does not appear to be possible for any created being, as there is no service which he can render to God which is not his indispensable duty. Thus, so far as we are able to discern, the atonement of Christ is absolutely necessary for the human race, and without it we can conceive of no possible way of salvation.

V. *The same doctrine equally teaches the absolute necessity of regeneration to mankind.*

That 'without holiness no man shall see the Lord,' is a doctrine so evidently rational and just, that it cannot but be believed by every sober man, even independently of the express declaration of the Scriptures. But without regeneration man is only unholy, and can therefore never 'see the Lord.' The first great effect of the redemption of Christ is to render it possible for man to become holy, in order to his justification and acceptance. Had the dispensation stopped here, man would still have been lost. The next step in this wonderful procedure is the renovation of man, or that implantation of holiness in his heart, styled in the Scriptures, regeneration, or the new birth. From the commencement of this great change in his character, he becomes the subject of evangelical holiness; of real piety, real benevolence, real self-government, or, generally, of real obedience to God. All his obedience, however, is imperfect, and could not be accepted but for the sake of Christ. His mediation, his righteousness, is 'the sweet incense' which perfumes every offering and act of man, and renders it acceptable before that pure and awful Being, 'in whose sight the heavens themselves are not clean.' But, though imperfectly holy, man when renewed is really holy. 'There is some good thing found in him towards the Lord God of Israel.' This, as a seed of inestimable worth, is seen by the all-searching eye to promise a future and eternal production of fruits, invaluable in their nature, and endless in their multitude.

VI. *With equal evidence we are here taught the necessity of the mission of the Holy Spirit.*

The Holy Spirit is the only author of the regeneration of man. That which is born of the flesh is flesh:

that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.' 'Except a man be born of the Spirit, he cannot see the kingdom of God.' 'Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his own mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost.' As, therefore, regeneration is absolutely necessary to man, and as man is renewed only by the Holy Spirit, so the mission of the Spirit is as necessary to man as his regeneration, and both are no less necessary than his eternal life.

On these three great evangelical doctrines I have here descanted very briefly, because they will hereafter be primary subjects of investigation. They have been now mentioned chiefly to show their connexion with the doctrine of human depravity, and the manner in which they necessarily arise out of this part of the scriptural scheme.

VII. *The same considerations also teach us the manner in which a preacher ought to address mankind.*

Every congregation will be regarded by a minister of Christ, who discerns this doctrine to be what it plainly is, a leading doctrine of the Scriptures, as a collection of depraved, guilty beings, exposed to endless punishment for their sins. On this basis will all his sermons be founded; and to this point will they all refer. He will exhort them to repent; because they are sinners, and therefore need repentance. He will exhort them to believe in Christ because they cannot save themselves, and because He can, and if they believe in him, will save them. He will teach them to seek for pardon of God: because they are sinners, and must either be pardoned or lost; to rely on the grace of God for their justification, because they have no merit of their own; and if they depend on their own righteousness, cannot be saved; and to feel the necessity of sanctification, because 'without holiness no man shall see the Lord;' and because without the sanctification of the Spirit of grace, no man can become holy.

The 'terrors of the law' he will set before his hearers in their own awful light; because by these, and by nothing but these, such beings can ordinarily 'be persuaded.' The gospel he will declare to be 'glad tidings of great joy;' because it is the news of forgiveness, justification, and everlasting life, to sinners who would otherwise perish. Mercy he will unfold as the peculiar 'glory of God in the highest,' and as eminently displayed when 'peace and good-will' are published to mankind. The distinguishing excellence of the Redeemer he will explain to be his willingness 'to seek and save that which was lost.' The duty of Christians, now become peculiarly their duty, he will teach to consist 'in denying all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and living soberly, righteously, and godly in the world.' Thus, whether God or man, the law or the gospel, heaven or hell, morality or piety, are the themes of his preaching, he will make the corruption of the human heart the foundation on which all will be built, the great point to which all will be continually referred.

These are subjects of preaching which cannot fail to interest the preacher who really believes them, or the hearers who listen to them with serious attention. They state to man, they bring to full view, they carry home to the heart, his real condition and only hope. He sees, if not prevented by sottish sloth or criminal prejudice, that the whole is the truth of God, truth infinitely important to himself, 'commending' itself 'to his conscience,' explaining his danger, disclosing the only way of escape, unfolding deliverance from hell, and pointing out the path to heaven. The preacher who utters these things is readily believed to have a real meaning, when he speaks of the solemnity and importance of religion, and presses upon his hearers the necessity of embracing it. They clearly discern that there is something, which they easily comprehend, to be done by them, and a momentous reason why it should be done: that a change real, great, and indispensable, is to be accomplished in their character, and that, unless it is accomplished, they must perish. Christianity hence assumes a solemnity which can be derived from no other considerations, and accords with no other scheme.

The preacher who regards man as originally virtuous, can neither explain to him his guilt nor his danger, show him the necessity of Christ's mediation, or the importance of an interest in it, explain to him the value of faith, or the use of repentance, nor exhort him to fly to the mercy of God for forgiveness or sanctification. He urges, therefore, a religion in which both his hearers and himself find little interest. His addresses to them are naturally made up of cold, common-place morality, such as Plato taught long since, and taught much better, or at least with greater force. They of course become dull and lifeless, unfrequent visitors to the house of God; and when there, are rarely of that number 'who have ears to hear.'

VIII. *In the same manner are all men taught how they ought to regard themselves in their religious concerns.*

The question, What will become of me hereafter? is of infinite moment to every child of Adam, and is to be always determined by the true answer to another, Am I virtuous or sinful?

The man who commences his moral course with a full conviction of his guilt, his exposure to the wrath of God, and his danger of final condemnation, will, if he goes on, direct his feet into a path widely distant from that which is pursued by men directed by the contrary doctrines. To such a man, all the accounts given in the Scriptures, and in religious discourses built on the Scriptures, concerning human guilt and danger, will be true and important. The tidings of redemption will be to him 'tidings of great joy,' because they are directed to such a creature as himself. Christ to him will be infinitely precious, because he is the Saviour of sinners. The renewing power and goodness of the Spirit of grace will appear to him unspeakably necessary and desirable, because, without this divine energy exerted on his heart, he will be a sinner for ever. To the atonement of Christ, he will fly for refuge, because he cannot make an atonement for himself. To the purifying influence of the Divine Spirit he will look for his preservation in holiness, and his safe arrival in the kingdom of life, because he will know that he cannot preserve nor conduct himself to that kingdom.

As a sinner he will feel himself guilty, condemned, and ruined; but, as an object of the divine mercy, he will see glorious hopes dawning upon him from heaven. Separated from Christ, he will feel that he 'can do nothing' effectual towards his salvation; but, as a candidate for heaven, by faith, repentance, and holiness, he will discern that 'all things' may be done for him by the Spirit of God. Left to himself, he will perceive that he must die for ever, but that in Christ he may for ever live.

With these views, all his self-examination, prayers, praises, hopes, resolutions, and efforts, will take their peculiar character from the great truth, that he is a depraved, ruined creature. His whole life, therefore, will be the life of a believing, penitent, and returning sinner, owing infinite blessings to the mere grace of God; and he will find more to animate his love, faithfulness, and gratitude, than an angel with the same powers could feel, because he is a forgiven and restored creature; forgiven an immense debt, and restored to holiness and endless life.

But if a sinner feels himself to be originally virtuous, he will feebly realize his guilt, his danger, or his need of a Saviour. The necessity of being born again, of being sanctified, guided, and quickened, by the Spirit of God, he cannot know. Justification he will regard as due to him, as the proper reward of his merit and holiness, as his original character, the native growth of his mind. He may, indeed, admit it to be imperfect, and to require some additions; yet even these he will esteem rather as advantageous than necessary. Christ he will consider rather as a convenience, as an auxiliary to him, than as his Saviour. His ultimate reliance will be on himself, not on the Redeemer. The gospel, instead of being the only and most joyful news of salvation to sinners, will be considered by him merely as a valuable book, somewhat better than any volume of philosophy, in which some interesting instructions may be found, and some useful precepts are given, but which i not indispensable to his eternal life. In a word, according to his predominant feeling, both he and others like him might have done very well without the gospel here, and, with little danger of failure, might have obtained salvation beyond the grave.

SERMON XXXIV.

APOSTATE MAN CANNOT BE JUSTIFIED BY WORKS OF LAW.

Therefore, by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight.—Rom. iii. 20.

In several preceding Discourses I have considered the universality and degree of human corruption, and its existence in consequence of the apostasy of Adam; and have also derived, from the observations made in them concerning these subjects, several inferences, which I supposed to be of serious importance to mankind. The next subject of inquiry in a system of theology is, the situation in which mankind are by means of their corruption. It is impossible for a rational being to know that he has offended God, and is now the object of his displeasure, without being, if he is not absolutely stupid, deeply alarmed by a sense of his danger at least, if not of his guilt.

All creatures are absolutely in the hands of God, and must be disposed of according to his pleasure. If he wills it, they are happy; if he wills it, they are miserable. He speaks, and it is done; he commands, and it stands fast. From his eye there is no concealment; from his hand there is no escape; from his anger there is no refuge. What, then, will become of those who are found guilty at the final trial, who can plead no excuse for their sins, and offer no expiation for their souls? 'He is not a man,' as we are, 'that we should answer him,' and that we 'should come together in judgment. Neither is there any daysman (any mediator) betwixt us, who might lay his hand upon us both,' and make reconciliation between us. When I say that there is no daysman between us and him, you will undoubtedly understand that I intend this as our situation while under law, and independently of the redemption of Christ. Of this situation it is immensely important for us to form clear and just views. False opinions here may easily be fatal to any man. If he feels safe while he is really in danger, as his danger, if it exists, must be immensely great, and threaten his whole well-being, his sense of safety must of course be ruinous. Whatever is to be done for his future good, must be done in this world, since he is to be judged and rewarded 'according to the deeds done in the body.'

The text is the close of a long discourse concerning the depravity of both Jews and Gentiles, or, in other words, of all mankind; and contains the great and affecting inference, drawn by St Paul himself, or rather given by the Spirit of God, from this humiliating doctrine: 'Therefore, by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in his sight.'

In order to understand the import of this interesting declaration, it is necessary to form distinct and correct views of the meaning of the term *justify*. This word is a term of law, in the judicial proceedings of which it denotes a sentence of acquittal passed upon a person who has been tried, concerning his obedience or disobedience. The person tried, being found to have obeyed the law in the manner required, is declared by the judge to be guiltless of any disobedience. In the language of the text he is 'justified;' that is, declared to be just, or blameless, in the sight of the law. With exactly this meaning the word is here used by St Paul.

There have been frequent disputes concerning the law here specified. Some commentators have insisted that the moral, some that the ceremonial, and some that the whole law given by Moses, is here intended. That neither the ceremonial nor political laws of the Jews is here designed by the apostle is, I think, completely evident from a bare consideration of the passage itself; the language is, that 'no flesh shall be justified' by means of the law intended. It can hardly be supposed that St Paul meant to say this with reference to the ceremonial or political laws of the Jews; because, except the Jews themselves, none of the human race can be either acquitted or condemned, or even tried, by those laws, since the rest of mankind not only have never known them, but have in almost all instances, been absolutely unable to come to any knowledge of them.

The truth, I apprehend, is, that this difference of opinion has arisen only from the translation of the text. The words in the original are, Διοτι, εξ εργων νομου ου δικαιωθησεται πασα σαρξ ενωπιον αυτου. 'Wherefore, by works of law no flesh,' that is, no man, 'shall be justified in his sight,' that is, in the sight of God. By works of law in the absolute sense: that is, no man shall be justified by any works whatever of any law, whether natural or revealed.

The doctrine contained in the text is, therefore, That no man can be justified on the ground of his obedience to the law of God.

This doctrine is so absolutely asserted in the text, that a plain man, in the exercise of sober common sense, would naturally conclude all attempts to prove it to be misplaced and superfluous. 'Whom,' he would instinctively say, 'shall we believe, if we do not believe God? and what declaration of God can be believed, if this, so plain, so unambiguous, is not to be believed? The efforts of reason to make it more certain or more evident are merely holding a rushlight to the sun.' So much has, however, been written and said to explain away even this declaration, and to avoid the truth which it contains, and the same truth as expressed in all other similar passages of the Scriptures, that, notwithstanding these decisions of common sense, it has become really necessary to examine this doctrine, as well as others. Nor is it only necessary to examine this doctrine as contained in the Scriptures. It is also of importance to consider the manner in which it is regarded by reason; and to show, that here as well as elsewhere, notwithstanding several objections suggested against the doctrine, reason still entirely harmonizes with Revelation.

In pursuance of the scheme which I have thus proposed, I observe,

I. *That the law of God demands perfect obedience to all its requisitions.*

This is indeed true of every law; for it is no more than saying that the law demands what it demands. Yet it is true, in a peculiar sense, of the divine law. The requisitions of this law are two: 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thine understanding; and thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself:' that is, Thou shalt devote, with supreme affection, all thy powers to the service of the Lord thy God, throughout the continuance of thy being; and thou shalt do unto others, who are included under the word 'neighbour,' that is, all intelligent creatures, whatsoever thou wouldest that they, in the like circumstances, should do unto thee; and this also thou shalt do throughout the continuance of thy being. The peculiar perfection of the obedience here required is the universality of it. No other law requires the absolute consecration of all our powers to the obedience of its precepts, or extends its demands to every moment of our existence.

That, which is commonly called the law of nature, viz. that part of the law, which is discoverable by unbiased reason, without the aid of Revelation, requires that we render continual reverence and gratitude to God, and that we invariably do justice, speak truth, and show kindness to our fellow men. All these things are required by the law of nature, because all men either do or may see them to be certainly their duty.

Without inquiring at this time, whether any man in a state of nature, ever did any one of these duties in the manner commanded, I shall consider it as sufficient for the present purpose to observe, that no man ever performed them universally, as they are here enjoined. No man to whom the law of God was revealed, ever loved God, uniformly, with all the heart: or rendered, uniformly, to his neighbour what he would that his neighbour, in the like circumstances, should render to him: neither did any man in a state of nature ever uninterruptedly render to God the reverence and gratitude, or to his neighbour the truth, justice, and kindness, which it required. Of this obedience, every man has plainly fallen short; and very few can be found who will not in this view of the subject, confess themselves to be sinners.

II. *The only condition of justification known by law is complete obedience to its precepts.*

The language of the divine law, generally resembling that of every other, is, 'Do these things, and thou shalt live;' and 'Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law, to do them. The soul that sinneth shall die: for not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified.'

This condition of justification is inherent in the very nature of law. The law of God, for example, requires certain things of mankind, and promises that those who do them shall be rewarded. But the reward is promised to no others. On the contrary, those who do them not it declares shall be punished. The former it pronounces just, or guiltless, the latter it pronounces guilty. Obedience and disobedience are plainly the only conditions by which creatures subject to this law can be justified, condemned, or even tried. The same things, substantially, are true of every other law. It is presumed no law was ever promulged by any authority whatever, which specified any other condition.

III. *It is impossible for manhood, or any other rational beings, do more than the law of God requires.*

This law requires that we love him with all the heart, and soul, and mind, and strength. Higher love than this cannot possibly be rendered by any creature. It requires that we love him thus at all times. There is no time, therefore, in which such love is not our duty. Supererogatory love or obedience of course cannot possibly be rendered by man. Hence, if man ever fails of obeying, he cannot atone for the sin by any future obedience, because all his future obedience is demanded for the time being. If, then, he is ever guilty of disobedience, his future obedience, however perfect, cannot contribute at all to his justification.

But all men have disobeyed; nay, all are disobedient every day and every hour; and never render complete obedience, even in a single instance. No man, therefore, is justified even for the time being.

IV. *The authority of the law is great in proportion to its importance to the universe, and to the greatness and dignity of the lawgiver.*

The law of God is the foundation of his government, and of the happiness which it confers on his intelligent creatures; a happiness partly attendant on the obedience, in its very nature, and partly its reward from the lawgiver. The importance of the law, therefore, cannot be measured.

The greatness and dignity of the lawgiver are infinite.

That the guilt of disobedience bears, at least, a general proportion to these things will not be denied. Of course, it must be very great, much greater than we can comprehend. Particularly, it is incalculably greater than if committed merely against human laws, so inferior in their importance, and their capacity of producing happiness; or against mere human lawgivers, infinitely inferior in dignity and excellence.

The worth of our services, at the same time, is proportioned to the worth of ourselves who render them. The law of God requires the obedience of archangels as well as that of men. The law is the same, but the difference between the subjects and the services in this case, is inestimable by us. The services of the archangel are plainly of very great worth, in a comparative view, those of man of very little. The difference evidently arises from the difference of worth in those who render them.

But the lowest created being, as truly as the highest, can sin against any law and any ruler. His crimes, therefore, can be very great, while his services must, of necessity, be very small in their importance.

Hence it is plain, that, if we could do works of supererogation, or services not required, we still could make no atonement for our sins. Our sins are enormous evils, and our services in a sense nothing.

V. *The law of God threatens punishment to the first transgression, and also to every succeeding transgression.*

'Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law, to do them.' He, therefore, 'who continues in all things written in the book of the law,' except one, 'and does them' as required, yet for the omission of that one 'is cursed.' 'The soul that sinneth shall die.' The soul that sinneth once, that sinneth at all; not that sinneth in a long course and to a given degree of transgression.

'In the day that thou eatest thereof,' said God to Adam, 'thou shalt surely die.' Adam ate the forbidden fruit once, and lost his immortality.

Human laws also are always formed in the same manner. The thief, the burglar, the murderer, are all punished by human laws for the first theft, burglary, or murder. This is indeed the very nature of law. It forbids whatever it forbids, and requires whatever it requires, under a penalty for every transgression. The plea, that this is the first transgression, though often alleged as a reason for tenderness and clemency, was, it is presumed, never proposed to a tribunal of justice as a cause of exempting the criminal from punishment, or, perhaps more properly, as a proof that he did not merit punishment.

These considerations plainly cut off all hope, as well as all ground of the justification of transgressors in the sight of God on the score of justice; and prove the absolute impossibility of justification by works of law. Still multitudes of mankind, and among them no small number of divines, have thought proper, notwithstanding this peremptory and decisive language of the law of God, to annex to it a condition upon which, in their view, the hopes of acceptance may be rationally formed. I say a condition, because I know of but one, viz. repentance. As this has been abundantly insisted on, it demands a particular consideration.

The scheme of those who urge this condition is, so far as my information extends, the following: That although the law of God does indeed demand perfect obedience, yet from the benevolence of God it may be fairly expected that, even under this law, every sincere penitent will be accepted.

On this scheme I observe,

1. The law itself makes no mention of any such condition.

Hence, the evidence of this scheme, if it exist at all, must be extraneous to the law itself. It cannot but be seen that a case of this nature must demand evidence clearly decisive, both because it is a case infinitely interesting to every child of Adam, and because the law is perfectly silent on this subject. This circumstance renders the scheme originally suspected; for we cannot easily conceive of a reason why, if acceptance was intended to be granted according to this scheme, God in publishing his law should observe an absolute silence concerning this condition, and should couch the law in such language as, for aught we can see, is directly contradictory to this scheme.

2. Revelation is every where silent concerning this condition of acceptance.

That Revelation no where expressly annexes the final acceptance of mankind to repentance alone, will, I suppose, be granted. I have been able to find no passage of this nature myself, and so far as I know, such a passage has not hitherto been pointed out by any one of those who adopt the scheme. Whatever importance is annexed to repentance, it certainly cannot be said with truth, that faith in the Redeemer is not considered in the Gospel as absolutely necessary to the justification of the penitent. It is no where said, that 'God may be just, and yet the justifier of him who' repenteth. Until something equivalent to this can be pointed out, as expressly declared in the gospel, all the evidence in favour of this scheme must be found in inference and argument.

3. Revelation declares the contrary doctrine.

In Gal. iii. 21, St Paul says, 'if there had been a law which could have given life, verily righteousness had been by the law.' In this passage it is evident beyond denial, that no law exists, or has ever existed, which could give life, or furnish acceptance and consequent salvation, to men. It is farther evident also, that righteousness is not to man by the law, or, more properly, as in the original, by law; that is by any law whatever. But how those who are not the subjects of righteousness, that is of moral excellence, or holiness, can 'see the Lord,' or be justified and saved, the Scriptures have no where explained.

In Gal. ii. 21, the same apostle says, 'if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain;' or, more accurately, according to the Greek, 'if righteousness exist by means of law, Christ certainly hath died in vain.' If righteousness do not exist by means of law, in any sense whatever, then man as a mere subject of law can never be accepted. If righteousness do exist by means of law, then, as God himself has declared, 'Christ died in vain.' A serious man must find an insurmountable difficulty in receiving any doctrine which involves this consequence.

In Rom. iii. 25, 26, the apostle says, 'Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time, his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.' In this passage of Scripture it is declared, that

God set forth Jesus Christ to be a propitiation, to declare his righteousness in the remission of sins, that he might be just, while justifying him that believeth in Jesus. It is therefore certain, that if he had not set forth Christ to be a propitiation, he either would not have justified any of mankind, or, if he had done it, would not have been just. Of course, all men who are justified, are justified only in consequence of this propitiation, and not by means of law, in any sense whatever.

It is also evident, that Christ becomes a propitiation to us through faith in his blood; and that those only are justified who believe in Jesus. In the same manner, in Rom. v. 9, the apostle says, 'Being justified through,' or by means of, 'his blood.' It is therefore certain; that those who do not believe will not be justified, and that none are justified without the blood of Christ.

In Rom. iii. 30, it is said, 'One God who shall justify the circumcision by faith, and the uncircumcision through faith.' Therefore, God will justify neither circumcision nor uncircumcision through or by repentance. The prophet Habakkuk, chap. ii. 4, repeatedly quoted by St Paul, says, 'The just shall live by faith;' more exactly, 'The just by faith shall live;' that is, he who by faith is just, shall live. Therefore no other will live.

All these and the like considerations have, however, been unsatisfactory to the abettors of this scheme, not, as it appears to me, from any want of explicitness in the declarations themselves, but from their want of accordance with a preconceived system; a system derived, I am apprehensive, more from philosophy than from the Scriptures. Let us, therefore, examine the dictates of reason concerning this subject, and see whether they do plainly and exactly harmonize with Revelation.

What, then, must be the nature and language of a law prescribing repentance as the condition of acceptance and justification? Plainly it must be this: He who disobeys the law shall be punished with death; but if he repents of his disobedience he shall not be punished. What would be the consequences of such a law?

1. All men who hoped to repent would disobey.

But, from universal experience, we are assured beyond a doubt, that every man would hope that he should at some time or other repent, because every man would consider repentance as in his power. The consequence therefore is irresistible, that every man would disobey.

It is equally evident also, that, from the love and the habit of disobedience, every man would continue to disobey so long as he thought repentance was in his power. But disobedience protracted to so late a period, would become a habit so strong that none would repent. Nothing is more self-deceiving than a spirit of procrastination. We see it in every thing, and always see it the same. Such a law therefore would frustrate itself, and prove a mere encouragement to disobedience.

2. The thing punished by such a law would not be disobedience, but impenitence.

It is undoubtedly true, that every law designs to punish that which it considers as the transgression, and that only. The thing punished, whatever it is, is in the view of the law the crime; and in that view nothing is a crime except that which is punished. But here the law does not threaten the punishment to disobedience, but to impenitence. Impenitence, therefore, is in the view of such a law the only crime. Disobedience, according to the very language of the law, is no crime. But nothing can be a crime except that which is constituted a crime by the law. It may be said, that disobedience being forbidden by the law, is for that reason the crime. This opinion, however, is wholly a mistake. The law, without a penalty, or with respect to whatever it does not threaten with a penalty, ceases to be a law, and becomes mere advice. Disobedience to what it thus prohibits may indeed be imprudence, or impropriety, but cannot be a crime in the eye of such a law. Undoubtedly, if the law regarded disobedience as a crime, it would punish it, as every law has done. As, therefore, the divine law according to this scheme, punishes impenitence only, it regards impenitence as the only crime.

But if disobedience be not a crime, it cannot be repented of; for repentance is a sorrow for crimes, and for them only. Repentance, therefore, would by such a law be rendered impossible.

3. In the present case, that of a man with respect to his Maker, what degree of repentance will excuse the transgressor from punishment?

Must it be a perfect repentance? that is, entire, and followed by no future sin. On this condition who could be saved? No man ever has repented, no man ever will repent in this manner. Shall the repentance be imperfect? a sorrow for sin, inferior in degree or continuance, to that which the nature of the case actually demands? a sorrow extending only to a part of the sins actually committed? a confession sincerely and cheerfully made with respect to some sins, and reluctantly concerning the rest? a renunciation of sin, partial in degree, partial as to the number and kinds of transgressions, and never aiming at, as well as never accomplishing a thorough reformation of character.

The first difficulty which attends this scheme is, that it is nowhere found in the Scriptures. Few men who believe the Scriptures to be the word of God will question the fact, that they contain all the terms of salvation. It can hardly be supposed that when God unfolded his will to mankind concerning this great subject, and declared that he had taught them 'all things pertaining to life and to godliness,' he omitted this, which is altogether the principal thing, the point, which they were infinitely concerned to know. But there is not a declaration of this nature in the Scriptures; at least, I have never been able to find one; nor have I ever seen one alleged. Can it be believed, that this should be the main term, nay, the only one, of our salvation, and yet that it should be nowhere expressed in a revelation from God, professedly declaring all the terms of salvation?

This, however, is far from being all. The Scriptures teach us in a thousand forms, both expressly and implicitly, that 'we have redemption through the blood of Christ, even the forgiveness of our sins.' As this is the doctrine of the Scriptures, so it is plainly their only doctrine. Indeed nothing is more evident in the nature of the case, than that if we have redemption through his blood, we have it not without his blood; and, therefore, not by a repentance of our own.

Nor does reason furnish us any additional light in favour of this scheme. Reason, indeed, finds itself at a loss to conceive in what manner even a perfect repentance can cancel former iniquities, or how an absolute

penitent can be accepted of God. His sorrow for his sins can in no respect alter their nature or lessen their demerit, and his future reformation cannot at all obliterate the guilt of his past life. Sorrow for sin is itself the most unequivocal acknowledgment of guilt. If, then, the penitent sees and knows himself to be guilty, God must see it also. What then should prevent him from expressing his views of it in the punishment of the sinner?

If this repentance is imperfect, these difficulties are multiplied and enhanced. The penitent in this case is still a sinner, and does not even perform the duty of repenting in the manner in which he is bound to perform it. He also still loves sin in some degree, and still, occasionally at least, practises it. After he becomes a penitent, therefore, he goes on through life accumulating guilt and meriting punishment. Can any man in these circumstances rationally expect acceptance with God? Yet these are the best circumstances in which man is ever found.

It is to no purpose to allege, that such a man obeys the law in part. The law knows of no such condition as partial obedience. Adam obeyed in part; and, what no one of his progeny has ever done, obeyed for a time perfectly. But for the first transgression he was condemned to death, just as if he had never obeyed at all. So far as law is concerned, God deals with his descendants exactly in the same manner. Accordingly, in Ezek. xviii. 24, he says, 'But when the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, all his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned. In his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them he shall die.' He, therefore, 'who hath continued in all things written in the book of the law to do them,' except one, would still be incapable, according to law, of being justified. Should he have repented of his first transgression, and should we, contrary to both reason and revelation, allow repentance to be a real ground of justification, generally considered, yet if he should die in the commission of sin, or without repentance of the sins which he had last committed, he must, according to this passage, die without justification, and be finally condemned.

Thus, if I mistake not, it has been rendered clearly certain, that 'by deeds of law no flesh shall be justified in the sight of God.'

REMARKS.

1. From these observations it is evident, that the atonement of Christ was absolutely necessary in order to the salvation of mankind.

Man was originally placed under a dispensation of law; and in consequence of perfect obedience was promised immortal life; while to his disobedience was threatened eternal death. Obedience, therefore, was the only condition of his justification, and the only source of hope to him beyond the grave. This law was perfect, and therefore immutable. No part of its demands or threatenings could be changed. It was more proper 'that the heavens and the earth should pass away, than that one jot or one tittle of the law should pass' without an exact fulfilment. The truth plainly is, that the law is a direct exhibition of the perfect character of God, and to change it, would be to manifest that his character was changed from its absolute perfection. Such an event is evidently impossible.

This perfect law, however, man has disobeyed. By his disobedience he has lost the possibility of justification, and the hope of reward; and exposed himself, without any means of escape or safety, to the punishment denounced against his transgression. Had he been left in this situation he must have finally perished. In this situation Christ found him, when 'he came to seek and to save that which was lost.' In this situation he assumed the character of a mediator between God and man, 'and made his soul an offering for sin; a sacrifice of a sweet savour,' accepted of God as a satisfactory expiation of human guilt. In this manner he rendered it possible, for before it was impossible, that man should be restored to the favour of God. The honour of the divine law was maintained, and even enhanced. The immutability of the love of God to holiness, and of the hatred of God to sin, and the perfect harmony of the divine government in the condemnation of sin and the forgiveness of sinners, were all illustriously displayed to the view of the universe. To forgive such as should repent and return to their duty, became now a dispensation divested of all inconsistency and impropriety. But independently of this interference of the Redeemer, no method appears to the human eye, in which the justification of mankind could have been accomplished, without a serious and inadmissible change of the law and government of God. Accordingly, we are informed in the Scriptures, that 'by his stripes only we are healed.' 'Neither is there,' nor, so far as we can understand, can there be, 'salvation in any other: for there is no name given under heaven among men, whereby we must be saved, but the name of Jesus Christ.'

2. Speculative unbelief prevents every hope of salvation.

By speculative unbelief I intend, First, the disbelief of divine revelation, or what is commonly called infidelity. Every infidel not only feels, but glories in feeling, a privileged exemption from what he calls the superstition of the gospel; by which he primarily intends the great evangelical requisitions of 'repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ.' It is superfluous for me to insist, that he who believes not speculatively in Christ, cannot believe in him cordially; for nothing is plainer, than that without the assent of the understanding there can be no yielding of the heart. The infidel will very cheerfully take this labour off my hands, and boast that he yields neither his understanding nor his heart to the Redeemer. Of course, he places himself under mere law; and must therefore find justification and consequent acceptance to him impossible. When I say impossible to him, you will undoubtedly understand me to mean, that it is impossible for him to be justified or accepted in his present character, or on his avowed principles. I do not mean that his understanding or his heart cannot be changed; for though I regard an infidel as a very dangerous and alarming character, yet I do not believe every infidel to be of course a final reprobate. Infidels have undoubtedly been changed into Christians, and, in some instances, have become exemplary ministers of the gospel. Infidels voluntarily place themselves under mere law, and reject with scorn, as well as obstinacy, an interest in the blessings of redemption. Under that law, however, even after it is narrowed by all his own indefensible limitations, the infidel has still committed innumerable sins, sins for

which he himself cannot atone, and for which he will not ask nor even accept the atonement made by the Redeemer. By the law he chooses to be tried, and by the law he cannot fail to be condemned. The God of truth in that day will declare that he has sinned, and, according with his own choice, must consign him to perdition. Such is the situation to which he voluntarily reduces himself, and which he prefers to Christ, with all his infinite blessings.

Secondly: Speculative unbelief is the proper character of multitudes who admit the reality of divine revelation. Those who in modern language are called Unitarians, deny the Deity, and therefore deny, either explicitly or implicitly, the atonement of the Saviour. Dr Priestly and, I presume, all his followers deny the atonement expressly: some of the Socinians and Arians have admitted it, but I think inconsistently with their commanding doctrines. The disbelief of the atonement of Christ has the same practical influence with that of the disbelief of his mediation at large. If he is only a prophet, and a pattern of righteousness, I see not that he can be any more a Saviour to mankind than Moses, Isaiah, and Paul. He was indeed a wiser and better man. But it will not be denied, that all these men were saved; nor that, therefore, their righteousness was such as, if we faithfully imitate it, would secure our salvation; that is, according to this Unitarian scheme. Nor will it be denied by any man, that the instructions of Moses and Isaiah are such as, if faithfully obeyed, will insure salvation. Nor can it be doubted that Paul has taught mankind more of the gospel than Christ himself personally taught. To believe in Christ, therefore, is substantially the same thing as to believe in Paul, Isaiah, or Moses. Yet, although we are required to believe all these men, and all other prophets and apostles, as being inspired by God, we are nowhere required to believe in them, or on them. They are nowhere styled the saviours or redeemers of mankind. On the contrary, we are expressly told, that there is no other Saviour of men but Jesus Christ; and that 'there is salvation in no other.' There is, therefore, something in Christ wholly different from any thing in these men; and that something constitutes his peculiar and essential character as the Saviour of mankind. As Christ is expressly declared to have been 'the propitiation for the sins of men;' 'to have made his soul an offering for sin,' and 'to have redeemed us with his blood;' and as we are said to 'have redemption, even the forgiveness of our sins, through faith in his blood;' it is unanswerably evident, that in this wonderful particular he differs totally from all other persons of whom we have any knowledge. To disbelieve his atonement, therefore, is to refuse belief in his peculiar, distinguishing, and essential character, as the Saviour of mankind. Of course, this scheme shuts out all the benefits of Christ's redemption, and places mankind again under law. But 'by works of law no flesh can be justified;' and, therefore, by this scheme no flesh can be saved.

There are, indeed, Unitarians of both these classes who acknowledge the atonement of Christ, but who yet in effect deny it, by the necessary consequences of their leading principles. Concerning these men I have no more to say at present, than that the hearts of some persons are sounder than their heads; and that, although their leading principles by their proper influence destroy the hopes of salvation, yet, as all errors which are imbibed are not obeyed, and as among such errors the leading principles of men may, for aught I know, be sometimes included, I am disposed to entertain better hopes concerning them than I should feel myself authorized by these principles, considered by themselves, to indulge.

3. Practical unbelief also equally cuts off the hope of salvation.

We become partakers of the benefits of Christ's redemption, only by exercising evangelical or cordial faith in him as the Redeemer. It is to no purpose that we believe the several records given us in the Scriptures concerning his incarnation, life, preaching, miracles, death, resurrection, and exaltation. It is to no purpose that we believe him to be a divine person, the real and all-sufficient Saviour; 'able,' willing, and faithful, 'to save unto the uttermost all that will come unto God by him.' This and all other speculative faith is to no purpose, if we stop here. It is, indeed, a step towards salvation, and a necessary step, but it is one step only; and, if no more be taken, we shall never arrive at the end of the Christian progress. In addition to this, we must with the heart confide in Christ, and his righteousness, and cheerfully trust our souls in his hands. This the practical unbeliever does not; and, so long as he continues to be of this character, cannot do.

Let every practical as well as every speculative unbeliever, then, remember that by his own choice, by his voluntary refusal to receive Christ as his Saviour, he cuts himself off from justification, and consequently from immortal life. Every one of these men has broken the law of God, and sinned against him in innumerable instances of great and dreadful iniquity. Every one infinitely needs forgiveness and salvation. At the bar of God how terrible will be the remembrance of this voluntary perdition, this suicide of the soul!

'Repent, therefore, every one of you, and believe on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, for the remission of your sins.' Repent *now*. 'Behold, now is the accepted time: behold, now is the day of salvation.' If repentance, if faith, be not now your duty, they can never be. Now, therefore, if you intend ever to 'hear his voice, even while it is called to-day, harden not your hearts.' 'Boast not yourselves of to-morrow, for you know not what' evils another 'day may bring forth.' Now you are called to repentance, faith, and holiness, and invited to eternal life. To-morrow you may be summoned to the grave and to the judgment. To-day you are before the mercy-seat, surrounded with blessings, in the presence of a forgiving God, and at the feet of a crucified Saviour. To-morrow, nay, this very night, 'your souls may be required of you;' your probation ended, your account given, the final sentence pronounced against you, and your souls consigned to suffering and sorrow which shall know no end!

SERMON XXXV.

THE CHRISTIAN SYSTEM GROUNDED ON THE RELIGION OF NATURE, AND INTRODUCED BY CHRIST.

DIVINITY OF CHRIST.—PROOF FROM THE NAMES GIVEN TO HIM.

For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.—Rom. viii. 3, 4.

For God, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and of a sin-offering, hath condemned sin in the flesh (the thing impossible to the law, because it was weak through the flesh) that the righteousness of the law may be fulfilled by us, who walk not according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.—Dr Macknight's Translation.

In my last Discourse I endeavoured to show, 'that man could not be justified, and of course could not be saved, by works of law.' The plain and necessary result of the establishment of this doctrine is, either that he cannot be saved at all, that is, he cannot be happy in a future existence; or that he must be saved by some other than the legal dispensation. The Scriptures inform us, that the latter part of this alternative is the true one; and declare, that salvation, or future happiness, is attainable by man. This subject then, infinitely interesting to every child of Adam, this subject, boundlessly great, sublime, and glorious; immensely honourable to God, and inestimably beneficial to man, becomes the next object of our inquiry.

It ought, perhaps, to be observed here, and certainly ought to be remembered, that our preceding investigation has been confined chiefly to what is commonly called 'the religion of Nature.' By this I intend the same with that which was the religion of Adam in Paradise; or, generally, the religion of beings placed under law only. The truths to be believed, and the duties to be done by beings, placed under the law of God, constitute the system, which we call natural religion. This religion is found nowhere clearly explained and solemnly sanctioned except in the Scriptures. In them it is presented to us in its perfect form, and with its proper lustre. In all the exhibitions of philosophy it is defective, mutilated, and deformed, with superadded features, created only by the imperfect reasonings, and wild imagination of man. In the Scriptures it is disclosed in its native beauty, freed from every defect and every mixture.

On this system Christianity, properly so called, is erected. By Christianity I intend, the religion of fallen beings; a religion furnishing effectual means of redemption from their apostasy, guilt, and punishment, and of their restoration to the favour of God, to virtue, and to future happiness. The means provided for this end, the truths to be believed, and the duties to be done by such beings, in order to their escape from sin, condemnation, and misery, and their attainment of justification, holiness, and happiness, constitute the sum and substance of the Christian religion.

To such beings as we are, fallen from the favour of God, polluted with immovable guilt, and destined to die for ever, under the law which we have broken, such a religion is plainly of infinite importance. From the bare contemplation of the subject, one would think, that the tidings communicated by such a religion must be welcome to mankind beyond degree. Every thing which they need, every thing which they can reasonably wish, every thing which can purify, adorn, or bless them, which can make them useful and comfortable here, or happy and glorious hereafter, it announces from the mouth of God. By such beings it ought certainly to be received as 'tidings of great joy unto all people.'

In the text the great and commanding doctrines of this religion are briefly declared; and these are the following:

I. *That it was impossible for the law to condemn, or, in other words, destroy sin in men, while in the state of nature, or under the legal dispensation.*

II. *That God has accomplished this great work by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, as an offering for sin.*

III. *That this was done, in order that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled by those who, under the influence of the gospel, live lives of new obedience.*

It will be easily seen, that these three great propositions contain the substance of Christianity; that they teach our ruined condition under the law; our recovery by Christ; and our duty and obedience in the Christian character.

The first of these propositions, that it was impossible for the law to destroy sin in man while in the flesh, or to furnish redemption to apostate beings, has been already considered at length in the preceding Discourses. This is the state in which Christianity found man, and took the charge of his concerns. On this state Christianity is erected, as on its proper foundation; and, but for this state, appears, in my view at least, to have neither use, explanation, nor meaning.

The second proposition is now to become the subject of discussion. As it is a proposition of vast extent, and contains a great many particulars of vast importance, demanding severally a minute examination, it will furnish an ample field for many Discourses.

In this proposition it is asserted, that God has accomplished the great work of destroying sin in man, by send-

ing his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, as an offering for sin.

The inquiries excited by this assertion are,

I. What is the character of the Person thus sent?

II. What has he done?

III. How has he destroyed sin in man?

In this order I propose to consider these highly interesting subjects.

I. I will proceed to investigate *the character of the Person who was thus sent.*

The character given of him in the text is plainly a singular one. He is called 'God's own Son,' and is yet said to have been 'sent in the likeness of sinful flesh.' These two great particulars, so unlike, so contrasted, form a character differing altogether from every other, and demand a very diligent consideration. The first of them shall be the immediate object of our attention.

At our entrance upon the investigation of this subject, the first thing which strikes the mind is, that it is a subject of mere revelation. Without the Scriptures, there is no knowledge in this world that such a person exists. The philosopher, therefore, has no other concern with this subject, except either to believe or disbelieve the testimony which the Scriptures give. By his own reason he can add nothing to what is revealed, and without impiety he can alter nothing.

Secondly: As revelation communicates to us our original knowledge of this subject, so it communicates to us all which we now know. The things which it testifies were not designed to be, neither can they become, the materials of future philosophical investigation and improvement. The knowledge which at this day exists concerning this subject, is all found in the Bible.

Thirdly: The things communicated concerning it, being communicated, 'not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but in those which the Holy Ghost teacheth,' are communicated in the best and wisest manner possible; the manner which was approved by infinite Wisdom. There is no error, no oversight; nothing superfluous, nothing defective. That, and that only, is taught, which God thought it proper to teach, in the manner which God thought it proper to adopt.

Fourthly: As the doctrines concerning this singular Person are of the highest moment to plain, uneducated men, as well as to men of learning, it is certain, that the things really revealed, are so revealed that such men, acting with integrity, can understand them sufficiently to make them proper and useful objects of their faith. Of course, the terms in which they are revealed are used in such a manner as these men can understand. They are, therefore, used according to their plain, customary, obvious meaning; the meaning which they have in the usual intercourse of mankind. Of course, also, they have no technical, philosophical, or peculiar signification; because, if thus used, they could never be understood by such men; or, in other words, by almost the whole body of mankind.

Fifthly: Just so much is revealed concerning this extraordinary Person, as it is useful for us to know. This truth is derived with absolute certainty from the wisdom and goodness of God. Whatever is revealed is revealed by this wisdom and goodness, and whatever is withheld is by the same wisdom and goodness withheld. That which is revealed, therefore, we are required by the authority of God to believe; and are bound to have no reference in our faith to that which is withheld. Whatever mysteries may be inferred, or may seem to be inferred, from the things actually revealed, can in no manner affect them, and ought in no manner to affect our faith in them. All that is taught is exactly true, and to be faithfully believed, although all that is true is not taught, nor capable of being divined by such minds as ours.

Sixthly: Whatever is contained in the Scriptures concerning this subject, as concerning every other, that is, in the Scriptures as they now are, is to be regarded as unquestionably the word of God, unless proved not to be genuine by manuscript authority. Nothing is to be admitted with respect to this subject, which would not be justifiably admitted with respect to any other scriptural subject. Particularly, all conjectural emendations of the text are to be rejected with scorn, as miserable attempts to mend the word of God according to the dictates of human philosophy. The reasonableness of this rule is too obvious to need illustration.

With these observations premised, I proceed to examine the character of this singular person, denoted by the phrase, 'God's own Son.'

The Scriptures are undoubtedly the best commentators on themselves, wherever they professedly undertake to explain their own language. Christ has in many instances called himself the Son of God; and in many more (which is exactly equivalent) has declared God to be his Father. In one of these instances the Jews attempted to kill him for challenging this character. The words which he used were, 'My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.' 'Therefore,' says the evangelist, in the following verse, 'the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also, that God was his Father, making himself equal with God.' John v. 17, 18. We have here the comment of the evangelist on Christ's meaning in adopting this language; and it is no other than this, 'That in declaring God to be his Father, he made himself equal with God.' No comment can be plainer, or more decisive. But we have, farther, the comment of Christ himself, for such it ought undoubtedly to be esteemed. He had healed the impotent man at the pool of Siloam on the sabbath day. The Jews 'sought to kill him' for this action. He justified himself by this remarkable declaration, 'My Father worketh hitherto, and I work:' that is, My Father worketh hitherto on the sabbath day in his providence; I, who am his Son, work also in the same manner and with the same authority, being 'Lord of the sabbath,' even as he is. In the following part of the context, to cut off all room for misconception concerning the import of this phraseology and the character claimed in it, he informs the Jews, in the verses immediately following, that 'he does all things which the Father does; that 'the Father shows him all things, which himself does;' that 'he has life in himself, even as the Father has life in himself;' that 'as the Father gives life to whom he pleases, so does the Son;' that 'it is the will of the Father, that all men should honour the Son even as they honour himself;' that 'those who do not thus honour the Son do not honour the Father;' that 'the Son is constituted the only Judge of the quick and the dead;' and that 'all who are in the graves shall hear, and obey his voice, and come forth to the resurrection, either of life or damnation.' Such is the comment of the evangelist on this phrase; such are the proofs that it is uttered in its simple and obvious meaning. Who would imagine that this meaning could be differently

understood by different readers, or be mistaken by any reader?

In John x. 30, Christ said to the Jews assembled around him, 'I and my Father are one.' The unity here challenged, seems not to have offended them (see verse 33); but they attempted to stone him because he said, 'I am the son of God;' as he informs us in the verse last mentioned. Upon being asked by him, for what good work they stoned him, they replied, 'For a good work we stone thee not, but for blasphemy, because thou, being a man, makest thyself God.' It will be admitted by all men, who believe the Bible, that Christ was a person of irreproachable benevolence and integrity. The Jews declared to him, as the reason why they were about to stone him, that in saying, 'he was the Son of God, he being a man, made himself God.' If, then, they had misapprehended his meaning, a very moderate share of benevolence and integrity must have compelled him to undeceive them; much more must the perfect integrity and benevolence of Christ have produced this effect. It is impossible that he should be justified in voluntarily suffering this imputed blasphemy to rest upon his good name; and to prevent, as it could not fail to prevent, their reception of his doctrines, precepts, and mission. This would have been voluntarily to lay a fatal stumbling-block, or offence, before them: but he himself has said, 'Woe to that man by whom the offence cometh.' It would, also, have been voluntarily to leave the full impression of a falsehood, uttered by himself, on their minds; which would be the same, in a moral view, as to utter intentionally the same falsehood. Finally, under this mistake they were about to murder him; a crime which he certainly could not fail of preventing, if they were influenced to commit it merely by mistaking his meaning; a thing so easily rectified by his own explanation. It is certain, then, that they did not mistake his meaning.

But, to put the matter beyond all doubt, he himself has settled the point. 'If,' said he, 'I do not the works of my Father, believe me not; but if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works, that ye may know and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in him.'*

The same subject of controversy arose again when Christ stood as a prisoner before the Sanhedrim. After attempting in vain to prove him guilty of any crime by various means, Caiaphas put him upon oath, to tell the Sanhedrim 'whether he was the Christ, the Son of God.' Christ immediately replied in the affirmative. The high-priest then rent his clothes; and declared that he had spoken blasphemy; viz. the very blasphemy of which the Jews had before accused him, for the very same declaration; and the Sanhedrim pronounced him guilty of death. Here, as in the former case, Christ went on to challenge, unequivocally, the character denoted by this phrase; and said, 'Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.' Thus we have the comment of St John on this phrase, declaring, that Christ in using it 'made himself equal with God;' the comment of the Jewish people and Sanhedrim; declaring that Christ in using it 'was guilty of blasphemy, because, that, being a man, he thus made himself God;' and Christ himself, according directly with this interpretation of it, justifying his own use of it with this meaning, and bringing irresistible proofs that he applied it, thus understood, to himself, with the most absolute truth and propriety. If we allow the language here used, to be used in the customary and obvious manner, the only manner in which it could be understood by those to whom it was addressed, and in which it can be understood by ninety-nine hundredths of those who read it; nay, farther, if we do not assign it a meaning which each man must laboriously contrive for himself, because the obvious meaning does not suit his own system, or must receive from another, who has for the same reason contrived it in this manner, we must admit all this to be clearly and unquestionably said, and to determine the meaning of this phrase in the text beyond any rational debate.

If I have satisfactorily settled the meaning of this phrase, the text contains, among other things, the following important doctrine:

That Jesus Christ is truly and perfectly God.

This doctrine I shall attempt to maintain by a variety of considerations, arranged in the following manner:

I. *I shall attempt to show, that Christ is spoken of in the Scriptures as the true and perfect God:*

II. *That the Deity of Christ is the only ground of consistency in the scheme of redemption:*

III. *That the Jews, according to the opposite doctrine, are unjustly charged with guilt in putting Christ to death:*

IV. *That the prophets and apostles, according to the same doctrine, cannot be vindicated from the sin of leading mankind into idolatry:*

V. *To these arguments from the Scriptures, I propose in another place, to subjoin several testimonies to the same doctrine from Jews, Christians, and Heathens.*

I. *I shall attempt to show, that Christ is spoken of in the Scriptures as the true and perfect God.*

This argument may be advantageously exhibited by showing,

1. That the names of God;
2. That the attributes of God;
3. That the actions of God; and,
4. That the relations, which God sustains to his creatures, are in the Scriptures ascribed to Christ; and,
5. That divine worship is in the Scriptures required to be rendered, and by persons inspired was actually rendered, to Christ.

1. The names of God are in the Scriptures ascribed to Christ.

(1.) He is directly called God.

John i. 1, 'In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God.' In this passage St John not only declares Christ to be God, but to be eternal. 'In the beginning was the word.' And in the following verse he declares that he is coeternal with God: 'The same was in the beginning with God.' Words exactly equivalent to those in Prov. viii. 23, 24, where the same truth is also asserted: 'The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way; before his works of old. I was set up from everlasting; from the beginning or ever the earth was.' In the following verse the evangelist farther declares, that Christ was the Creator of the universe, and without him was not even one thing made, which has been made.* In this

* That the Jews understood Christ to confirm *their* construction of his words is certain: for St John says, that they now sought again to take him.

* See the original.

passage of Scripture, St John has not only declared, that Christ is God; but to prevent any possible mistake concerning what he meant by the word *God*, has told us, that he is co-eternal with God the Father; and that he is the Creator of every thing which exists. Were the Scriptures allowed to speak their own language, this single passage would decide the controversy; for it is impossible to declare in stronger language, or more explicit, that Christ is God in the highest sense, originally, and without derivation.

Rom. ix. 5, 'Of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever, Amen.' This passage cannot be avoided by any means, except a resolute denial.

1 Tim. iii. 16,* 'Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness. God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, and received up into glory.' Nothing is more evident than that these things are said of Christ, and that they can be said of no other. No other person, and no attribute can be said to be 'God, manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, and received up into glory.' Let any person make the experiment, and he will find it impossible to make the application of all these things to any other than the Redeemer.

Matt. i. 23, and Isa. vii. 14, 'Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and shall bring forth a son; and thou shalt call his name Emmanuel;' that is, 'God with us.' Christ, therefore, is 'God with us.'

2 Peter i. 1, 'To them that have obtained like precious faith with us, through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.' According to the original, *of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ; του Θεου ἡμων, και Σωτηρος, Ιησου Χριστου.* The common translation is a violation of the Greek; and, besides, it is 'through the righteousness of Christ' only that 'the precious faith' of the apostles and other good men is 'obtained.' Jesus Christ is, therefore, 'our God and Saviour.'

Psalm xlv. 6, 7, quoted in Heb. i. 8, 9, 'Unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity: therefore, God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.' This is addressed by God the Father to the Son. The Father, therefore, has thought proper to call the Son, God. Who can question the propriety of the application? That we may be assured that he is called God, in the full and perfect sense, he declares, that 'the throne of the Son is for ever and ever.' To whom, but God, in the absolute sense, can an everlasting throne, or dominion, be attributed?

Rev. xxi. 5—7, 'And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new; and he said unto me, I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. He that overcometh shall inherit all things, and I will be his God, and he shall be my Son.' That it is Christ who is spoken of in this passage, is evident by a comparison of Rev. i. 11, and Rev. iii. 21. In the former of these passages Christ says, 'I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last.' In the latter he says, 'To him that overcometh, I will give to sit on my throne; even as I overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.' In Rev. xx. 11, 12, we are informed, that John 'saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the heavens and the earth fled away, and there was found no place for them:' and that he 'saw the dead, small and great, stand before God.' He that sat upon the throne, in Rev. xxi. 5, is plainly the same person who, in chap. xx. 11, is exhibited as sitting on the great white throne; and this person we certainly know to be Christ, because 'the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son;' and because the throne here spoken of is the throne of final judgment. In the second and third of these passages, Christ declares himself to be 'the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last,' or the beginning and the end; and to be 'set down upon the throne of his Father.' In the first passage he declares, that 'he will be a God to him that overcometh.' In the last, he is declared by the evangelist to be God.

There are many other passages in which Christ is directly called God. But these are sufficient to establish the point.

(2.) Christ is called the Great God.

Titus ii. 13, 'Looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour, Jesus Christ.' In the Greek it is, *the Great God, even our Saviour Jesus Christ*, or *our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ.* God the Father will not appear at the judgment. If then Christ is not 'the great God,' God will not appear at the judgment at all. *Και*, the conjunction here used, is rendered exactly, in many cases, by the English word *even*, particularly in the phrase God and our Father,' found Gal. i. 4, 1 Thess. i. 3, 2 Thess. ii. 16, &c. In the last of these places the translators have rendered it *even*, as they plainly ought to have done in both the others, since the present rendering makes the apostle speak nonsense.

(3.) Christ is called the true God.

1 John v. 20, 'In his Son Jesus Christ. This,' in the original *This Person* 'is the true God and eternal Life.' If this passage admits any comment, it must be that of Christ himself, who says, 'I am the Life;' and that of the evangelist, who, in the first chapter of this epistle, and second verse, says, 'For the Life was manifested; and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that Eternal Life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us.'

(4.) Christ is called the Mighty God.

Psalm l. 1—3, 'The mighty God, even the Lord hath spoken, and called the earth from the rising of the sun unto the going down thereof. Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined. Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence; a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him.' This psalm is a prediction of the last judgment. In the first verse, the Person, who comes to judge the world, and who speaks the things recorded in this psalm, is called, Al, Aleim, Jehovah; and is exhibited as calling mankind before him, 'from the rising of the sun to his going down.' In the second, he is represented as 'shining,' or displaying his glory, 'out of Zion;' that is, by his dispensations to his church. In the third, is described the awful splendour with which he will appear, the fire which shall consume, and the convulsion

* These Sermons were written before the results of Griesbach and others were extensively known in this country. The author was satisfied, from an examination of these results, that the common is the genuine reading of the text.

which shall rend asunder the world, at that great and terrible day. But Christ alone will appear on that day, and at his presence 'the heavens shall pass away with a great noise; and, by 'the flaming fire' with which he will be surrounded, 'the elements will melt with fervent heat, and the earth, and the works that are therein, will be burnt up.' Christ, therefore, is the God, the Mighty God, the Jehovah, who is here mentioned.

Isa. ix. 6, 'For unto us a Child is born; unto us a Son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Father of the everlasting age, the Prince of Peace.' This Child, this Son, is 'the Mighty God, the Father of the everlasting age, and the Prince of Peace.' He who admits that 'a Child, a Son,' is 'the Mighty God,' will certainly admit that this can be no other than Christ. He who does not will charge Isaiah with uttering falsehood.

The same name, 'Wonderful,' is also given to him by himself, when appearing as an angel, or rather as 'the Angel,' to Manoah and his wife, Judges xiii. 18, 'And the angel of the Lord said unto him, Why askest thou thus after my name, seeing it is secret?' in the Hebrew , *seeing it is Wonderful ;* the same word being used in both these passages. The Hebrew words which are translated 'the angel of the Lord,' may be literally rendered, *the Angel-Jehovah* or *Jehovah-Angel;* that is, He who, though Jehovah, is yet a Messenger.* For this view of the subject the Scriptures themselves furnish the most ample authority.

In Isaiah xlviii. 12, and onward, we have these words: 'Hearken unto me, O Jacob, and Israel my called. I am he; I am the first, I also am the last. Mine hand also hath laid the foundation of the earth, and my right hand hath spanned the heavens. I call unto them; they stand up together. Come ye near unto me; hear ye this: I have not spoken in secret from the beginning: from the time that it was, there am I. And now the Lord God and his Spirit hath sent me. Thus saith the Lord, thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: I am the Lord thy God.' Here the Person speaking informs us, that 'he is the first and the last; that he has founded the earth, and spanned the heavens; that he is Jehovah-God, the Redeemer, and the Holy One of Israel:' and yet he says, 'That the Lord Jehovah and his Spirit hath sent him;' or as Origen and Lowth translate it, 'The Lord Jehovah hath sent me and his Spirit.' The Person sending, therefore, is Jehovah; and the Person sent is also Jehovah.

The same Person, under the appearance, and by the name of a man, wrestled with Jacob at Peniel, and there gave him the name Israel, or a Prince of God; assigning for it this remarkable reason: For as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed.' After asking his name, and receiving a blessing from him (upon which he departed), 'Jacob called the name of the place Peniel; for, said he, I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.'

This Person is called by Hosea, *God, the Angel, and Jehovah.* 'He had power with God; yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed. He wept, and made supplication unto him. He found him in Bethel; and there he spake with us, even Jehovah, God of Hosts.' Horsley, whose biblical opinions will rarely be disputed with success, has the following observations on this subject: 'This Man, therefore, of the book of Genesis, this Angel of Hosea, who wrestled with Jacob, could be no other than the Jehovah-Angel, of whom we so often read in the English Bible, under the name of the Angel of the Lord.' A phrase of an unfortunate structure, and so ill conformed to the original, that, it is to be feared, it has led many into the error of conceiving of 'the Lord' as one person, and of 'the Angel' as another. The word of the Hebrew, ill rendered 'the Lord,' is not, like the English word, an appellative, expressing rank or condition, but it is the proper name Jehovah. And this proper name Jehovah, is not in the Hebrew a genitive after the noun substantive 'Angel,' as the English represent it; but the words יהוה and מלאך; 'Jehovah' and 'Angel,' are two substantive nouns, in apposition; both speaking of the same person, the one by the appropriate name of the *essence,* the other by a title of *office. Jehovah-Angel* would be a better rendering. The Jehovah-Angel of the Old Testament is no other than he who, in the fulness of time, 'was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary.'

According to the scheme of these observations, Manoah understood the character of the 'Angel who appeared unto him;' for he said unto his wife, ver. 22, 'We shall surely die, because we have seen God.' In the same manner is the same person presented to us, Mal. iii. 1, 'Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me; and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple; even the Angel of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of Hosts.' In Luke vii. 27, Christ speaking of John the Baptist says, 'This is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face who shall prepare thy way before thee.' John the Baptist was, therefore, 'the messenger, who was to prepare the way;' and 'the Lord, even the Angel of the covenant,' was Christ. The Person also speaking, who is here called 'Jehovah of Hosts,' and who says, this messenger shall prepare the way before himself, is also Christ.

(5.) Christ is called the God of Israel.

Exod. xxiv. 9, 10, 'Then went up Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel. And they saw the God of Israel.' Psalm lxviii. 17, 18, 'The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels. The Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place. 'Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive, thou hast received gifts for men.' Eph. iv. 8, 'Wherefore he saith, When he ascended on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. Now that he ascended, what is it, but that he descended first into the lower parts of the earth. He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fulfill all things: and he gave some apostles, and some prophets,' &c. Here the apostle informs us, that the Person who 'ascended on high, and led captivity captive,' is Christ. The psalmist informs us, that the Person who 'ascended on high, and led captivity captive, is the Lord, 'who appeared in Sinai.' And Moses informs us, that 'the Lord who appeared in Sinai,' was 'the God of Israel.' We also know, 'that no man hath seen God, the Father, at any time.' Christ, therefore, is 'the God of Israel.' Of course, 'the God of Israel,' so often mentioned in the Old Testament, is everywhere, peculiarly, Christ.

* See Horsley's new Translation of Hosea. Appendix.

(6.) Christ is called Jehovah.

On this subject Horsley observes, 'The word Jehovah being descriptive of the Divine Essence, is equally the name of every one of the three Persons in that Essence. The compound Jehovah-Sabaoth belongs properly to the second Person, being his appropriate demiurgic title; describing not merely the Lord of such armies as military leaders bring into the field, but the unmade, self-existent Maker and Sustainer of the whole array and order of the universe.'

Isa. vi. 1, and 3, 'In the year that king Uzziah died, I saw Jehovah * sitting on his throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple; and one of the seraphim cried to another, and said, Holy, Holy, Holy, is Jehovah of Hosts;' and again, in the 5th, 8th, 11th, and 12th verses of the same chapter. St John, quoting the 9th and 10th verses of this chapter, in his Gospel, chap. xii. 40, says, 'These things said Esaias, when he saw his (that is, Christ's) glory, and spake of him.' To prove beyond controversy, that Christ is the Jehovah of Hosts here mentioned, I observe, that no person is spoken of in the chapter, except Uzziah, Jehovah of Hosts, the seraphim, the prophet Isaiah, and the people of Israel. The seraphim and the people of Israel being mentioned only in the aggregate, must be laid out of the question. Christ, therefore, being, by decision of the evangelist, spoken of in this chapter, must be either the prophet himself, king Uzziah, or Jehovah of Hosts. It happens also, unfortunately for Unitarians, that the prophet saw the glory of no other person but Jehovah of Hosts; yet St John assures us, he saw the glory of Christ. St John's opinion on this subject we cannot mistake, if we remember, that he commences his Gospel in this manner: 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.'

Isa. xl. 3, 'The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of Jehovah, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.' John the Baptist, when asked by the messengers of the Sanhedrim, 'Who art thou?' answered, John i. 23, 'I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness. Make straight the way of the Lord, as saith the prophet Esaias.' St Matthew, speaking of John the Baptist, chap. iii. 3, says, 'This is he that was spoken of by Esaias the prophet, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.' From these passages compared, it is evident that Christ, before whom John cried, was 'the Lord' whose way he directed thus to be prepared in the wilderness; 'the Jehovah,' spoken of by the prophet: 'the Jehovah of Hosts,' who said, Mal. iii. 1, 'Behold, I will send my messenger before MY face, and he shall prepare the way before ME.'

Exod. iii. 2—6, 'And the Angel-Jehovah appeared unto him, in a flame of fire, out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and behold the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed. And Moses said, I will now turn aside and see this great sight, why the bush is not burned. And when Jehovah saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses! And he said, Here am I. And he said, Draw not nigh hither; put off thy shoes from off thy feet: for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground. Moreover he said, I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God.' In this passage we are informed that the Angel-Jehovah appeared 'to Moses in the burning bush,' and said to him, 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.' The word *Angel*, as you well know, denotes a *person sent;* and, of course, implies a person sending. The Person here sent is called Jehovah, and styles himself 'the God of Abraham.' It needs no words to show, that the Person sent cannot be God the Father; or that he must be the Angel of the Covenant, God the Son. Christ, therefore, is the Jehovah mentioned in this passage as 'the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.'

The application of these peculiar names of the Godhead to our Saviour furnishes, in my view, an unanswerable argument to prove his divinity: for,

1. In Isaiah xlii. 8, God says, 'I am Jehovah, that is my name, and my glory I will not give to another.'

In this passage, God declares, that 'he will not give his name,' or glory, both terms meaning here the same thing, 'to another.' Yet, in the word of this same God, his several peculiar and distinguishing names are given to Jesus Christ; not indeed communicated to him, but applied to him, as his own original, proper appellations. This we are taught at large, Exod. xxiii. 20, 21. 'Behold I send an Angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the way which I have prepared. Beware of him, and obey his voice; provoke him not; for he will not pardon your transgressions, for my name is in him.' Here we are informed, that the 'Angel,' sent before the Israelites, would not 'pardon their transgressions, if they provoked him;' and are thus certainly taught, that he possessed the right and the power of pardoning sin. 'But who can forgive sins, except God?' We are farther informed, that the 'name' of God is 'in' this Angel; not that it is given or communicated to him, but that it existed in him, and belongs to him, originally. What this name is, the passage last quoted from Isaiah declares to us; 'I am Jehovah, that is my name.' It is also declared in the same manner to Moses, when asking of God, Exod. iii. 13, what was his name, that he might declare it to the children of Israel: 'And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM. Thus shall ye say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.' It is hardly necessary to remark, that the name, *I am*, has the same import with Jehovah. All this is rendered perfectly consistent and obvious by the scriptural accounts of Christ. 'I and my Father are one,' said our Saviour to the Jews.

For God, therefore, in his own word to give or apply his name, or glory, to Christ, is not to give it to another; but to apply to Christ names which are his own proper appellations. But, according to the Unitarian doctrine, this assertion on the part of God cannot be true. The doctrine therefore is false; for 'Let God be true, but every man a liar;' that is, every man who opposes God.

2. In Deut. xxxii. 39; in Isa. xliii. 10; xliv. 6, 8; xlv. 5, 14, 21; and in various other places, God says, *that there is no God beside him; that there is none else; and that he knows not any.* Yet Christ is called God, and announced by other names of the Deity, in the several passages above mentioned, and in many others, and this by the same God who made this decla-

* Lowth's Notes on this verse.

ration. That he is not so called in a subordinate, delegated, or derived sense, is unquestionably evident. First, from the titles given to him, viz. *The True God; The Mighty God; The Great God; The God of Israel; Jehovah;* and *I am;* all of them names never given in the Scriptures to any being but the Deity. Secondly, from the things ascribed to Christ in the same passages, many of which, as you must have observed, cannot be predicated of any being, except the one living and true God.

If it be admitted then that the Scriptures speak language which is to be understood in its customary sense, the only sense in which it can be intelligible to those to whom it was addressed, and to ninety-nine hundredths of those for whom the Scriptures were written; if it be admitted, that God has chosen the most proper terms to communicate true ideas of himself to mankind; it cannot be denied, that Jesus Christ is truly and perfectly God.

SERMON XXXVI.

DIVINITY OF CHRIST.—PROOFS FROM THE ATTRIBUTES AND ACTIONS ASCRIBED TO HIM.

For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.—Rom. viii. 3, 4.

For God, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and of a sin-offering, hath condemned sin in the flesh (the thing impossible for the law, because it was weak through the flesh) that the righteousness of the law may be fulfilled by us, who walk not according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.—Dr Macknight's Translation.

In the preceding Discourse I observed, that the great and commanding doctrines of Christianity are briefly declared in this passage of Scripture, and, as such, recited the following:

I. That the law could not destroy sin in man.

II. That God has accomplished this work by sending his own Son into the world.

III. That this was done in order that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled by Christians.

As the first of these propositions had been sufficiently discussed, I proposed, in a series of sermons, to examine the second; and to commence the examination by inquiring into the character of him who is here called 'God's own Son.' After reciting several scriptural comments on this phrase, I asserted, that it contains the following important doctrine:

That Jesus Christ is truly and perfectly God.

This doctrine I proposed to illustrate under several heads of discourse, then specified; the first of which was—

That Christ is spoken of, in the Scriptures, as the true and perfect God.

The argument contained in this proposition, I proposed to exhibit by showing, that the names, attributes, and actions of God, together with the relations which he sustains to his creatures, are in the Scriptures ascribed to Christ; and that divine worship is in the Scriptures required to be rendered, and by persons inspired was actually rendered, to him.

The first of these subjects, viz. *the names of God*, I then showed at sufficient length for my design, to be abundantly applied to Christ in the Scriptures. I now propose to exhibit this truth concerning the *attributes.*

I. *The peculiar attributes of God are ascribed to Christ in the Scriptures.*

1. Eternity.

Rev. i. 10, 11, &c. 'I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice as of a trumpet, saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and I turned to see the voice that spake with me; and being turned I saw seven golden candlesticks; and, in the midst of the seven candlesticks, one like unto the Son of Man: and when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead: and he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not, I am the first and the last, I am he that liveth and was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore. Amen.'

Rev. ii. 8, 'These things saith the first and the last, who was dead and is alive.'

Isa. xliv. 6, 'Thus saith Jehovah, King of Israel, and his Redeemer, Jehovah of Hosts, I am the first, and I am the last, and beside me there is no God.'

Isa. xlviii. 12, 'Hearken unto me, O Jacob, and Israel my called; I am he; I am the first; I also am the last. Mine hand also hath laid the foundation of the earth,' &c.

In the two first of these passages it will not, for it plainly cannot be disputed, that the person spoken of by St John, and afterwards speaking of himself, 'who was like unto the Son of Man, who was dead, is alive, and liveth for evermore,' was Christ; and this person in four instances declares himself to be 'the first and the last;' the strongest assertion, that eternity past and to come belongs to himself. If he is the first, none can have been before him: if he is the last, none can be after him.

In the two last passages, from the prophet Isaiah (the latter of which has, in the preceding Discourse, been clearly proved to be written concerning Christ,) Jehovah of Hosts, who declares, that 'beside himself there is no God,' declares also, that, 'he is the first, and that he is the last.' This language, with mathematical certainty, is attributable to but one being, and that being is the only living and true God.

Prov. viii. 22, 23, 'The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. I was

set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was.'

That the person here spoken of under the name of Wisdom, is Christ, cannot be rationally questioned by any man who reads this chapter with attention; especially if he compares it with the account given by the same person of himself, in the first chapter of the same book; where he exhibits himself as the judge, and rewarder, of mankind. To place the matter out of doubt, St Paul informs us, that 'Christ is the wisdom of God.' But this person says, 'he was set up from everlasting.'

Micah v. 2, 'And thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me, that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting:' in the Hebrew, *from the days of eternity.* This passage was, in a sense proverbially, acknowledged by the Jewish nation to be a prophecy of Christ. See Matt. ii. 6, where it is quoted as such by the Pharisees, in answer to Herod's inquiry concerning the birth-place of the Messiah. Besides, God, speaking in the passage itself, says, 'yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me,' &c. Here, 'he, whose goings forth have been from the days of eternity,' is said by another Person to 'come forth unto' the person speaking; that is, unto God the Father.

John i. 1, 2, 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God.'

1 John v. 20, 'This is the true God, and,' or even, 'the eternal life.'

The names, *Jehovah, I am,* and *I am that I am,* already proved to belong to Christ, are also the strongest expressions of original and eternal existence. The phrase, 'I am,' Christ in a peculiar manner applies to himself. John viii. 58, 'And Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, before Abraham was, I am.' John viii. 24, 'If ye believe not that I am, ye shall die in your sins.' Matt. xxviii. 20 'Lo, I am with you alway,' &c. Here Christ does not say, Before Abraham was, I was; or I will be with you alway; but *I am,* teaching us explicitly, that past and future are perfectly present to himself, and that his own existence is one present time.

2. Both by these names, and by other ascriptions of eternity to Christ, he is declared to be underived, or self-existent.

He who is the first, he whose existence is one present time, necessarily exists only of himself.

3. Omnipotence is directly ascribed to Christ.

Rev. i. 8, 'I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.' In the 11th verse of this chapter, Christ utters these words of himself. Either, then, there are two persons who truly say these things, each of himself; or Christ declares them of himself in both these verses. The choice in this alternative I willingly leave to the Unitarians; for, either way, the great question in debate is determined with equal certainty. If Christ speak the words in the 8th verse, he is the Almighty; if not, there are two Persons who are 'the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last.' Origen comments on these words in the following manner: 'And that thou mayest know the omnipotence of the Father and the Son to be one and the same, hear John speaking in the Revelation in this manner, "These things, saith the Lord God, who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty;" for who is the Almighty to come, except Christ?' Origen supposed ὁ ἐρχόμενος to indicate the coming of Christ at the day of judgment. Psalm xlv. 3, 'Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most mighty.' He, who is *most mighty,* is plainly all mighty. Mat. xxviii. 18, 'And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.' The Greek word here is ἐξουσια; the most proper meaning of which is *authority, control,* or *dominion.* But he who has the authority, control, or dominion over all things, unquestionably possesses all power, in the original or absolute sense.

This control was manifested by Christ in the obedience of diseases, life, and death, the elements of this world, and angels, both good and evil, to his command. The manner in which he exercised his control over all these things was, it should be remembered, the same which he used at the creation. In both cases 'he spake and it was done.' The bread, with which he fed the two companies of four thousand and five thousand men, came into existence, just as the heavens and the earth had before done, in obedience to his mere pleasure. To the leper he said, 'I will, be thou clean:' to the deaf ears, 'Be opened:' to the blind, 'Receive thy sight:' to the demons, 'Come out of the man:' and to the winds and waves, 'Peace, be still:' as he had before said, 'Let there be light;' and was in the same manner obeyed. The most proper mode, however, of exhibiting the omnipotence of Christ is to appeal to those acts by which it is peculiarly displayed. When we read John i. 3, 'All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made which was made;' and Heb. i. 2, 'Upholding all things by the word of his power;' we are presented with the strongest possible proof that his power is unlimited He who created and who upholds the universe, plainly can do every thing which in its nature is possible; and is, in the absolute sense, omnipotent.

4. Omniscience is also ascribed to Christ.

John xxi. 17, 'Peter saith unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things.' To this ascription of omniscience, Christ makes no reply, and therefore admits it in its full latitude. If it had not been true it is impossible that he should have permitted Peter to continue in so dangerous an error.

Mat. xi. 27, 'All things are delivered unto me of my Father, and no one knoweth the Son but the Father; neither knoweth any one the Father, save the Son; and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.' In this passage both the omniscience and incomprehensibility of Christ are declared by himself. He who knows the Father, is omniscient. He who is known only by the Father, is incomprehensible.

No exercise of omniscience is more peculiarly declaratory of this perfection than 'searching the heart,' and none more peculiarly challenged by God as his sole prerogative. Accordingly, 1 Kings viii. 39, Solomon, addressing himself to God in his prayer at the dedication of the temple, says, 'For thou, even thou only, knowest the hearts of all the children of men.' Yet, Rev. ii. 23, Christ says, 'And all the churches shall know, that I am he who searcheth the reins and the hearts;' and St John, chap. ii. 23, 24, says, 'Now when he was in Jerusalem, at the passover, on the feast day, many believed

in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did. But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men.' Accordingly, in Matt. ix. 4, it is said, 'And Jesus, knowing their thoughts:' in Matt. xii. 25, 'And Jesus knew their thoughts:' in Luke, v. 22, 'When Jesus perceived their thoughts:' in Luke vi. 8, 'But he knew their thoughts:' in Luke ix. 47, 'And Jesus perceiving the thought of their heart:' and in Luke xi. 17, 'But he, knowing their thoughts.' In all these passages we have the most absolute proof that it is the prerogative of Christ to search the heart; and that, therefore, he is the God to whom Solomon prayed. The same truth is also declared in the fullest manner by Christ, in each of his messages to the seven churches, in the verses beginning with, 'I know thy works,' &c. See Rev. ii. 3.

5. Omnipresence is ascribed to Christ.

Matt. xviii. 20, 'Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them. This fact, the gathering together of persons in the name of Christ, has, from the times of the apostles, yearly existed in many thousands of places. Yet Christ, according to his own declaration, is in the midst of all these assemblies.

Matt. xxviii. 20, 'Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.' Here Christ declares that he is with the apostles and succeeding ministers alway, unto the end of the world. But ministers are, in a sense, scattered throughout the world. With all these Christ has promised alway to be present.

Unitarians object against the interpretation of this passage, that ἑως τῆς συντελείας του αἰωνος ought to be rendered, 'unto the end of the age.' To this I answer, First, that this phrase is used three times in the Gospel of St Matthew by Christ himself: Matt. xiii. 39, 40, and 49, 'The harvest is the end of the world; as therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so shall it be in the end of this world; and again, 'So shall it be at the end of the world: the angel shall come forth and sever the wicked from among the just.' These, if I mistake not, are the only instances in which the phrase is used at all; and in all these, except the passage now in dispute, it certainly signifies the end of the world at the general judgment. There is no warrant for supposing that Christ, who used it in this sense, in three instances out of four, totally varied his meaning in the fourth instance, without giving any notice of such variation.

Secondly: If the interpretation contended for be admitted, the passage will still equally declare the truth alleged from it. For, if Christ was present alway with the apostles, only to the end of the Jewish age, he is omnipresent. They preached throughout a great part of the world. But no being could be present with them 'alway,' in these separate and distant regions, but he 'who filleth all things.' Eph. iv. 10.

To avoid the difficulty, which is presented to the Unitarians by this passage, Mr Belsham, one of the most considerable Socinian writers at the present time, informs us, that Christ was with St Paul (and, I presume, therefore, with the other apostles, since, the promise was made personally to them), by his bodily presence, which yet was invisible. Accordingly, Christ must be supposed to have been constantly and most rapidly flying, throughout that age, from place to place, and from apostle to apostle. I cannot but blush for human nature, to see such wretched subterfuges resorted to by a man, styled a minister of the gospel, as serious comments on the word of God, for the sake of escaping from the plain meaning of his direct declarations, and for the sake of retaining a system palpably contradictory to those declarations. What mind does not revolt at such a debasing representation of the Redeemer? Surely this gentleman might have recollected, that St Peter said, 'The heavens must receive Christ until the times of the restitution of all things:' that St Paul said, 'When he had purged away our sins by himself on the cross, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high;' that Christ himself said to his disciples, 'And now I go my way to him that sent me:' and to the Father, in his intercessory prayer, 'And now I am no more in the world; but these are in the world; and I come to thee.'

But this interpretation will not help the Unitarians over the difficulty. He could not on this plan, be with them alway; and therefore his promise could not be fulfilled. Besides, this promise, thus understood, would be scarcely at all applicable to the purpose for which it was given; viz. the support and consolation of those who should disciple and baptize all nations: for these, existing in every age, as well as in many countries, unto the real end of the world, need alike the blessing which is promised.

This is one of the instances in which a meaning, laboriously contrived to make the Scriptures accord with a pre-conceived system, is substituted for the obvious and true one; and may serve as a representative of the rest.

6. Immutability is ascribed to Christ.

Heb. xiii. 8, 'Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to day, and for ever.'

Psalm cii. 27, &c. quoted Hebrews i. 10, &c. 'And thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the works of thy hands. They shall perish, but thou remainest: yea, all of them shall wax old as doth a garment, and as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed; but thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end.' This passage is declared by St Paul to be spoken of Christ, as I shall have occasion to show more particularly hereafter: and in both passages he is declared to possess absolute immutability. On this subject I argue in the following manner:

If Christ is unchangeable, he is so, either because his faculties are so immensely great, and his character is so perfectly good, as to be incapable of change, either by increase or diminution: or, if the supposition be possible, because he possesses a mind which having originally received all its ideas, is unable by means of its singular constitution, either to lose any of those which it has received, or to receive any more; and which, having originally possessed a certain degree of energy and moral worth, is, by its singular nature, also made incapable in both these respects of any alteration. No words are necessary to show, that every new idea makes a real change in the recipient; and that, therefore, every intelligent creature changes of necessity every day, in the manner which we actually behold.

That Christ is not unchangeable, according to the latter of these suppositions, will, I suppose, be admitted without a debate. For though I have made the supposition, it is, I think, clearly inconsistent with the essential nature of an intelligent being. No such being turn-

ing his mind to the objects by which thought is excited, can possibly fail of receiving new ideas. Besides, that Christ is not in this manner unchangeable, is certain, from Luke ii. 52, 'And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.' Here it is asserted, not only that he changed when twelve years of age, but so perceptibly, as to have the change distinctly marked by those around him.

Therefore, by necessary consequence, he, concerning whom this attribute is asserted, is infinitely different in nature from the infant, which was born of the Virgin Mary; and was united to that infant by a mysterious union, so as to become one person, denominated with strict propriety by the one name Jesus Christ, or the Anointed Saviour.

II. *The peculiar actions of God are ascribed to Christ in the Scriptures.*

On this subject I observe,

1. That the creation of all things is ascribed to Christ.

John i. 3, 'By him all things were made: and without him was not even one thing made, which hath been made.'

Col. i. 16, 'For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers, all things were created by him and for him.'

Heb. i. 10, quoted from Psalm cii. 25, 'Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundations of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thy hands.'

It has been denied that this last passage is applied by the apostle to Christ; but the denial cannot, I think, have proceeded even from prejudice. It must have resulted from absolute inattention. In the 7th verse the apostle says, 'and of the angels he saith, Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire. But unto the Son he saith,' What? Two things, which follow: the first, quoted from the xlvth Psalm, beginning, 'Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever;' the second, quoted from Psalm cii. and beginning with, 'Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth:' and these two are coupled by the conjunction, *και*, or 'and.'* In this manner the passage has meaning and syntax; but without it, has neither. If the passage be not applied to Christ by the apostle, he departs entirely from his discourse begun before and continued after this passage; that is, carried through the whole chapter; and inserts these three verses, containing, according to this scheme, not even a parenthetical reference to any thing in the chapter, nor indeed to any thing in the whole book. In the meantime, the 'and,' by which it is connected with the former quotation, and which determines it, beyond debate, to be a part of the speech of the Father to the Son, makes it, according to this scheme, to be ungrammatical nonsense. Surely such writing ought not to be attributed to the apostle Paul, even if we regard only his character as a man of understanding. It ought, however, to be remarked, that for the present purpose the passage may be dispensed with, without any disadvantage: those which remain being abundantly sufficient to establish the point. In the two former of these passages it is asserted, that 'all things in heaven and in earth, visible and invisible:' nay, that 'every thing which has been made,' without the exception even of one, 'were created by Jesus Christ;' in the latter, 'the heavens and the earth,' the Jewish appropriate phrase to denote the universe, are declared to be 'the work of his hands.'

On these passages I observe, that if a person, thoroughly acquainted with language, were to sit down purposely to express the proposition that Christ created all things, he could not find words to express it more clearly and decisively, than those, which convey to us each of these scriptural declarations. St John, particularly, has gone the utmost length which human language will permit; when, after saying, 'And by him all things were made,' he subjoins, 'and without him was not even one thing made, which has been made.'

2. The preservation of all things is also ascribed to Christ in the most explicit manner.

Col. i. 17, 'By him,' that is, Christ, 'do all things consist.'

Heb. i. 1, 2, 'God, who at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake unto our fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son: whom he hath appointed heir of all things; by whom also he made the worlds: who, being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person and upholding all things by the word of his power,' &c.

On these passages it cannot be necessary to dwell.

They plainly have but one meaning; and that meaning is too explicit to admit even of an ingenious misconstruction. The words make it evident, if words can make it evident, that Christ is the upholder of all things.

3. The government of all things is, in the same direct and distinct manner, applied to Christ.

Psalm xlv. 6, 'Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever.'

The second Psalm throughout, is an illustrious exhibition of the universal dominion of Christ.

The seventy-second Psalm is a still more glorious exhibition of the same subject. Here it is said, that 'his dominion shall extend from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth; that all kings shall bow down to him; that all nations shall serve him: that they shall fear him as long as the sun and the moon endure: that his name shall endure and be blessed, for ever: and that the whole earth shall be filled with his glory. Amen.'

Psalm cx. 1, 'The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.'

Psalm viii. 5, 'Thou madest him a little (for a little time) lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour: thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands.' See this passage applied to Christ, Heb. ii. 9.

Isa. ix. 6, 7, 'Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder. And his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Father of the everlasting Age, the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end.'

Dan. vii. 13, 14, 'And I saw in the night visions, and behold, one like the Son of Man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of Days; and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom; that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his

* See an example of the same mode of connexion) Matt. xxiii. 16—18.

dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away: and his kingdom that, which shall not be destroyed.'

The same doctrine is pursued throughout the New Testament in the same explicit manner. Acts x. 36, 'The word, which he sent to the children of Israel, proclaiming glad tidings of peace by Jesus Christ. This person is Lord of all things.'

Rom. ix. 5, 'Of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all things, God blessed for ever and ever. Amen.'

1 Cor. xv. 25, 'For he must reign until he hath put all enemies under his feet.'

Eph. i. 20, 'Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but in that which is to come: and hath put all things under his feet; and given him to be head over all things unto the church.'

Philip. ii. 9—11, 'Wherefore God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name, which is above every name; that at the time of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess, that he is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.'

These numerous passages are, comparatively, but a few of those in which the Scriptures assert the absolute and universal dominion of Christ. I have recited such a number of them, to show that this doctrine runs through the whole sacred volume. No words can be conceived which can express absolute and supreme dominion over all beings, and all events, more unequivocally or more forcibly than these. The name of Christ is here declared to be 'above every name that is named, not only in this world, but in that which is to come, in earth and in heaven,' in time and in eternity. All things in all worlds are required to bow to him. Angels of every order, as well as men, it is declared, shall thus 'bow' to him, either voluntarily or involuntarily; and shall 'confess, that he is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.' This dominion also is asserted to be without limits, and without end. I shall only add, from the mouth of Christ himself, 'I am the first and the last, and the living one.' Also, 'I was dead, and behold, I am the living one for ever and ever: and I have the keys of hades and of death. I shut, and no one openeth; I open, and no one shutteth;' Rev. i. 17, 18; and iii. 7: and the equivalent passage, Mat. xxviii. 18, 'And Jesus came, and spake unto them, saying, All authority in heaven and in earth is given unto me.' Here Christ asserts that the rightful exercise of all power in heaven and in earth is in his possession; that he has 'the keys of hades and of death;' or the absolute control over the world of the dead and the region of departed spirits. From that world, from that region, none of the numberless inhabitants can escape without his permission; but when the gates are unlocked by him, none can hinder them from coming forth; as at his call they will actually do on the great and final day.

4. The act of giving and restoring life, is also expressly ascribed to Christ in a variety of ways.

Particularly while he resided in this world, he raised the dead at his pleasure. The daughter of Jairus, the son of the widow of Nain, and his beloved Lazarus, were illustrious examples. All these returned again from the world of departed spirits at his command. 'Damsel, I say unto thee, Arise;' 'Young man, I say unto thee, Arise;' 'Lazarus, Come forth!' were the only means which he employed; and the spirits of these deceased persons instantly obeyed the call. This amazing power he accordingly asserts of himself in terms absolute and universal. John v. 21, 26, 'As the Father raiseth up and quickeneth, even so the Son quickeneth whom he will. As the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself.'* In the same manner St Paul declares, 1 Cor. xv. 45, 'The first Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was a quickening spirit.' In a still more striking manner did he exemplify this wonderful power in raising himself from the dead. That he did this cannot be doubted, unless we are disposed to doubt the truth of his own express declaration. John x. 17, 18, 'Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it up again; no one taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again.'

In this passage it is as evident as words can make it, that Christ 'laid down his life,' of his own accord only, and of his own accord 'took it up again,' and that 'no one was able to take it from him.' Accordingly, St Peter declares, Acts ii. 24, that 'it was not possible for him to be holden of death.'

Another most wonderful exhibition of this astonishing power will be made by him, as he himself has told us, in raising up the dead at the last day. 'And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one who seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day,' John vi. 40. And again, verse 54, 'Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.' See also verses 39 and 44.—John v. 28, 'Marvel not at this, for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good to the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil to the resurrection of damnation.'

After Christ had ascended to heaven, the apostles, according to his promise, raised the dead by his power and authority; and thus proved the ubiquity of his power, as well as of his presence.

As there can be no rational doubt concerning these passages, and no misconstruction of them, except by violence, I do not suppose any explanation of them to be necessary. They carry their own meaning perfectly in themselves, and, therefore, demand no comment The united language of them all is, that Christ in himself perfectly possesses the power of giving life; that in this world he exercised it on himself, and many others; and that he will most wonderfully display the same power at the end of this earthly system, by raising to life the great congregation of the dead.

5. The forgiveness of sin is expressly ascribed to Christ.

Thus, in Exod. xxiii. 20, 21, already quoted for another purpose, it is said, 'Behold, I send an Angel before thee to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared. Beware of him, and obey his voice; provoke him not; for he will not

* See also Phil. iii. 21, and Col. iii 4.

pardon your transgressions: for my name is in him.' In this passage it is evident beyond a doubt, that the *Angel* who was sent before the Israelites was possessed of the power and right to forgive sins. Otherwise God could not have thus cautioned the Israelites not to provoke him for this reason, since the reason would not have existed, and would therefore have been alleged insincerely. But this cannot be attributed to God. 2 Cor. ii. 10, 'For, if I forgave any thing, to whom I forgave it, for your sake forgave I it, in the person of Christ.' The apostle here declares to the Corinthians, that he forgave the offenders referred to in his former epistle, in the person of Christ, or standing as his representative; but if Christ could not himself forgive sins, the apostle might, with equal propriety, have said, that he forgave it in the person of any other; *the person* of Christ here being equivalent to the *name* and *authority* of Christ. But if Christ had not the power to forgive sins, this authority would have been nothing. Col. iii. 13, 'Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any, even as Christ forgave you.'

The import of this passage will be sufficiently understood, if it can need any explanation, by reciting the parallel passage, Eph. iv. 32, 'Forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake, hath forgiven you.'

Acts vii. 59, 60, 'And they stoned Stephen, invocating, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.'

In this affecting passage, Stephen, full of the Holy Ghost, and vouchsafed a vision of the glory of God, and of Jesus standing on the right hand of God, prays to Christ to forgive the sin of his murderers. Words, one would think, cannot be more decisive.

Matt. ix. 2—7, 'And, behold, they brought to him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed; and Jesus, seeing their faith, said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, be of good cheer; thy sins are forgiven thee. And, behold, certain of the scribes said within themselves, This man blasphemeth. And Jesus knowing their thoughts, said, Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts? For whether is easier to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins (then saith he to the sick of the palsy), Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house. And he arose, and departed unto his house.'

In this passage, Christ said to the sick of the palsy, 'Son, thy sins are forgiven thee.' Some of the scribes who were present accused him in their own hearts of blasphemy, and said, as Mark informs us, 'Who can forgive sin, but God only?' In this also they spoke the truth. Christ knew their thoughts and asked them, 'Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts? For whether is easier to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and walk?' Both these acts belonging to God only, the latter is here, with supreme force, proposed as a test of the former. Christ, therefore, makes it such, and tells the scribes, that he will prove to them his power to forgive sins by his power to raise up the sick of the palsy, with a command. Accordingly, as a proof in form, that he possessed this power, he says to the sick of the palsy, 'Arise, and walk.' The sick man 'immediately arose, and departed to his house.'

Here the power of Christ to forgive sins was denied by the scribes, and expressly asserted by himself. Of this assertion he undertook the proof on the spot; and the proof proposed was a miracle. A miracle can be wrought by none but God; and God cannot work a miracle to prove a falsehood. The miracle was wrought; the assertion therefore was true.

6. The act of giving eternal life is abundantly ascribed to Christ in the Scriptures.

John x. 27, 28, 'My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish.'

Rev. xxi. 6, 'I am the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.'

Rev. ii. 7, 'To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.' See also verses 17 and 28.

Rev. iii. 5, 'He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life.' See also verses 12 and 21.

These passages need no explanation.

7. To Christ is ascribed the great and awful act of judging the world, and of acquitting and condemning angels and men.

John v. 22, 'The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son.' See also, what will preclude any farther inquiry, the account of the last judgment, given by Christ himself, in the 25th chapter of Matthew.

All these are confessedly the acts of the infinite God alone, and involve the absolute possession of power and perfection without limits. To create, preserve, and govern the universe; to give and restore life; to forgive sin; to bestow eternal life; to judge the world of angels and men, and to acquit or condemn, finally and for ever, all intelligent beings—is, if any thing is, to be, and to act as being, the true God, the only infinite and eternal Jehovah.

In the great act of judging the world, particularly, the absolute exercise and the most wonderful display ever made of omniscience, as well as infinite justice, will be made. To judge righteously in this amazing case, plainly requires the most exact and minute, as well as the most comprehensive and perfect, knowledge of all the thoughts, words, and actions, of intelligent beings; together with all the aggravations and palliations of guilt, and all the enhancements and diminutions of virtue, which have existed in the universe. Consequently, whatever circumstances have attended these innumerable beings must be perfectly known, and actually present at once, to the view of such a judge. Nor must he be less perfectly acquainted with the precise kinds and distributions of punishment and reward, which the respective works and characters of these numberless individuals, in their endlessly various circumstances, justly require.

To these things must be added, what Christ directly challenges to himself, the power of opening and shutting heaven and hell, or hades, at his pleasure, and of conferring the happiness of heaven, and inflicting the miseries of hell on whom he pleases.

If, then, Christ be not God, the real God has so ordered things in his providence, that the peculiar displays of divine perfection, the greatest which will ever be made, will be made by a creature, and not by himself. The creation, preservation, and government of the

universe; the giving of life, and the restoration of it to the dead; the forgiveness of sin; the communication of endless life; and the final judgment of intelligent beings; are the highest, the most peculiar, and the most perfect displays of the Godhead. Omnipotence and infinite wisdom are pre-eminently manifested in the formation and government of all things; infinite benevolence, in the forgiveness and salvation of sinners; and omniscience and infinite justice, in acquitting and condemning, rewarding, and punishing, the righteous and the wicked.

If then these, the most perfect displays of the Godhead, do not prove Christ to be the real and supreme God, let me ask, In what manner and by what arguments shall we prove that there is such a God? The existence and perfections of this glorious Being, have hitherto been always evinced from the creation, preservation, and government of the universe. But these, if the Scriptures are true, are the acts of Christ. If then, they prove the existence of God at all, they certainly prove Christ to be God. If they do not prove him, whose acts they are, to be God, they do not prove God to exist at all; for they cannot prove him to be God, whose acts they are not. To what proofs, then, of the being of God are we to recur, unless we admit these to be the proofs? and if we admit them, how can we deny or doubt the Deity of Christ.

Let me farther ask each member of this assembly to apply this subject to his own case, and say, whether he is not ready fearlessly to commit his all to him, who has done, and will do, all these amazing things? who in the Scriptures is called God, and Jehovah; and to whom all the attributes of the infinite mind are ascribed? If he is not, let me ask him, To what being is he willing to trust this mighty deposit—himself—his soul—his all.

SERMON XXXVII.

DIVINITY OF CHRIST.—PROVED FROM DIVINE REVELATIONS SUSTAINED BY HIM; AND FROM DIVINE WORSHIP REQUIRED AND RENDERED TO HIM.

For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.—Rom. viii. 3, 4.

For God, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and of a sin-offering, hath condemned sin in the flesh (the thing impossible for the law, because it was weak through the flesh): that the righteousness of the law may be fulfilled by us, who walk not according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.—Dr Macknight's Translation.

Having shown in the two preceding Discourses, that Christ is spoken of in the Scriptures as the true and perfect God: because, 1. the names, 2. the attributes, and 3. the actions of God are ascribed to him; I shall now proceed to consider the remaining particulars, proposed under this head: viz.

IV. *That the relations which God sustains to his creatures, are in the Scriptures ascribed to Christ;* and,

V. *That divine worship is in the Scriptures required to be rendered, and by persons inspired was actually rendered, to Christ.*

In examining the relations, sustained by God to his creatures, and ascribed in the Scriptures to Christ, so copious a field is open for discussion, that it can only be partially surveyed at the present time. I shall, therefore, confine my attention to the following particulars:—

1. Christ sustains to the universe the relation of Creator.

In the passages quoted in the preceding Discourse, to prove that the act of creating is ascribed to Christ, in the Scriptures, it is asserted, that he is 'the Creator of the heavens and the earth; of thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers; and of every individual thing which hath been made.' In the relation of Creator he stands, therefore, to every being, great and small, in the heavens and in the earth. Atoms were called into existence by his word; angels owe to him their exalted being. This is a relation which no being but the infinite Jehovah can sustain; and is plainly that on which all the other relations of God to his creatures depend. Accordingly, God challenges this character to himself, as his character alone, sustained by himself only. 'I,' saith he, 'am Jehovah, and none else; forming light, and creating darkness; making peace, and creating evil: I Jehovah am the author of all these things.'* Whatever the Creator makes, is in the most absolute sense his own; and can in no sense belong to any other, unless by his gift. Whatever connexion, therefore, exists between God, as God, and creatures, as such, arises originally and entirely from the act of bringing them into being. All the rights which the infinite mind claims and holds over the universe, and all the duties of intelligent creatures, spring originally from this source only. It is his universe, because he made it. They are his property, because by him they were created. As their Creator, therefore, they look to him and him alone, to whom they are indebted for every thing, and to whom they owe every thing which they can do, because every thing in which they can be concerned depends upon their existence. But for this, however excellent, great, and desirable, he might be, and however deserving of their love and admiration, still they would not be his. This God himself teaches us in di-

* Isaiah xlv. 6, 7. Lowth.

rect terms. 'Remember these things, O Jacob; and Israel, for thou art my servant. I have formed thee; thou art my servant. But now, saith the Lord, that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, fear not, thou art mine.' Out of this act of giving existence arises, then, his property in all creatures: and his right to give them laws, to control their actions, to judge, reward, and punish them, and universally to dispose of them according to his pleasure; together with all their corresponding duties. To Christ, then, belong all these rights. But who can possess these rights, or sustain the relation out of which they arise, beside the only living and true God?

In sustaining this relation to the universe, Christ possesses also, of course, all the attributes necessary to it, and displayed in the work of creating; particularly, the power and wisdom manifested in the production of all things. This power and wisdom are plainly infinite.

I know it is said by Emlyn, and other Arians, that we do not see the infinity of these attributes displayed in creating the universe; and that they may, for aught that appears to us, have existed in a sufficient degree for the production of all things, and yet not have been infinite.

On this subject I observe,

(1.) That of creating power in the abstract, or unexercised, we have no idea at all; and, therefore, cannot thus discern it to be infinite.

(2.) We cannot comprehend infinity in any sense. The mind which can comprehend infinity must itself be infinite. When we speak of infinite power, as evident in the creation of all things, we simply declare the fact, that this power is infinite. That infinity exists with respect to duration, expansion, or any thing else which is infinite, we may perceive distinctly, and yet are perfectly unable to comprehend eternity or immensity.

(3.) The power of creating, or giving existence, is evidently a subject to which limits can no more be assigned in our thoughts, than to duration, or space. Plainly, he who gave existence to one atom, can give existence to atoms, and therefore to worlds, without number. He who gave intelligence, who formed men, and angels, and archangels, can form all kinds and degrees of intelligence which can be formed, and can raise men, angels, and other rational beings, to any height, to any perfection of intelligence which in the nature of things is possible. To this power, therefore, no other bound can be set beside possibility. He who formed all things cannot create contradictions. This, however, is no circumscription of his power; for if it could be done he could do it. The only difference which would exist, would be in the nature of the things themselves, and not in the power of the Maker.

(4.) If creation and preservation be not a proof of infinite power, there is no proof that such power exists. Of this there needs no illustration but one, viz. that these are the only sources whence infinite power has been hitherto argued in the present world; for the argument, *a priori*, I consider as of no value.

(5.) We plainly cannot see, that creating power is not infinite; nor can we furnish a single argument for the support of such a conclusion. The doctrine is, therefore, a mere gratuitous assumption, and merits as little consideration as any other such assumption.

(6.) Creating power is the source of all power that exists, except itself. If, therefore, creating power is not infinite, there is no infinite power. Christ, therefore, as the Creator of all things, possessed originally all existing power, whether we allow it to be infinite or not.

(7.) The Scriptures have determined this point, so far as the subject of this Sermon is concerned: for in Heb. iii. 4, they say, 'Every house is builded by some one; but he that built all things is God.'

It will easily be discerned, that the remarks made here concerning the power displayed in creation, are with equal force applicable to the wisdom exhibited in that work.

2. Christ sustains also the relation of Preserver.

'By him all things consist.' Col. i. 17. 'Upholding all things by the word of his power.' Heb. i. 3.

That God is the only preserver of the universe, is unquestionably evident to the eye of reason, and has accordingly been acknowledged by all men who have acknowledged a God. It is also, in the most definite manner, declared in the Scriptures. In Neh. ix. 6, the Levites, at the head of the congregation assembled for a solemn national fast, blessed God in these terms: 'Thou, even thou, art Jehovah alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their hosts; the earth, and all things that are therein; the seas, and all that is therein; and thou preservest them all: and the host of heaven worshippeth thee. Thou art Jehovah, the God who didst choose Abram, and brought him forth out of Ur of the Chaldees, and gavest him the name of Abraham.' In this passage it is declared in the most explicit terms, that he who preserves all things, is the Being worshipped by the host of heaven. 'Jehovah alone;' 'the Jehovah;' 'the God;' according to Parkhurst and Lowth, The Jehovah, the true, eternal, and unchangeable God; the God who chose Abram, brought him forth out of Ur of the Chaldees, and gave him the name of Abraham. In the subsequent verses we are farther informed that he is the 'God of Israel; the great, mighty, and the terrible God; gracious and merciful:' the author of all the wonders in Egypt, the Red sea, and the wilderness, and of the dispensation of the law at Sinai; the only object of prayer, supreme love, faith, and obedience. Yet all 'things consist by Christ,' and 'he upholds them all by the word of his power.' He therefore, is this Jehovah: this God.

The relation of universal Preserver is plainly a relation incapable of being sustained by any being but Jehovah. It involves a knowledge of all beings, and all their circumstances; a power present in every place, and to every being at every moment; sufficient in degree to hold in existence, to keep together, and to continue in order and harmony, the mighty frame of the universe; to roll the innumerable worlds of which it is composed, unceasingly, through the expansion; and to control, with an irresistible sway, all their motions, affections, and inhabitants; and a wisdom sufficient to contrive the proper employments and destinations of this endless multitude of beings, as well as the natures and attributes necessary for them, so as to accomplish those ends, and those only, which are worthy of the incomprehensible workman. Of this power, knowledge, and wisdom, the Scriptures, therefore, assert Christ to be possessed, when they declare him to be the Preserver of all things. Our ideas of the power exerted in the preservation and also in the creation of the universe, they exceedingly enhance, by informing us, that both these amazing works are accomplished by his work.

'Upholding all things by the word of his power.' 'He spake, and it was done.' Of course, both are performed with perfect ease; and he who does them 'fainteth not, neither is weary.'

In the character of the Preserver of the universe, all creatures owe to Christ the continuance of their blessings and their hopes. As we should have been nothing, had we not been created, so we should become nothing, were we not preserved. On this relation, therefore, next after that of Creator, we depend for every thing, and to him who sustains it we owe every thing. Were it possible that he who sustains it should be any other than God, we should still originally and continually, owe all things to him, and nothing to God. To such a monstrous absurdity does the opinion, that the Creator and Preserver is any other than the true and perfect God, ultimately conduct, and, if they would be consistent with themselves, does in fact conduct those who deny Christ to be God.

As the Preserver of the righteous, Christ is appropriately called in the Scriptures by the emphatical name of *the Shepherd.* 'I,' saith he of himself, 'am the good Shepherd. The good Shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. I am the good Shepherd and know my sheep,' John x. 11, 14.—'Our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep.' Heb. xiii. 20.—'And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory, which fadeth not away,' 1 Peter v. 4.—'There shall be one fold, and one Shepherd,' John x. 16.—'Awake, O sword, against my Shepherd, against the Man that is my fellow,' &c. Zech. xiii. 7.—'Behold, the Lord God will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him: behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him. He shall feed his flock, like a shepherd; he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young,' Isa. xl. 10, 11.—'Jehovah is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul; he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness, for his name's sake.' Psalm xxiii. 1—3. In these passages we are informed, that Christ is 'the good Shepherd,' 'the great Shepherd,' 'the chief Shepherd,' and the 'Shepherd of God, the Man that is the fellow,' or compeer, 'of Jehovah of Hosts.' We are farther informed, that there is one Shepherd to the flock; that he is the final Judge of the quick and the dead: that Jehovah is the 'Shepherd' of David, one of the righteous, and therefore, by irresistible consequence, of all the righteous; that the Lord God will feed his flock 'like a shepherd, will gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom.' If therefore Christ be not Jehovah, if he be not the Lord God, then there are *two* shepherds instead of *one*, of whom Christ is still the 'chief' and the 'great Shepherd;' and, although the Shepherd of David was Jehovah, yet Christ is the Shepherd of all other righteous persons. This character Christ recognizes, when he informs us that at the great day he will 'separate the sheep from the goats;' and this character he will for ever sustain in the future world; for there, we are taught, he 'will feed them, and lead them to living fountains of waters.'

3. Christ sustains the character of the Possessor of all things.

At his entrance into this world it is said, 'He came unto his own things (τα ἰδια); and his own men, or kindred (οἱ ἰδιοι), received him not;' that is, he came into the world, but mankind, or the Jewish nation, received him not, John i. 11.—'All things,' saith Christ, 'which the father hath, are mine,' or, *my things*, John xvi. 15.—Again, in his intercessory prayer, he says to the Father, 'All things that are mine, are thine, and the things which are thine are mine,' John xvii. 10. It will be needless to add any farther passages to texts so perfectly explicit and unambiguous as these. It is proper, however, to remark, that the possession of all things is inseparably connected with the creation and preservation of all things. All things are necessarily the property and possession of Christ, because he made them, and because he upholds them in being, as saith the Psalmist, 'The earth is Jehovah's, and the fulness thereof, the world, and they that dwell therein; for he hath founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods.'

But the possession of the universe involves in the Possessor, to say the least, an absolute knowledge of every thing that is thus possessed. No mind can possess any thing, to which its comprehension does not extend. Entitled to it, it may be; in the actual possession of it, it cannot be. But no mind except the Omniscient can comprehend, or ever discern, more than a little part of the universe; and, therefore, none but the Omniscient Mind can possess any more than this little part.

There is indeed an humbler and totally different sense, in which it may be figuratively said, and in which it is said in the Scriptures, that the saints shall inherit all things, and in which all things are said to be theirs, viz. 'that all things shall work together for good to them.' In this manner all things cannot with propriety be said to belong to Christ; because, being 'the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever,' his enjoyment is, like himself, unchangeable, and cannot, in any sense, be the result of the changes of which created things are the subjects. The happiness of created beings results only and necessarily from his government of all things for their benefit; but his happiness existed before the things themselves, and can be dependent on nothing but his own mind.

Farther: The possession of all things involves, inseparably, the control over them, in such a degree, as to direct them immediately to the use and purposes of the possessor. That which we cannot command for our own use, we do not in the proper sense possess. But the power and the knowledge necessary to the possession of all things are in this view plainly infinite.

4. Christ sustains the relations of Supreme Ruler to the universe.

Rev. xix. 11, &c. 'And I saw heaven opened; and, behold, a white horse, and he that sat on it was called Faithful and True, and his name is called the Word of God. And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, King of kings, and Lord of lords.' Rev. xvii. 14, 'These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them; for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings.' 1 Tim. vi. 15, 'Which in his times the blessed and only potentate shall show, the King of kings, and Lord of lords.' Acts x. 36, 'Jesus Christ: this person is Lord of all things.' Rom. ix. 5, 'Christ, who is over all things, God blessed for ever. Amen.' Philip. ii. 10, 11, 'That at the name of Jesus

every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth: and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.' In these passages Christ is directly exhibited as the Lord or Ruler of the universe, in the most absolute sense; the Lord of all things; whom things in heaven, and things in earth, are respectively required to confess as their Lord.

But the government of the universe requires, if any thing requires, the attributes of an infinite mind: goodness to prompt, justice to direct, knowledge to discern, and power to execute, whatever is right, wise, and good, to be done, and to prevent the existence of whatever is not. It demands also existence every where present, and eternally enduring throughout the boundless and everlasting kingdom of God. Without these attributes Christ must be the Lord only in name, and rule only in pretence; and such must undoubtedly be the character attributed to him in these and the almost innumerable passages of Scripture, in which he is styled Lord, and said to hold dominion over all things, unless he is essentially possessed of these attributes. The Scriptures are not thus deficient in their own scheme; for, when they attribute universal dominion to Christ, they teach us that he is qualified for such dominion, by declaring, 'that in him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead.' We are not, therefore, left at a loss by the Scriptures themselves concerning his perfect qualifications for the exercise of this government; nor can we wonder that he who made and preserves should also govern all things.

In this relation Christ gave the law to the Israelites and to mankind at Mount Sinai; and in this character, as the rightful lawgiver, he directed his own Spirit to inspire the prophets and apostles with the knowledge of his word, as the universal law to mankind. 'But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, he will guide you into all truth; for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak; and he will show you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you. All things which the Father hath are mine; therefore, said I, that he shall take of mine, and show it unto you.' John xv. 26. xvi. 13—15, 'Of which salvation the prophets have inquired, searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ, which was in them, did signify.' Accordingly, the Scriptures are called *the word of Christ:* 'Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, in all wisdom;' and, *the law of Christ:* 'Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.' The law here referred to is no other than the second command of the moral law, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself;' or that branch of this command which, respecting Christians peculiarly, is called *the new commandment:* 'A new commandment give I unto you, that ye love one another,' John xiii. 34. In this character Christ, when he began to preach, expounded, altered, and annulled, the law of Moses, in his own name, and at his own pleasure. All the prophets who came before him introduced their messages to mankind under the name and authority by which they spoke; prefacing them with 'Thus saith the Lord;' 'Thus saith Jehovah;' and 'Thus saith Jehovah of Hosts.' Christ, on the contrary, when altering and annulling these very things, uses no name but his own, and speaks directly by his own authority, introducing his own laws with 'Verily, I say unto you;' plainly intended to be equivalent to 'Thus saith the Lord;' because the things which were prefaced with this latter phrase were openly altered and revoked by him.

In this character, also, he disposes of the present and future allotments of all beings, opens and shuts, at his pleasure, the world of death and departed spirits; consigns whom he pleases to endless suffering, and bestows on whom he pleases immortal life. In this character, he is 'the head of all principality and power,' Col. ii. 10.—'Who, having gone into heaven,' saith St Peter, 'is on the right hand of God; angels, authorities, and powers being subjected to him.' In this relation it is obvious, that all intelligent beings are bound to render him their supreme and ultimate homage and obedience; that the law is the rule of all their conduct; from obeying which nothing can excuse them; the law by which they will be tried, and approved or condemned; that his word is the only rule of life and salvation to mankind; that his dominion is the supreme and universal control, to which, in this and every other world, intelligent beings are rightfully required to bow; to which every one of them in this and all other worlds will ultimately bow; and by which all things are, and will for ever be, regulated at his pleasure; that he is the Judge, who will finally acquit or condemn, reward or punish every intelligent creature. I scarcely need to ask, who can sustain this stupendous relation to the universe except Jehovah?

5. Christ is the last end of all things.

Col. i. 16, 'All things were created by him, and for him;' that is, they were all created for his use, that he might destine them to such purposes, and conduct them to such an issue, as were agreeable to his pleasure. In the same manner as it is said, Prov. xvi. 4, 'Jehovah hath made all things for himself.'

It will, I suppose, be granted, as I do not see how it can be questioned, that the end for which any thing exists under the control of divine wisdom, is more important than the thing itself; or universally, that the end is more important than the means. I suppose it will also be granted, that the end for which all things exist, is the most important of all ends. I suppose it will farther be granted, that Jehovah, in making all things for himself, regarded himself, and in this design proved, that he regarded himself as more important than all things else; and his glory or pleasure, for which they were created, as the most important of all the ends discerned by his omniscience, and perfectly worthy to be preferred to every other. But this plainly could not be, unless he who thus proposed himself as the end of all things, was, in the view of his omniscience, a more excellent, great, and glorious being, than any other. If there were any other being superior to himself, such being ought plainly to be preferred to him; otherwise, that which was of inferior importance and worth would be preferred to that which was superior; a preference obviously unfounded and unjust. Jehovah, therefore, in making all things for himself, hath testified in the most solemn and forcible manner possible, that himself is more important, great, and excellent, than all other things whatever.

But all things are declared, in the passage quoted from Colossians, to have been created by Christ for himself. Christ, therefore, in this act of making himself the end of the creation of all things, has declared

that himself is, in his own view, the most important, great, and excellent of all things. This declaration is either true or false. If false, it proceeded from ignorance or from sin. It could not be from sin; for 'Christ knew no sin;' and is declared to be 'without spot or blemish;' 'the Holy One and the Just;' even the 'Holy One of God.' It could not be from ignorance; because no intelligent creature who knew Jehovah at all, could possibly suppose himself to be more important, great, and excellent, than Jehovah; and because Christ will not be supposed even by the Unitarians, to be capable of such ignorance. It is, therefore, true. But if it be true, it is, by inevitable consequence, also true, either that Christ is greater and more important than Jehovah, or that he is Jehovah himself.

Farther: As Christ is the end of all things, if he be not Jehovah, there is nothing of which Jehovah is the end. As all things were made for Christ; if Christ be not Jehovah, there is nothing which is made for Jehovah. The united tendency and result of all that has been, is, or will be in the universe, is the accomplishment of the pleasure and glory of Christ; and if Christ be not Jehovah, Jehovah will exist without any glory displayed, without any interest or concern, in the universe.

It ought also to be added, that he who is the end of all things, for whose glory and pleasure they are to operate, must possess power sufficient to direct them to his glory, and intelligence to discern that this purpose is accomplished by them all. When we consider the greatness and multitude of the things themselves, and their everlasting continuance and operation, it will, I think, be impossible not to conclude, that this power and intelligence must be, in the strictest sense, unlimited.

It is with reference to this very subject, as I apprehend, that our Saviour, in his intercessory prayer, utters to the Father these remarkable words: * 'All things which are mine are thine; and all things which are thine, are mine: and I am glorified in them,' John xvii. 10. Here, in two forms of expression, he declares to the Father the co-extension of the property which the Father and the Son have in the universe, and their mutual possession of all things; and then adds, that 'he is glorified in,' or by means of, 'them all.' This may be properly styled Christ's own comment on the declaration of St Paul, that 'all things were made for him;' that is, for his use, his glory; for here Christ declares his glory to be actually accomplished by them all.

This doctrine is plainly and utterly inconsistent with the Arian notion of Christ being a subordinate God; to whom divine power is supposed to have been delegated, and who in this character of a delegate, is supposed to have created the universe, and to be worshipped. On this notion, I propose to make some observations hereafter. At present I shall only remark, that he who is the first cause, or Creator, and the last end of all things, is all that is or can be meant by the Supreme God. All things being made for his use, and being the means of his glory, there is nothing left to a being higher and greater than himself; nor does it appear that such being can have any material concern with the universe, in any manner whatever.

* See the original Greek.

I shall now consider the fifth and last particular mentioned under this head: viz. That divine worship is in the Scriptures required, and by persons inspired was actually rendered, to Christ.

Divine worship is required to be rendered to Christ, John v. 22, 23, 'For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: that all men should honour the Son even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father that sent him.' In this passage of Scripture we are informed, that the infinite prerogative of judging the universe is committed by the Father to the Son, for this, as at least one, if not the only great end, 'that all (that is, I apprehend, all intelligent creatures, the word *men* not being in the original) should honour the Son even as (that is, just in the same manner as, and in the same degree as) they honour the Father.' The final judgment, being an act which eminently displays the infinite perfections, is committed to the Son, that he may be perceived with indubitable evidence to possess these perfections, and may therefore receive that peculiar honour which is due to Him only by whom they are possessed. The honour which is due in a peculiar sense to God consists supremely in religious worship? in making him the object of our supreme affection; and rendering to him our supreme obedience. All this is here required to Christ, in the same manner in which it is required to the Father.

Whether it be supposed that this passage be intended to include angels or not, they are expressly required to worship him in Psalm xcvii. 7, 'Confounded be all they that serve graven images: worship him, all ye gods.' St Paul quotes a part of this verse in the following manner: 'And again, when he bringeth in the first-begotten into the world, he saith, Let all the angels of God worship him.' It is therefore certain, that all the angels of God are required to worship Christ.

The only possible debate which can arise here, is concerning the kind of worship which is to be rendered. On this I observe, first, that the Greek word is προσκυνησατωσαν, and that this word is used twenty-four times in the New Testament to denote the worship of the true God; that it is used many times more to denote the religious worship of false gods; and that it is, so far as I have observed, the only word used to denote what is intended by *worship*, when considered as an act *immediately performed*. The words θεραπευω, λατρευω, and σεβομαι, rendered also *to worship*, appear rather to express either habitual reverence or service, or a general course of worship, considered as a character or course of life. Προσκυνεω, so far as I have been able to observe, is the only term used to denote religious worship by St John; and is certainly the appropriate word for this idea, if there is any such appropriate word in the New Testament. It is particularly the word used by Christ in his answer to Satan; 'Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God:' and in his discourse with the woman of Samaria concerning the place where, the manner in which, and the persons by whom, God is acceptably worshipped.

Secondly: That religious worship is here intended is certain, because the object of the worship commanded, is directly opposed, in the command itself, to idols; and the worship required to that which is forbidden. 'Confounded be all they that serve,' that is, religiously worship, 'graven images; that boast themselves of idols.'

As if God had said, Worship no more graven images, nor idols of any kind; for all their worshippers shall be confounded: Worship *him*, the Messiah, the Son of God; and not only you, the sottish men, who are guilty of this idolatry, but all ye angels also, to whom this worship is often sottishly rendered.

In the same manner is worship commanded to both men and angels. Phil. iii. 9—11, 'Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.' In this passage, all things celestial, terrestrial, and subterranean (as it is in the original), are required to bow the knee to Christ, and to confess him to be Lord. To bow the knee is well known appropriate phraseology to denote religious worship. 'I have left me,' says God to Elijah, 'seven thousand in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him,' 1 Kings xix. 18.* St Paul also says, 'I bow my knees to the Father of all mercies.' But to place it beyond all doubt, we need only refer to Isa. xlv. 22, 23, whence this passage is quoted: 'Look unto me, and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else. By myself have I sworn, and the truth is gone out of my mouth; the word, and it shall not be revoked. Surely to me shall every knee bow, shall every tongue swear: saying, Only to Jehovah belongeth salvation and power.' † To ascribe to Jehovah salvation and power (the thing which, the apostle informs us, is the same with confessing that Christ is Lord), and to bow the knee when making this ascription, is undoubtedly religious worship, if any thing is. Accordingly, this ascription is often made by the saints in the Scriptures, and the saints and angels in heaven.

In accordance with these requisitions, we find Christ actually worshipped in great numbers of instances. I shall omit here the numerous instances, in which we are directly told that persons worshipped Christ, while here in the world, merely because they would give birth to a critical controversy, too minute and too extended for the present occasion. The instances about which such a controversy cannot at least decently arise, are sufficiently numerous for my design.

1. In Gen. xviii. we are told that 'Jehovah appeared unto Abraham in the plains of Mamre, as he sat in the door of his tent.' The manner of his appearance was the following. 'As he lifted up his eyes and looked, lo, three men stood by him, and he ran to meet them, and bowed himself towards the ground.' To one of them he said, 'My Lord, if I have now found favour in thy sight, pass not away, I pray thee, from thy servant,' &c. The person here spoken to is called by Abraham, אֲדֹנָי. This person in the 13th verse is called Jehovah; and in the 14th says, 'Is any thing too hard for Jehovah?' and informs Abraham of the destruction of the cities of the plain, which he had determined to bring upon them for their sins. To this person Abraham prays repeatedly for the preservation of these cities. Lot also, to whom he appeared in the following chapter, *prayed to him* for his own preservation, and that of the city Zoar, and was accepted. These persons are in the first place called 'three *men*.' One of them, whom Abraham calls Adonai, or Lord, is afterward called by himself, by Abraham, and by Moses, Jehovah; and was worshipped by both Abraham and Lot. The other two are afterward repeatedly called *angels*. Now it will not be pretended, that God the Father appeared as a man, or that he ate of the provision furnished by Abraham; for 'no one hath seen God' the Father 'at any time. Yet this person is here styled Jehovah, and was worshipped; and this person was Christ.

2. In Judges xiii. the Angel-Jehovah appeared to Manoah and his wife. When he departed, it is said, that 'Manoah knew that he was the Angel-Jehovah:' and it is added, 'Manoah said unto his wife, We shall surely die, because we have seen God. But his wife said unto him, If Jehovah were pleased to kill us, he would not have received a burnt-offering and a meat-offering at our hands.' In verse 16, the Angel had said to Manoah, 'If thou wilt offer a burnt-offering, thou must offer it unto Jehovah; for,' it is subjoined, 'Manoah knew not that he was the Angel-Jehovah.' But after he had ascended in the flame of the altar, 'then,' it is declared, 'Manoah knew that he was the Angel-Jehovah.' The burnt-offering and the meat-offering Manoah and his wife then perceived themselves to have offered unwittingly to him who had manifested to them his acceptance of both at their hands.

Here the worship was not only presented to Christ, but, what is of much more importance to my purpose, was accepted by him.

3. David worships Christ in Psal. xlv. lxxii. and cii. in ascribing to him the praise which is due to God only. In the two first he declares, that 'the people shall praise him, and fear him, and fall down before him, and serve him for ever and ever.' In the last he makes to him a long continued prayer.

4. In Isa. vi. the seraphim worshipped him, saying, 'Holy, holy, holy, is Jehovah of Hosts.'

5. Stephen, in Acts vii. 59, 60, prayed to Christ. 'And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God;' or as in the original, 'they stoned Stephen invoking, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge; and, having said this, he fell asleep.'

On this prayer of St Stephen I make the following remarks:—

(1.) Stephen at this time was 'full of the Holy Ghost,' (verse 55,) and therefore perfectly secured from error.

(2.) He was singularly favoured of God on account of the greatness of his faith and obedience; and, as a peculiar testimony of the divine favour, he was permitted to 'see the heavens opened, and to behold the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God.'

(3.) In the full assurance produced by this vision, and the faith with which he beheld it, he presented his final petitions to Christ.

(4.) The first of these petitions respected the highest personal object which can be prayed for, viz. the eternal salvation of his soul; and attributed to him to whom it was made that infinite power, wisdom, and goodness which alone can bestow salvation.

(5.) The second petition was of the same nature, being a prayer, that his enemies might not be finally condemned for the sin of murdering him; and of course

* See Hos. xiii. 2; and Psalm ii. 2. † Lowth.

attributed to the person, to whom it was addressed, the power of forgiving or condemning these murderers. No higher act of worship was ever rendered than this, nor was any act of worship ever performed on a more solemn occasion, nor by a person better qualified to worship aright, nor with a more illustrious testimony of acceptance. Yet this act of worship was performed to Christ.

(6.) This was the very worship, and these were the very prayers offered to God, a little before, by Christ at his crucifixion. Stephen, therefore, worshipped Christ just as Christ worshipped the Father.

6. St Paul often prayed to Christ directly.* Particularly, 1 Thess. iii. 11, 12. 'Now God' himself, 'even our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way unto you. And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one towards another, and towards all men, even as we do towards you.' Here a prayer is offered up by St Paul, that he may be guided to the Thessalonians; and that they may be made to increase and abound in holiness, and be established unto the end. This prayer is offered up to God the Father and to our Lord Jesus Christ, in the same manner and the same terms; both being unitedly addressed in the same petition, without any note of distinction. The second of these petitions is also offered up to Christ alone. The same petition in substance is presented to the Father and Son united, in the same manner, 2 Thess. ii. 16, 17. In the third chapter, ver. 5, Paul prays, 'Now may the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God, and to the patience of Christ:' and ver. 16, 'Now the Lord of peace himself give you peace by all means. The Lord be with you all.' Again, 2 Cor. xii. 8, 'Concerning this,' that is, the messenger of Satan to buffet him, St Paul says, 'thrice I besought the Lord, that it might depart from me. But he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my power is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in mine infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.' In this passage St Paul informs us that he thrice prayed to Christ respecting the particular subject mentioned.

7. St Paul, in all his epistles except that to the Hebrews, and St John, in his second epistle, pray to Christ, in that noted request, in which also Silas, Timothy, and Sosthenes united, that 'Grace, mercy, and peace might be multiplied,' or communicated, to those to whom they wrote, 'from God our Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ.' This is an express prayer to the Father and the Son united, to grant grace, mercy, and peace to men. These are the highest of all blessings, and such as none but Jehovah can grant. Yet Christ can grant them, because the spirit of inspiration directed that he should be prayed to for them.

8. The baptismal service, directed by Christ himself, is an act of religious worship to Christ.

'Baptizing them in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.' Whether this be interpreted to mean, baptizing them *into* the name, or *in* the name, it makes no difference. If Christians are baptized *into* the name, they are baptized into the name of God only; for they are the children of God only by adoption; that adoption by which they take his name upon them; and Christ is here declared to be the God whose name they assume. If they are baptized in the name, they are baptized in the name, or authority of God only: but Christ is this God.

9. The blessing pronounced on Christian assemblies, is an act of religious worship, rendered to Christ.

'The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen.' 'Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith from God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ,' Eph. vi. 23. Or, as it was more commonly, 'The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.' The first of these is equivalent to the blessing anciently pronounced by the high priest on the children of Israel. 'Jehovah bless thee, and keep thee: Jehovah make his face to shine upon thee, and be gracious to thee: Jehovah lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.' It is the appropriate office of the Father to bless and preserve; of the Son to give grace and illumination; and of the Spirit to communicate peace.

Finally: So universal was the custom of praying to Christ, that Christians were originally entitled, as their distinguishing appellation, 'Those who called on the name of Christ.' Thus Ananias says to Christ, Acts ix. 14, 'And he hath authority from the chief-priests to bind all those that call on thy name.' The people of Damascus also, when they heard Paul preach, 'were amazed and said, Is not this he, who destroyed them that called on this name in Jerusalem?' 1 Cor. i. 1, 'Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ, and Sosthenes the brother, unto the church of God which is at Corinth, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.' 2 Tim. ii. 22, 'Follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.' Rom. x. 12, 'The same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him.' That Christ is here meant, is evident from the preceding verse.

In all these instances, and in this universal manner, was Christ worshipped. In the greater part of the instances, the persons who rendered the worship were inspired, and in the remaining instances were plainly under divine direction, because the worship was approved and accepted.

But religious worship is lawfully rendered to God only. This we know from the mouth of Christ himself, quoting Deut. x. 20, in Matt. x. 12, 'It is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.' The angel also forbade John to worship him, saying, 'See thou do it not; worship God.' Isaiah also commands, 'Sanctify the Lord of Hosts himself: and let him be your fear and your dread.' God, also, in Exod. xxxiv. 14, says to the Israelites, 'Thou shalt worship no other God: for Jehovah, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God.'

Yet Christ is here directed to be worshipped, and is actually worshipped, by persons inspired. If, then, Christ be not God, God has commanded another to be worshipped; and persons under the immediate direction of his Spirit have worshipped another.

The whole church, the bride, is commanded, in Psalm xlv. by that God who said unto him, 'Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever,' thus: 'Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; so shall the king greatly desire thy beauty; for he is thy Lord, and worship thou him.' The church has in all ages obeyed this

* See Bishop Burnet on the Articles, p. 48.

command, and worshipped him; prophets have worshipped him; apostles have worshipped him: men, full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, have besought his guidance, aid, grace, and blessing, while they lived, and when they died have besought him to receive their spirits into his own eternal kingdom. If Christ is God, if he is Jehovah, they have done their duty. If he is not God, if he is not Jehovah, they have violated through life and in death the first of Jehovah's commands in the decalogue; 'Thou shalt have no other God before me.'

SERMON XXXVIII.

DIVINITY OF CHRIST.—PROOFS.

THIS THE ONLY GROUND OF CONSISTENCY IN THE SCHEME OF REDEMPTION.—THE JEWS OTHERWISE NOT CHARGEABLE WITH GUILT IN CRUCIFYING CHRIST.—THE APOSTLES OTHERWISE CHARGEABLE WITH LEADING MANKIND INTO IDOLATRY.

For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.—ROM. viii. 3, 4.

For God, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and of a sin-offering, hath condemned sin in the flesh (the thing impossible for the law, because it was weak through the flesh): that the righteousness of the law may be fulfilled by us, who walk not according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.—DR MACKNIGHT'S TRANSLATION.

ACCORDING to the plan originally proposed from these words, I have, in the three preceding Discourses, considered at length, the proofs of the Deity of Christ, arranged under the first general head: viz. That Christ is spoken of in the Scriptures as the true and perfect God.

I shall now proceed to consider the three following heads of Discourse, originally proposed; viz.

II. *That the Deity of Christ is the only ground of consistency in the scheme of redemption.*

III. *That the Jews, according to the opposite doctrine, are unjustly charged with guilt in putting Christ to death.*

IV. *That the prophets and apostles, according to the same doctrine, cannot be vindicated from the sin of leading mankind into idolatry.*

The last argument then proposed, I shall omit to examine, until I have considered the divinity of the Holy Spirit; and shall now proceed to the consideration of the

II. *That the Deity of Christ is the only ground of consistency in the scheme of redemption,*

The truth of this assertion I shall attempt to evince by showing, that the Deity of Christ is the only ground of consistency in the things spoken of him, as the Light of the world; the Saviour of the world, and, the propitiation for sin.

1. As the light of the world.

Christ is exhibited in the Scriptures as the light of the world, in two respects:

(1.) As revealing the will of God to mankind; and,

(2.) As communicating spiritual or divine light to the soul.

In both respects, the things said of Christ in the Scriptures, as 'the Light of the world,' are consistent only on the supposition that Christ is the true God. That the Scriptures are the word of Jehovah will not be questioned by any man who believes in a revelation, since they are called by this title, and by others equivalent to it, in hundreds of instances, from Genesis to the Revelation of St John. But the Scriptures are expressly declared to be the word of Christ: 'Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs.' In this passage, the Old Testament is in so many terms declared to be the word of Christ. The gospel, every man knows, is appropriately entitled 'The Gospel of Christ.'

St Mark prefaces his account of the gospel with these words: 'The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ the Son of God.'

St Paul informs us, that he received the gospel immediately by revelation from Christ: and accordingly, he everywhere styles it the gospel of Christ. The greatness of the authority which it derived from this source, he teaches us in the strongest manner, when he says, 'Though we, or an angel from heaven, or any one whatever, preach another gospel, let him be accursed,' Gal. i. 8, 9. This gospel, he also says, is 'Christ the power and wisdom of God unto salvation.'

St Peter teaches the same truth, in a manner equally forcible, when he says, 'Of which salvation the prophets have inquired, searching what and what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify.' Here the Spirit which inspired the prophets, is styled 'the Spirit of Christ:' and this Spirit, the same apostle says, is 'the Holy Ghost.' 'For prophecy,' saith he, 'came not in old time by the will of man;' 'but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.' The Old Testament, therefore, was revealed to the prophets by the Spirit of Christ.

Concerning the New, Christ himself teaches us the same doctrine, in the same decisive manner. 'Howbeit, when he, the Spirit of truth is come; he will guide you into all truth;—for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak. He shall glorify me; for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you. He shall teach you all things, and

shall bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.'

All things, therefore, which Christ hath said to the apostles, the Spirit of truth brought to their remembrance. He taught them all things, and guided them into all the truth. Yet he spake not of himself, but that which he heard, which he received from Christ, and that only, he declared unto them. The gospel, therefore, is originally and only derived from Christ. Yet it is repeatedly styled by St Paul, 'the gospel of God.'

This character of the revealer of the will of God, St John declares repeatedly in the introduction of his gospel. After having declared, that 'the Word was in the beginning,' or eternal; 'was God;' and 'was co-eternal with God;' and that 'all things were made by him;' he goes on to say, 'In him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.' He then informs us, that John the Baptist 'came to bear witness of the light;' that 'he was not that light: but was sent to bear witness of that light:' then he adds, 'That was the true light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.' To all this he adds farther, the testimony of John the Baptist, the very witness which he bore concerning Christ as the light. 'No one,' said this harbinger of the Redeemer, who was sent for the very purpose of declaring his true character, 'No one hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son of God, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.' To declare the character and designs of God is plainly impossible, unless for him who knows these things intuitively, or for him to whom God is pleased to make them known. But no other person beside the Son and the Spirit knows the things of God intuitively. This we know certainly without inspiration; but the Scriptures have determined the point, if it were otherwise uncertain. 'No one,' saith our Saviour, 'knoweth the Father but the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.' 'The things of God,' saith St Paul, 'knoweth no one, but the Spirit of God: and the Spirit searcheth all things, even the deep things of God.' From all these passages it is, I apprehend, certain, that Christ is the sole author of revelation; and that the Spirit has not, as the Spirit of inspiration, spoken of himself, but has received from Christ his mind or pleasure, and declared it to the men whom he inspired. Accordingly, St Paul says, speaking of his own inspiration, and that of the other apostles, 'We have the mind of Christ.' It is therefore true to this day, that 'no one knoweth the Father but the Son, and those to whom the Son hath revealed him.' This knowledge thus revealed, was not revealed to Christ, but was possessed by him, because he dwells in the bosom of the Father, and has dwelt there from eternity, 'being daily his delight, and rejoicing alway before him.'

Should it be objected, that mankind know something of God by their reason, independently of revelation, and therefore possess a knowledge of God which is not derived from Christ: I answer, that with some qualifications I admit the premises, but deny the consequence. The very reason of man was formed by Christ, as was man himself; as were also all those materials from which reason derives whatever knowledge of this nature it possesses. It has, I trust, been proved beyond reasonable debate, that Christ created, preserves, and governs all things, and therefore is the author of those works of creation and providence whence reason obtains all its knowledge of this subject. Of course, in this sense also, Christ is 'the light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world.' Thus all the knowledge which exists of God is derived from Christ; and since he is 'the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever;' and 'dwells in the bosom of the Father:' this knowledge was his originally, intuitively, and eternally. I need not say, that these things cannot be true of any mind but the omniscient.

(2.) Christ is the author of spiritual light to mankind.

The communication of spiritual light is spoken of in the Scriptures as a work peculiar to God. 2 Cor. iv. 6, 'For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined into our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face (or person) of Jesus Christ.' John vi. 45, 'And they shall all be taught of God.' And thus in many other places. But this office is also ascribed to Christ. Simeon says, Luke ii. 30, 'For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people: A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.' 'In him,' says St John, 'was life, and the life was the light of men.' 'I,' said our Saviour, John viii. 12, 'am the light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.' Isa. xlix. 6, quoted Acts xiii. 47, 'I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation to the ends of the earth.' In all these passages, it is manifest that spiritual or divine light is the light spoken of, and that it resides in Christ, as its source, and is by him communicated to mankind. All this also is completely expressed by the prophet Malachi in a word; when he calls Christ 'the Sun of righteousness;' the orb, in which righteousness is originally inherent; in which it dwells, and from which it emanates to mankind. In the same manner it is said by David, 'the Lord God is a sun.'

2. The things spoken of Christ as the Saviour of the world, are consistent only on the supposition that he is the true God.

Psalm lx. 16, 'I Jehovah am thy Saviour.' Hos. xiii. 4, 'I am Jehovah thy God; thou shalt know no God but me; for there is no Saviour beside me.' Isa. xliii. 11, 'I, even I, am Jehovah; and beside me there is no Saviour;' and thus in various other places in the Old Testament.

The same thing is often declared in the New Testament. 1 Tim. i. 1, 'The commandment of God our Saviour:' and Tit. ii. 10, 'Adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour.'

Yet in the same absolute sense Christ is declared to be the Saviour of mankind. 'Who is this,' saith the prophet Isaiah, 'that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah; this, that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? I,' saith Christ, 'that speak in righteousness; mighty to save.' John iv. 42, 'This is the Christ, the Saviour of the world.' Acts iv. 12, St Peter, speaking of Christ, saith, 'Neither is there salvation in,' or by means of, 'any other; for there is no other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.' And thus in very many other places. The importance of the work of saving mankind, and the glory derived from it to the divine character, are strongly exhibited by God in Isa. lxv. 17, 18, 'For behold I create new heavens and

a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered nor come into mind; but be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create; for behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy.' In this passage it is evident, that the new creation is, in the view of God, so much more glorious than the original one, that, compared with it, the original creation shall not be remembered. But the new creation is no other than 'creating Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy;' that is, renovating the souls of mankind, and thus making them holy, lovely, a rejoicing, or foundation of joy, in the sight of God. This work then is, in the sight of God, a far more glorious work than the formation of the heavens and the earth. Such also it is in the eye of reason. One mind is of more importance than any number of worlds, inanimate and unconscious. The renovation of one mind to righteousness, and its reinstatement in the divine favour, is the production of eternal, and by us incomprehensible, worth and enjoyment in that mind. This work repeated in 'a multitude' of minds 'which no man can number,' is the work which is styled the new creation. How immensely more glorious a work than the production of ever so many masses of lifeless matter!

When we consider the nature of this work, and the things involved in it, we cannot hesitate to admit the peculiar importance attached to it in the Scriptures. In this work are involved, the creation of a new heart in man;—the communication of divine knowledge;—the adoption of man into the divine family;—a perpetual presence with the souls of all who are created anew;—a continual communication of strength, patience, fortitude, peace, consolation, and hope; the preservation of the soul from the fatal influence of temptations, lust, and all other spiritual enemies; the final justification of the soul at the judgment, and its establishment in the possession of immortal life; together with what will be the subject of the next head of discourse, the accomplishment of such a propitiation, as may be the proper source of all these wonderful consequences. He who admits these things to be included in the work of saving man, must admit also that there can be no Saviour beside Jehovah.

Should it be said, that all these things, except the last, are the work of the Holy Spirit, and that therefore they are here erroneously attributed to Christ; I answer, that they are indeed the work of the Holy Spirit; but, notwithstanding this, they are truly attributed to Christ, not only as he laid the foundation for them all, but as the Spirit acts not of himself, and only executes the pleasure of Christ under his commission.

This work, then, of saving man, is in the Scriptures attributed to Christ in a manner so peculiar, that from it he derives his own appropriate name, Jesus Christ, the Anointed Saviour; and is considered by Jehovah as being so much greater and more glorious than the work of creating the heavens and the earth, that in comparison with it, that work 'shall not be remembered, nor come into mind.'

3. As the propitiation for sin, the Deity of Christ is the only ground of consistency in the scriptural exhibitions.

As I expect hereafter to discuss Christ's atonement for sin, as one of the great parts of the Christian system, I shall here omit every thing concerning this subject which is not necessary to the doctrine just now declared.

That Christ is in some sense 'a propitiation for the sins of the world,' cannot be denied, unless by a direct denial of the express words as well as the unquestionable doctrines of the gospel. 1 John ii. 2, 'And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world.' 1 John iv. 10, "He loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.' See also Rom. iii. 25; Isa. liii. 10, &c. The text also is a direct declaration of this doctrine. 'God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and of a sin-offering, or an offering for sin,' &c.

By Christ being a propitiation for sin, it is here necessary to mean only that something, which being done for the sinner, the sinner may be forgiven and restored; but which not being done, he must be punished according to the sentence of the law by which he is condemned. That so much as is here specified, is included in Christ's being the propitiation for the sins of mankind, is unquestionably evident.

(1.) From the name by which it is called in the Scriptures in many instances, viz. ἀπολυτρωσις, translated *redemption*. When a person was taken captive in war, and condemned to perpetual slavery or to death, a sum of money was not unfrequently paid and accepted for his ransom from these evils; this sum was called λυτρον; and the redemption of the captive from death or slavery, was called ἀπολυτρωσις. The redemption of mankind from the slavery of sin, and the everlasting death to which the sinner was exposed by it, is called by the same name. The λυτρον, or price of redemption, was paid, not by the captive, but by another person. The price of man's redemption, in like manner, was not paid by himself, but by Christ; that is, Christ accomplished something, without which man would not have been redeemed from the bondage of death and sin.

(2.) This truth is evident from Isa. liii. 10, 'Yet it pleased Jehovah to crush him with affliction. If his soul shall make a propitiatory sacrifice, he shall see a seed which shall prolong their days; and the gracious purpose of Jehovah shall prosper in his hands. Of the travail of his soul he shall see (the fruit) and be satisfied: by the knowledge of him shall my righteous servant justify many; for the punishment of their iniquities he shall bear. Therefore, I will distribute to him the many for his portion; and the mighty people shall he share for his spoil: because he poured out his soul unto death; was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many; and made intercession for the transgressors.'*

In this passage it is clear, that in the covenant of redemption, here recited, Jehovah promised to Christ, 'the seed which should prolong their days,' or be eternally blessed, a promise here repeated in many forms, on the condition that 'he made his soul a propitiatory sacrifice for sin.' It is therefore certain, that if he had not made this sacrifice, he would not have received this reward: or, in other words, mankind would not have been saved.

(3.) The same truth is evident from Rom. iii. 25, 26, 'Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation for sin, to declare his righteousness in the remission of sins that are past; that he might be just, and yet the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.'

From this passage it is evident, that if God had not

* Lowth.

set forth Christ as a propitiation, his righteousness in the remission of sins that are past, would not have been declared; and that he would not have been just in the act of justifying believers. In other words, if Christ had not become a propitiation, the sins of mankind could not have been remitted, nor themselves justified.

In a former Discourse it has, I trust, been proved that, in the literal sense, 'by works of law no flesh can be justified before God;' and that the future obedience and the repentance of the sinner are alike and wholly unavailing to this end. Independently of Christ's redemption, therefore, or independently of his being 'the propitiation for the sins' of men, every sinner is condemned, lost, and without hope. The Scriptures in multiplied instances teach us that Christ became a propitiation for sins, especially by his death. Isa. liii. 5, 'He was wounded for our transgressions; he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him.' Rom. v. 6, 'In due time Christ died for the ungodly.' 1 Cor. xv. 3, 'Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures.' 2 Cor. v. 14, 'One died for all.' 1 Thess. v. 10, 'Who died for us, that we should live with him.' Col. i. 20, 'Having made peace through the blood of his cross.' 1 John i. 7, 'The blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin.' 1 Pet. i. 18, 19, 'Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, but with the precious blood of Christ.' Rev. v. 9, 'Thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood.' More proofs of this point cannot be necessary. Let me now ask, if Christ be not in the strictest sense God, how is it possible that he should become in this or any other manner, a propitiation for the sins of mankind? If Christ be merely a man, or in any other sense a mere creature, how is it possible that he should be able to perform any act which would not be absolutely necessary for his own justification before God? The law, by which every creature is governed, requires him to 'love God with all the heart, soul, strength, and understanding;' or, in other words, to consecrate all his powers supremely and absolutely, so long as he exists, to the service of God. More than this he cannot do; and if all this be not done, he is a sinner, and cannot be justified. How then can it be possible for him to perform any thing which can be accepted on the behalf of another? It is impossible that any service should be accepted for another which is entirely due for one's self. It is impossible that the debt due from another should be cancelled by my payment of money due for a debt of my own. When I have paid my own debts, if I can offer more money, I may then satisfy the creditor for the debt of another. The obedience which the law requires of me as my obedience, will satisfy the demands of the law on me, and prove the means of my justification; but cannot be transferred from me to another subject of the same law, so as to answer the demands of the law on him. The law demands all his obedience of him and all mine of me; but mine only being rendered, the demands of the law are not, and cannot be, satisfied.

Supererogatory service, or service not required by law, is absolutely necessary to the very existence of all vicarious interference. But no creature can possibly perform supererogatory service; because all that he can do is required of him by the law. Thus, 'exceeding broad,' in the scriptural language, 'is the commandment;' and thus it is impossible that any creature should become, in any sense, a propitiation for the sins of mankind.

To avoid this immovable difficulty, Dr Priestley, and other Socinians, have denied wholly the doctrine of Christ's atonement; and in this denial have, at least in my view, acted in the only manner consistent with the main part of their scheme, viz. that Christ is a mere man. But in this denial they have, at the same time, contradicted the main doctrine in the Christian system, after that of the existence of God. According to the scheme of these men, Christ came into the world, or was born, merely to be a prophet and example of righteousness, or a teacher of the will of God to mankind, and died only to bear witness to the truth of his precepts. In the same manner Moses, and all the succeeding prophets, came into the world to be teachers and examples of truth and righteousness; and in the same manner, Peter and Paul, both the Jameses, and almost all the other apostles, together with Stephen, and a host of martyrs who followed him, bore witness, to the truth of the precepts which they taught, by voluntarily yielding themselves to death. All these persons taught the truth of God, and practised righteousness; and a multitude of them sealed their testimony with their blood. The only difference, according to the Socinian scheme, between Christ and them is, that he was wiser and better than they. Paul, however, taught more of the gospel than Christ himself, and both Paul and Peter sealed the truth of their testimony on the cross. Of what consequence, then, was the death of Christ to mankind, any more than that of Zechariah, Jeremiah, James, Peter, or Paul? Each of these men died as a witness to the truth. Christ, according to Dr Priestley, appeared in no other character in his death. All these men also taught the truth; according to Dr Priestley, Christ did no more. Each of these men was an eminent example of righteousness: according to Dr Priestley, Christ was only a brighter example. With what meaning, then, can it be said, that 'God hath set forth Christ as a propitiation for the remission of sins?' that Christ is said to be 'the propitiation for the sins of the world?' that 'his soul' is said to make 'a propitiatory sacrifice for sin?' that 'he bare the sin of many?' that we 'are justified and redeemed by his blood?' that 'by himself he purged our sins?' that 'he made peace through the blood of the cross?' that 'he reconciled both Jews and Gentiles unto God in one body by the cross?' that 'by his stripes we are healed?' that 'the chastisement of our peace was laid upon him? and that 'we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins?' together with many other things of the same import; so many as to constitute no small part of the Scriptures? And why did Christ say, 'He came to give his life a ransom for many?' and why did Paul say, 'Christ gave himself a ransom for all?' Could these things be said of Moses, or Jeremiah, or Peter, or James, or Paul? Are we justified by the grace of God through the redemption which is in Moses? Did Paul make peace by the blood of his cross? Was Peter a propitiation, an ἱλασμος, the means of appeasing the anger of God, of reconciling him to us, and rendering him propitiatory to sinners?

Farther: In what sense was the death of Christ necessary as a testimony to the truth of his precepts? Were not his miracles, and the unspotted excellency of his life, ample proofs of the sincerity of his declarations, and the reality of his mission from God? Are they not now appealed to by Dr Priestley, and most, if not

all other divines, as the chief proofs? Is not his death rarely appealed to for this purpose? And is it not manifest from this fact, that it is a testimony plainly inferior to his life and miracles?

If, then, this was the end and amount of Christ's death, is it not evident, on the one hand, that the end was in a great measure useless, and very imperfectly accomplished? and on the other, that the amount of Christ's death was no more than the amount of the death of Paul and Peter? that they, as truly as Christ, were a propitiation for the sins of the world? and that we are as truly justified by faith in them, as in him; and by their blood, as by his?

I shall now proceed to show,

III. *That the Jews, according to the Unitarian doctrine, are unjustly charged with guilt in putting Christ to death.*

The law of God, as given by Moses, required the blasphemer to be stoned. Christ, in his conversation with the Jews, recorded John v. declared himself to be 'the Son of God.' By this phrase the Jews, as I mentioned in a former Discourse, understood him to declare that himself was God, or equal with God. Their own construction they declared to him, 'For a good work we stone thee not, but because thou, being a man, makest thyself God,' John x. 33. St John, also, as I then observed, understood the phrase in the same manner. 'Therefore,' he says, 'the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God.' This is the apostle's own construction of Christ's averment, and is plainly alleged by him as being that of the Jews also.

When Christ was brought before the Sanhedrim, after several vain attempts to convict him of any crime, the high-priest 'adjured him,' that is, put him upon oath, 'to tell him whether he was the Christ, the Son of the blessed' God. In answer to this question, thus solemnly put, Christ said, 'I am;' and, as a proof that he said this truly, added, 'And ye shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.' In reply to this declaration, 'the high-priest rent his clothes,' and declaring all farther testimony needless, pronounced him guilty of blasphemy for this saying; in consequence of which the evangelist informs us, they all condemned him to death.

Now, it is evident, that Christ was understood by the Jews to declare, that he was equal to God, and was God, by asserting himself to be the Son of God. Of this there cannot be a doubt, because it is asserted both by the Jews themselves, and by the evangelist. If then Christ was a man merely, he was for aught that I can see, truly a blasphemer. For, when he declared himself to be God, or equal with God, he plainly declared God to be neither greater, wiser, nor better than himself. But to assert in any form of words, that the infinite Jehovah is of the same character with a man, and possessed of no more greatness, excellency, or glory, than that which is human, would be acknowledged in any other case to be blasphemy, because it would be a denial of all the perfections of God, and an ascription to him of all the frailties of man. If this be not blasphemy, what can be?

But if Christ was a blasphemer, he was justly put to death. The law, which he, as well as the Jews, acknowledged to have been given by God himself, required the blasphemer, to be stoned; as a blasphemer, therefore, he was, according to the requisitions of a divine, and therefore a just law, deservedly condemned to death.

Thus, according to this scheme, the Jews, instead of being guilty in putting Christ to death, acted meritoriously, for they only obeyed the divine law.

But it will be said, Christ did not intend by this declaration to assert that he was God, nor that he was equal with God. This indeed is said, and must be said, by the abettors of the Unitarian scheme. I answer, It is clear that the Jews thus understood him, and that he knew them thus to understand him. They had formerly attempted to stone him for using the same language; and had then told him in express terms the manner in which they construed the phrase. The Sanhedrim also sufficiently explained to him their own views of it by pronouncing it blasphemy. In consequence of this mode of understanding the phrase, he saw them now about to imbrue their hands in his blood. If it was a mistake on their part, he was bound to remove it. He was bound not to suffer his own character to be stained in their view with the crime of blasphemy. He was bound to use language as he knew it would be understood. He was bound not to lose his own life, nor suffer them to incur the guilt of taking it away, merely through a mistake of theirs. If, then, they are supposed in this case to have sinned at all, they sinned only through a mistake which Christ himself voluntarily created, and voluntarily declined to remove. The sin, therefore, so far as I can see, lies, on this supposition, primarily at his door. What then shall we say of the solemn and awful charge brought against the Jews by St Peter? 'Him ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified, and slain.' What shall we say of the whole body of scriptural representations on this subject? What shall we say of the terrible destruction of their nation; of their judicial blindness; and of all the calamities which have befallen them, as monuments of the divine indignation, for more than seventeen hundred years?

IV. *The prophets and apostles, according to the same doctrine, cannot be vindicated from leading mankind into the sin of idolatry.*

The prophets and apostles have in a great variety of places, called Christ God, The true God, The great God, The mighty God, Jehovah, and I AM. They have declared him to be eternal, self-existent, incomprehensible, almighty, omnipresent, omniscient, and immutable. They have attributed to him the creation, preservation, and government of all things; and the acts of giving life, forgiving sin, judging the world, and rewarding both the righteous and the wicked. They have ascribed to him the infinite relations of Creator, Preserver, Possessor, Ruler, and final Cause of all things. Beyond this, they have on many occasions worshipped him themselves; and have taught us that God requires him to be worshipped; and that he is in fact worshipped by saints, and angels in earth and heaven. They have also exhibited Christ, when on earth, as challenging these things to himself, and as receiving them from others, without reprobation or censure. They have farther declared him to be the only Saviour of the world, a character evidently demanding infinite attributes, and according to their account, challenged by Jehovah as exclusively his own.

Beyond all this, they have informed us that he was condemned to death for declaring, under the sanction

of an oath, that he was the Son of God; a phrase which he knew was understood by them to be no other than a declaration, that he was God. Yet, though knowing this, and though directly charged with blasphemy, although on two occasions they attempted to stone him, and on a third pronounced him guilty of death, instead of explaining, softening, or at all modifying the declaration, he proceeded directly, in two of the instances, to allege proofs that he used this declaration with exact truth and propriety; proofs, which in themselves are a direct arrogation of the divine character. The Scriptures of truth they also declare to be his word; and inform us, that the Holy Ghost who inspired them, received them from him; and that Christ himself, when promising them the gift of inspiration, personally told them this wonderful truth. In this account they have taught us, that the Scriptures, which they everywhere style 'the Word of God,' are no other than the law of Christ himself; partly uttered by his own mouth, and partly taught by the Holy Spirit, in conformity to his pleasure; and accordingly in his own name and by his own authority explained, altered, and annulled by him as he thought proper; and that the Holy Spirit, whom, as we shall see hereafter, they pronounce to be a divine person, was commissioned and sent by him into the world to execute his purposes; an act of authority on the part of Christ, to which there is no parallel in the universe, except his own mission from the Father. Finally, in the view which is given us of the heavenly system in the Revelation of St John, we find the same exalted character completely recognized. In that world we behold him sitting on the throne of infinite dominion, styled 'the throne of God, and the Lamb;' unfolding, and declared by the heavenly host to be worthy to unfold, the book of God's counsels, which they also declare no being in the universe to be worthy or able to do; being, together with the Father, the everlasting temple of heaven; controlling all the affairs of this world, of heaven, and of hell; the light and glory of heaven; and the bestower of future and everlasting happiness. In all these wonderful characters he is also worshipped in that glorious world with the highest ascriptions which were ever made, or which can be made, to Jehovah. 'Worthy,' they cry, 'is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. Every creature,' says St John, 'which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him, that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever.' Of all these things it is to be remarked, that they are expressed on every occasion which admits them, and in every form of phraseology which language can easily be supposed to allow; commence with the first chapter in the Bible, and terminate only with the last.

Now let me ask, Whether all these things are not a complete exhibition of Christ, as the proper object of religious worship? But the apostles have directly and fully declared all these things. If then Christ is not God, have they not clearly so represented him as to persuade mankind that he is God, and that he is to be worshipped?

How is it possible that their readers, and especially the plain men who constitute ninety-nine hundredths of them; how is it possible that any men, acknowledging the apostles to have used language as other men use it, and so as to be understood by those for whom they wrote (an admission absolutely necessary to exculpate them from plain fraud), should distinguish between a person thus described, and the being who alone is the proper object of worship? What can their minds, what can any mind, add to this exhibition, to make such a being more great, awful, lovely, glorious, and godlike? Do not these things include all which we can conceive to be included in infinite perfection? Has any thing superior to these been ever published to mankind? Has any thing been published in any other instance which can be compared with these?

But if Christ be not truly God, he cannot be worshipped without idolatry. He himself says, and recites it as the command of God, 'Thou shalt worship Jehovah thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.' Can inspired men, then, writing a revelation, the great end of which was to inculcate the unity of God, the existence of but one God, and the supreme obligation incumbent on all men to worship him only, can such men have been directed by the Spirit of God so to write as they have actually written? Could they, being Jews, with the Old Testament in their hands, have so written even of themselves, as naturally, not to say necessarily, to lead all their followers into the sin of idolatry? That they have so written, as naturally to produce this consequence, if Christ be not God, is unquestionable; because the great body of their followers have actually understood them to assert the Deity of Christ, and have actually worshipped him. The Scriptures, therefore, written for the professed purpose of preventing idolatry, have, according to the scheme of my opponents, been the direct cause of promoting and establishing it among almost all those who have believed them to be the word of God. Mr Belsham accordingly pronounces the system, of which the worship of Christ is a leading principle, 'a pernicious system: a mischievous compound of impiety and idolatry.' Lest it should be supposed, however, that those who adopt this worship have really been impious, let it be remarked, that Dr Priestley himself expressly says, 'he considers the principles of Calvinism as generally favourable to that leading virtue, devotion; even an habitual and animated devotion.' Another writer,* also, no way favourable to these principles, says in the British Encyclopedia, † 'If we consider the character of the Calvinists' (whom he mentions together with several others), 'when compared with that of their antagonists, we shall find that they have excelled in no small degree in the practice of the most rigid and respectable virtues; and have been the highest honour of their own ages, and the best model for imitation to every age succeeding.' But Calvinists, to a man have been worshippers of Christ; as have also been almost all other members of the church universal; and to this idolatry, if it be such, the Scriptures have led them. Of course, the guilt of leading mankind into that gross sin is, on this scheme, chargeable to the prophets and apostles. But can the prophets and apostles have led mankind into the abominable sin of idolatry? Can the principles which lead to idolatry be favourable to habitual and animated devotion? Can the men who have excelled in the practice of the most rigid

* Robert Forsythe, Esq. † Article Predestination.

and respectable virtues, who have been the highest honour to their own age, and the best models for imitation to succeeding ages, have been regularly guilty of this sin? Can the system which asserts or involves these things be truth?

Can all, or any of the things which I have asserted concerning Christ from the Scriptures, be true of a man: or of any created being? Can a man, can an angel, be the first cause or last end, the Preserver, Proprietor, Possessor, and Ruler of all things? Can a creature be 'the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person;' 'the Light of the world,' the 'propitiation for sin,' 'the Saviour' of mankind, or the object of religious worship? Can any religious man on a death-bed say, 'Gabriel, receive my spirit?' or 'Lay not the sin of my murderers to their charge?' Can Gabriel give life, raise the dead, or bestow immortal life? Can he judge the world, reward the righteous and the wicked, or be the glory, light, and temple of heaven? What would be the impression, were a minister of the gospel to say, 'I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of Gabriel, and of the Holy Ghost?' or 'The grace of Gabriel, the love of God the Father, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen?' Would not these things beyond measure shock the minds of any Christian assembly, as the most palpable blasphemy? Was there ever a minister, even an Arian or a Socinian, who could bring himself thus to speak in such an assembly? Would not this be, not merely comparing or likening one of the angels to Jehovah, but placing him on the same level? Yet these things are said of Christ.

Why are they said of him, if his nature be like that of Gabriel? Why are they seemingly said? Was it not perfectly easy for the omniscient God to have said, if he chose to say it, that Christ was a mere man, or a mere creature? and so to have said this, that it would not have been misunderstood even by the plainest man? Did he not understand language sufficiently? Has it not been said in such a manner as to be intelligible to all men, by Arius, Socinus, Zuicker, Price, Priestley, Belsham, and many others? Did any man ever mistrust that they have not said it? Was not Jehovah more interested to say it, if it is true, than they were? and so to say it, as to be easily, generally, and certainly understood? Was he not more able? Did he not foresee all the doubts, difficulties, errors, misconstructions, and consequent sins and idolatries, if they have indeed been misconstructions and idolatries, arising from unhappy language used in the Scriptures? Have not the prophets, who 'spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost;' have not the apostles, who 'spake the things freely given to them of God, not in the words which man's wisdom taught, but which the Holy Ghost taught,' expressed the mind of God on this subject, and every other, in the very manner chosen by God himself? Has not his infinite faithfulness and mercy then sufficiently guarded every honest mind against this erroneous sin?

But if Christ be not the true God, the great body of Christians have in every age of the church wholly misunderstood the Scriptures concerning this most important doctrine, and mistaken infinitely the real character of their Saviour. Of course, the Scriptures have been so written, as that the natural interpretation of them is a source of total and dreadful error; even of that which they themselves denounce in terms of the highest reprobation, viz. idolatry. For the interpretation which has been given them by the great body of Christians, in every age and country in which they have existed, is beyond a controversy the natural interpretation. That men, who first make a philosophical system of religion, and then endeavour to reconcile the Scriptures to it, should understand them falsely, cannot be wondered at; but that they should be falsely understood by the great body of mankind, who for their religion come to them only; and yet the way of holiness be still a highway, in which wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err, is a position which is yet to be explained.

SERMON XXXIX.

DIVINITY OF CHRIST: OBJECTIONS ANSWERED.

The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain.—1 Cor. iii. 20.

In the eighteenth verse of this chapter, St Paul says, 'Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God; for it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness.'

These words, together with the text, are paraphrased by Doddridge in the following manner: "I know there are those among you, whose pride and self-conceit may lead them to despise this admonition, especially as coming from me; but 'let no man deceive himself' with vain speculations of his own worth and abilities. If any one of you 'seem to be wise in this world,' if he value himself on what is commonly called wisdom among Jews or Gentiles; 'let him become a fool, that he may be wise' indeed. Let him humbly acknowledge his own natural ignorance and folly; and embrace that gospel which the wisdom of the world proudly and vainly derides as foolishness, if he desire to approve himself really and substantially wise, and to reap at last the honours and rewards of those who are truly so in the sight of God. 'For' all 'the boasted wisdom of this world is foolishness with God;' who with one glance sees through all its vanity; as it is written Job v. 13., 'He entangleth the wise in their own' crafty 'artifice;' often ruining them by those designs which they had formed with the utmost efforts of human policy, and were most intent upon executing. And again it is said, else-

where, Psalm xciv. 11, 'The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain.' He sees how they insnare themselves in their own subtleties; and, when they think themselves most sagacious, are only amused with their own sophistry and deceit.'

This paraphrase expresses exactly my own views concerning these declarations of St Paul; declarations which appear to me to be continually and abundantly verified by experience. No man is in the way to true wisdom who does not first become, in the apostle's sense, 'a fool;' that is, who has not a just and affecting consciousness of his own ignorance and weakness, his utter inability to devise a system of religion, or to amend that which God has taught; and who is not altogether willing to submit his own opinions to the dictates of inspiration.

Concerning the text it will be only necessary to observe that the word διαλογισμους, translated 'thoughts,' is properly rendered *reasonings*; and that the word, translated 'the wise,' is σοφων; denoting the *learned* men of Greece, and ultimately of other countries, most usually called philosophers. 'The reasonings' of these men, as the apostle proves from the Scriptures of the Old Testament, are in the sight of God 'vain;' or utterly incapable of accomplishing the end to which they were then chiefly directed; viz. the formation and establishment of a sound theological system.

What was true of these men in ancient times is equally true of men of the same sort in every age. Modern wise men are no more able to perform this work than ancient ones. Hence, the proposition in the text is written in the absolute or universal form; and extends this character to the reasonings of all men employed either in making systems of theology, or in amending that which is revealed by God.

Of the truth of this declaration experience has furnished the most abundant evidence. The great body of such systems, including all which have been originally devised by man, and which have existed long enough to be thoroughly examined, have been successively exploded; and as objects of belief, forgotten. Those which have been devised for the purpose of amending the scriptural system, have been generally of the same frail and perishing character. Some of them, however, under the wing of that divine authority, which by their abettors was supposed to shelter them, and under the garb of sacredness which was lent them by their inventors, have lasted longer, and been more frequently revived. New forms have in the latter case been given to them, new arguments suggested in their behalf, and the splendour of new and respectable names has been employed to recommend them to mankind. After all, their existence and their influence have been generally limited by bounds comparatively narrow.

From the nature of the subject the same truth is completely evident. Theology is the science of the will of God concerning the duty and destination of man. What the will of God is concerning these subjects cannot possibly be known, unless he is pleased to disclose it. That it is disclosed by him in the works of creation and providence in a very imperfect degree, and that it cannot be discovered by man beyond that degree, must be admitted by every one who would make even a plausible pretension to good sense or candour. All that remains undiscovered in this way must be unknown, unless revealed by the good pleasure of God. When thus revealed it can never be safely added to, diminished, nor otherwise in any manner altered, by man. To him, whatever God is pleased to withhold must be unknown. By him, whatever God is pleased to reveal must be unalterable, either as to form or substance; for no authority less than infinite can change that which infinite authority has been pleased to establish. As, therefore, the scriptural system of theology could not have been invented by man, so neither can it possibly be amended by man. In the strong, but accurately just, language of St Paul on this subject, 'Let God be' acknowledged to be 'true;' but let 'every man,' who denies or opposes what he has revealed, be accounted 'a liar.' Or in the still stronger language of the same apostle, 'though an angel from heaven preach any other gospel, let him be anathema.'

Among the various denominations of men, denoted in the text by 'the wise,' whose 'reasonings are vain,' are included, so far as I can discern, the Arians and Socinians; or, as both sometimes choose to term themselves, Unitarians. I feel myself obliged to warn my audience, that this name, however, contains in itself an error, and appears to have been formed with a design to deceive. It was professedly assumed for the purpose of challenging to those who assumed it the exclusive character, among Christians, of believing in the unity of God; and of denying particularly, that Trinitarians entertain this belief; whereas Trinitarians believe in the unity of God as entirely and absolutely as their opposers. That every Trinitarian asserts this of himself, every Unitarian, possessing a very moderate share of information, knows: and he knows also, that the charge of admitting more gods than one cannot be fastened upon the Trinitarian, except by consequences professedly derived from his doctrine, which he utterly disclaims. To prove that such consequences do indeed follow from it, is, if it can be done, altogether fair and unobjectionable; but to charge him with admitting them, while he utterly disclaims them, is unworthy of a disputant assuming the character of a Christian.

For the assertion which I have made above, concerning the Unitarians generally, I am bound to give my reasons. This I intend to do without disguise, or softening; but at the same time with moderation and candour. My observations I shall distribute under two heads: Answers to the objections of the Unitarians against the doctrine of the Trinity: and objections to the doctrine of Unitarians, and to their conduct in managing the controversy. It will not be supposed, that under either of these heads very numerous or very minute articles can find a place in such a system of Discourses. All that can be attempted is, to exhibit a summary view of such particulars as are plainly of serious importance.

In the present Discourse, it is my design to answer the principal objections of Unitarians against the doctrine of the Trinity. Of these the first, and as I conceive the fundamental one, on which their chief reliance is placed, is, That the doctrine of the Trinity, or of three Persons in one God, is self-contradictory.

This objection, therefore, merits a particular answer.

Those who make this objection to the public, express themselves in such language as the following:

'The Father, according to the Trinitarian doctrine, is God; the Son is God; and the Holy Ghost is God. Here are three, each of whom is God. Three cannot be one, three units cannot be one unit.' Were

this objection made professedly, as it is actually, against the inconsistency of tritheism with the unity of God, it would be valid and unanswerable. Equally valid would it be against the Trinitarians, if they admitted the existence of three Gods, or if their doctrine involved this as a consequence. But the former of these is not true, and the latter has not been, and, it is presumed, cannot be shown. Until it shall be shown, every Trinitarian must necessarily feel that this objection is altogether inapplicable to his own case, and although intended against his faith, is really aimed against another and very distant object. Until this be shown, this objection will, I apprehend, be completely avoided in the following manner:

1. The admission of three infinitely perfect Beings does not at all imply the existence of more Gods than one.

This proposition may, perhaps, startle such persons on both sides of the question as have not turned their attention to the subject; but can, I apprehend, be nevertheless shown to be true. It is clearly certain that the nature, the attributes, the views, the volitions, and the agency of three Beings infinitely perfect must be exactly the same. They would alike be self-existent, eternal, omniscient, omnipotent, and possessed of the same boundless moral excellence. Of course, they would think exactly the same things, choose the same things, and do the same things. There would, therefore, be a perfect oneness of character and conduct in the three; and to the universe of creatures, they would sustain but one and the same relation, and be absolutely but one Creator, Preserver, Benefactor, Ruler, and final cause. In other words, they would be absolutely One God. This radical objection, therefore is, even in this sense, of no validity.

2. The doctrine of the Trinity does not involve the existence of three infinite Beings: and therefore this objection does not affect it.

The scriptural account of Jehovah, as received by every Trinitarian, is, that he is one perfect existence, underived and unlimited; and that this one perfect existence is in the Scriptures declared to be the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. These, in the usual language of Trinitarians, are styled *Persons*, because, in the Scriptures, the three personal pronouns, *I*, *thou*, and *he*, are, on every proper occasion, applied to them. As this is done by the Father and the Son, speaking to each other, and of the Holy Ghost, and by the Holy Ghost, speaking of the Father and the Son, we are perfectly assured that this language is in the strictest sense proper. Still, no Trinitarian supposes that the word *person* conveys an adequate idea of the thing here intended; much less that, when it is applied to God, it denotes the same thing as when applied to created beings. As the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are distinguished, some terms generally expressing this distinction seem necessary to those who would mark it, when speaking of the three together. This term, therefore, warranted in the manner above-mentioned, has been chosen by Trinitarians, as answering this purpose, so far as it can be answered by human language.

If I am asked, as I probably shall be, what is the exact meaning of the word *person* in this case; I answer, that I do not know. Here the Unitarian usually triumphs over his antagonist. But the triumph is without foundation or reason. If I ask, in return, What is the human soul or the human body? He is obliged to answer, that he does not know. If he says, that the soul is organized matter, endowed with the powers of thinking and acting; I ask again, What is that organization, and what is that matter? To these questions he is utterly unable to furnish an answer.

Should he ask again, to what purpose is the admission of the term, if its signification is unknown? I answer, to what purpose is the admission of the word *matter*, if its signification is unknown? I farther answer, that the term in dispute serves to convey briefly and conveniently the things intended by the doctrine, viz. that the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God: that these are three in one sense, and one in another. The sense in which they are three and yet one, we do not and cannot understand. Still we understand the fact; and on this fact depends the truth and meaning of the whole scriptural system. If Christ be God, he is also a Saviour; if not, there is no intelligible sense in which he can sustain this title, or the character which it denotes.

In addition to this, he is asserted in the Scriptures to be God, in every form of expression and implication, from the beginning to the end, as plainly as language can admit; and so fully and variously that, if we deny these assertions their proper force, by denying that he is God, we must, by the same mode of construction, deny any thing and every thing which the Scriptures contain. If the declarations, 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God,' and 'Christ, who is over all things, God blessed for ever,' do not prove Christ to be God, the declaration, 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth,' does not prove that there was a creation, or that the Creator is God. The declaration, 'All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made which is made,' is as full a proof that Christ is the Creator, as that just quoted from Genesis is that the Creator is God. An admission or denial of the one ought therefore, if we would treat the several parts of the Bible alike, and preserve any consistency of construction, to be accompanied by a similar admission or denial of the other. Here, then, is a reason for acknowledging Christ to be God, of the highest kind: viz. that God has declared this truth in the most explicit manner.

The mysteriousness of the truth thus declared, furnishes not even a shadow of reason for either denial or doubt. That God can be *one* in one sense, and *three* in another, is unquestionable. Whatever that sense is, if the declaration be true, and one which God has thought it proper to make in the Scriptures, and one therefore to which he has required our belief, it is, of course, a declaration incalculably important to mankind, and 'worthy of all acceptation.'

The futility and emptiness of this fundamental objection of Unitarians, as applied to the doctrine of the Trinity, is susceptible of an absolute and easy demonstration, notwithstanding the objection itself claims the character of intuitive certainty. It is intuitively certain, or, in other language, self-evident, that no proposition can be seen to be either true or false, unless the mind possess the ideas out of which it is formed, so far as to discern whether they agree or disagree. The proposition asserted by Trinitarians, and denied by Unitarians, is, that God is tri-personal. The ideas intended by the words *God* (here denoting the infinite

existence), and *tri-personal*, are not, and cannot be possessed by any man. Neither Trinitarians nor Unitarians therefore can, by any possible effort of the understanding, discern whether this proposition be true or false; or whether the ideas denoted by the words *God* and *tri-personal*, agree or disagree. Until this can be done, it is perfectly nugatory, either to assert or deny this proposition, as an object of intellectual discernment or philosophical inquiry. Where the mind has not ideas, it cannot compare them; where it cannot compare them, it cannot discern their agreement or disagreement; and of course it can form out of them no proposition, whose truth or falsehood it can at all perceive. Thus, this boasted objection is so far from being conclusive, or even formidable, that it is wholly without force or application.

After all that has been said, it may still be asked, Why, if this proposition be thus unintelligible, do Trinitarians adopt it as an essential part of their creed? I answer, Because God has declared it. Should it be asked, Of what use is a proposition, thus unintelligible? I answer, Of inestimable use: and this answer I explain in the following manner. The unintelligibleness of this doctrine lies in the nature of the thing which it declares, and not in the fact declared. The nature of the thing declared is absolutely unintelligible; but the fact is, in a certain degree, understood without difficulty. What God is, as one or as three in one, is perfectly undiscernible by us. Of the existence thus described we have no conception. But the assertions, that he is one, and that he is three in one, are easily comprehended. The propositions, that, the Father is God, that the Son is God, that the Holy Ghost is God, and that these three are one God, are equally intelligible with the proposition, that there is one God. On these propositions, understood as facts, and received on the credit of the divine witness, and not as discerned by mental speculation, is dependent the whole system of Christianity. The importance of the doctrine is therefore supreme.

The utmost amount of all that can be said against the doctrine of the Trinity is, that it is mysterious, or inexplicable. A mystery and a mystery as to its nature wholly inexplicable, it is cheerfully acknowledged to be by every Trinitarian; but no Trinitarian will on that account admit, that it ought to be less an object of his belief. Were the faith or even the knowledge of man usually conversant about objects which are not mysterious, mysteriousness might, with a better face, be objected against the doctrine of the Trinity. But mystery envelopes almost all the objects of both. We believe, nay, we know the existence of one God; and are able to prove him self-existent, omnipresent, omniscient, almighty, unchangeable, and eternal. But no more absolute mysteries exist, than in the being, nature, and attributes of God. The soul of man, the body of man, a vegetable, an atom, are all subjects filled with mysteries, and about them all a child may ask questions which no philosopher can answer. That God, therefore, should in his existence involve many mysteries inexplicable by us, is so far from violating or stumbling a rational faith that it ought to be presumed. The contrary doctrine would be still more mysterious, and far more shock a rational mind.

'As to the doctrine of the Trinity,' says a writer * of distinguished abilities and eloquence, 'it is even more amazing than that of the incarnation: yet, prodigious and amazing as it is, such is the incomprehensible nature of God, that I believe it will be extremely difficult to prove from thence, that it cannot possibly be true. The point seems to be above the reach of reason, and too wide for the grasp of human understanding. However, I have often observed, in thinking of the eternity and immensity of God; of his remaining from eternity to the production of the first creature, without a world to govern, or a single being to manifest his goodness to; of the motives that determined him to call his creatures into being; why they operated when they did, and not before; of his raising up intelligent beings whose wickedness and misery he foresaw; of the state in which his relative attributes, justice, bounty, and mercy, remained through an immense space of duration, before he had produced any creatures to exercise them towards; in thinking, I say, of these unfathomable matters, and of his raising so many myriads of spirits and such prodigious masses of matter, out of nothing; I am lost and astonished, as much as in the contemplation of the Trinity. There is but a small distance in the scale of being between a mite and me; although that which is food to me is a world to him, we mess, notwithstanding, on the same cheese, breathe the same air, and are generated much in the same manner; yet how incomprehensible must my nature and actions be to him! He can take in but a small part of me with his eye at once; and it would be the work of his life to make the tour of my arm; I can eat up his world, immense as it seems to him, at a few meals: he, poor reptile! cannot tell but there may be a thousand distinct beings, or persons, such as mites can conceive, in so great a being. By this comparison I find myself vastly capacious and comprehensive, and begin to swell still bigger with pride and high thoughts; but the moment I lift up my mind to God, between whom and me there is an infinite distance, then I myself become a mite, or something infinitely less; I shrink almost into nothing. I can follow him but one or two steps in his lowest and plainest works, till all becomes mystery and matter of amazement to me. How, then, shall I comprehend himself? How shall I understand his nature, or account for his actions? In these, he plans for a boundless scheme of things, whereas I can see but an inch before me. In that, he contains what is infinitely more inconceivable than all the wonders of his creation put together; and I am plunged in astonishment and blindness, when I attempt to stretch my wretched inch of line along the immensity of his nature. Were my body so large that I could sweep all the fixed stars visible from this world in a clear night, and grasp them in the hollow of my hand, and were my soul capacious in proportion to so vast a body, I should, notwithstanding, be infinitely too narrow-minded to conceive his wisdom when he forms a fly; and how then should I think of conceiving of himself? No, this is the highest of all impossibilities. His very lowest work checks and represses my vain contemplations, and holds them down at an infinite distance from him. When we think of God in this light, we can easily conceive it possible, that there may be a trinity of persons in his nature.

II. *It is asserted by Unitarians, that the doctrine of the Trinity is anti-scriptural.*

It has undoubtedly been observed, that in this Dis-

* Skelton. Deism Revealed, Dialogue vi.

course I have considered objections against the Deity of Christ and the Trinity as being commensurate. The reason is, that, so far as my knowledge extends, those who deny one of these doctrines deny also the other. Although it is not strictly true, therefore, that every objection against the Trinity must of course be an objection against the Deity of Christ; yet, as this is the ultimate aim of almost all such objections actually made, I have not thought any distinction concerning them necessary in this Discourse.

As this objection is designed to be extensive, and is capable of being indefinitely diversified, it will not be possible for me to take notice of all the forms in which it may appear. It will be my intention, however, to dwell upon those particular applications of it on which the authors of the objection seem to have laid the greatest stress.

The general import of this objection is, that Christ is exhibited in the Scriptures as inferior to the Father. All the alleged exhibitions of this nature may be advantageously ranged under two heads: those made by himself; and those made by the prophets and apostles.

An answer to the principal of these will, it is believed, be an answer to the rest.

1. Christ, as the Unitarians assert, exhibits himself as inferior to the Father, and therefore declares in unequivocal language, that he is not truly God. Particularly, (1.) He declares that he is not omnipotent.

John v. 19, 'Then Jesus answered, and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, the Son can do nothing of himself.' And again, in the 30th verse, 'I can of mine own self do nothing.' And again, John viii. 28, 'Then said Jesus unto them, When ye have lifted up the Son of Man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things.'

It will not, I presume, be pretended, that these words, in either of the passages, are used in the strict and absolute sense. That Christ could literally 'do nothing of himself,' will not be asserted in the sense, that he had no power at all, and could not act to any purpose whatever. Whoever Christ was, he doubtless possessed some degree of inherent power, or power which was his own; and by it could do, at least, some such things as are done by men generally. What then is intended? Undoubtedly, either that Christ could do nothing, compared with what the Father can do; or that Christ could do nothing, except what was directed by the Father, according to the commission given to him by the Father, to act in the mediatorial character.

That the latter is the true interpretation is, in my view, unanswerably evident from the following considerations:—

[1.] The subject of a comparison between the power of Christ and that of the Father, is not even alluded to in any preceding part of the chapter, either by himself or by the Jews.

The only debate between Christ and the Jews was concerning the rectitude or lawfulness of his conduct. As the Jews were about to kill him for having acted unlawfully, both in healing a man on the sabbath-day, and in saying that God was his Father; it is incredible (because it is imputing to him a gross absurdity), that Christ should here, instead of replying to the accusation of the Jews, and justifying his conduct as lawful, enter on a comparison between his ability and that of the Father. This would have been a total desertion of the important subject in controversy, and could not have been of the least use either for the purpose of justifying himself, or of repressing the violence of the Jews. On the contrary, it would have been the assumption of a subject totally foreign, totally unconnected with the case in hand, without any thing to lead to it, incapable of being understood by those to whom it was addressed, and a species of conduct which, so far as I can see, would have been irreconcilable with common sense.

[2.] This interpretation is refuted, so far as the objection is concerned, by the discourse of which it is a part.

The whole drift of this discourse is to show the extent of that authority which Christ possessed as the Mediator. In displaying this authority, he also displays, necessarily, the power which he possesses. In chap. v. 19, from which the first of the objected declarations is taken, is this remarkable assertion: 'What things soever he,' that is, the Father, 'doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise.' It is presumed that not even a Unitarian will imagine, that in a verse in which this declaration is contained, Christ could intend, by any phraseology whatever, to exhibit a limitation of his own power.

With this complete refutation of the meaning now in question in our hands, it can scarce be necessary to observe, that in many subsequent parts of this discourse of Christ, it is also overthrown in the same complete manner.

This interpretation being thus shown to be false, the other, the only remaining one, might be fairly assumed as the true interpretation. At the same time, it may be easily evinced to be the true one by other considerations.

[1.] It is perfectly applicable to the case specified.

That the proposition containing it expresses what is true, viz. that Christ, as the Mediator, could do nothing of himself; that is, that while acting under a commission from his Father, he could do nothing of his own authority, but must do all things by the authority and agreeably to the commission which he had received, will, I suppose, be admitted by every man. But this proposition is not more clearly true, than it is applicable to the case in hand. If Christ, in those things of which he was accused by the Jews, acted by the authority and agreeably to the commission which he had received from the Father, then plainly, that which he did was right. Of course, the objections and the animosities of the Jews were without cause, and wholly reprehensible. In this sense the answer of Christ was perfectly pertinent, and the only valid answer which could be given.

[2.] That this is the true meaning is evident from John viii. 28, (the last of the passages quoted above). 'Then said Jesus unto them, When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me I speak these things.' In this passage Christ informs the Jews that, after they had lifted him up on the cross, they should know that he was the Messiah, and that he did nothing of himself: not that he did nothing by his own power; but nothing by his own authority. The former having nothing to do with the subject; the latter being perfectly applicable to it.

Therefore, he adds, 'As my Father hath taught me,' or, as we say in modern English, According to the in-

structions which I have received from my Father, 'I speak these things.' It will hardly be questioned that Christ here speaks of his authority only, and not at all of his power.

[3.] We find the same language, used in the same manner, in various other passages of Scripture. In Gen. xix. 22, Christ himself, acting in the same mediatorial character, says to Lot, beseeching him to permit himself and his family to escape to Zoar, 'Haste thee, escape thither; for I cannot do any thing till thou be come thither.' It will not be pretended that, so far as his power only was concerned, Christ could not as easily have begun the work of destroying the cities of the plain before Lot had escaped, as afterward. But as it was a part of the divine determination to preserve Lot and his family, so the authority of Christ did not in this case extend to any thing, nor permit him to do any thing, which involved the destruction of Lot.

Numb. xxii. 18, Balaam says, 'If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my God, to do less or more.' This declaration of Balaam, I consider as expressing fully and completely the very thing which in the objected passages Christ expressed elliptically. And again, chap. xxiv. 12, 13, 'And Balaam said unto Balak, Spake I not also to thy messengers which thou sentest unto me, saying, If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the commandment of the Lord, to do either good or bad of mine own mind; but what the Lord saith, that will I speak?'

I shall only add to these observations the obvious one, that persons acting under a commission now use similar language, in similar circumstances.

Should any one question whether Christ acted under a commission, he himself has answered the question in his intercessory prayers, John xvii. 4, 'I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.'

From these observations it is, if I am not deceived, clear, that the declarations of Christ here objected to, do not in any sense refer to his power, but only to his authority as mediator; and are, therefore, utterly irrelevant to the purpose for which they are alleged.

(2.) The Unitarians object, that Christ exhibits himself as inferior to the Father in knowledge.

The passage quoted to prove this assertion is especially, Mark iii. 31, 'But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.'

Here it is said, Christ confesses himself to be ignorant of the day and hour specified.

On this objection I observe,

[1.] That the subject of which Christ is here declared to be ignorant, is a subject which demanded no greater extent of knowledge, or rather which demanded knowledge in a less extent, than many subjects disclosed by him in the same prophecy. The subject is the time of the destruction of Jerusalem. In this very prophecy, as well as in various others, he had uttered many things which appear to demand as great a measure of prescience as this can be supposed to have done. Such were, the arising of false Christs and false prophets; the preaching of the gospel through the world; the earthquakes, famines, and pestilences; the fearful sights and great signs which should precede the destruction of Jerusalem; the hatred and treachery of parents and others to his disciples and the protraction of the ruinous state of Jerusalem until the times of the Gentiles should be fulfilled. The foreknowledge of the particular period of its destruction was, certainly, no very material addition to the foreknowledge of these things; and would imply no very material enlargement of the mind by which they were foreknown. Several of the prophets, it is to be remembered, were furnished with a foreknowledge of dates, not differing from this in their importance: thus Isaiah foreknew the date of the destruction of Ephraim; Jeremiah, that of the Babylonish captivity; and Daniel, that of the death of Christ; and no reason can be imagined why the foreknowledge of this particular date should be withholden from Christ, even if we admit that he was a mere man, when so many other things relating to the same event, of so much more importance, were revealed to him.

There is, therefore, no small reason to believe, that the Greek word, οἰδε, has here the signification of γνωριζω, according to the comment of Dr Macknight, and denotes, not *to know* but *to cause to know*: a signification which it sometimes has, as he has sufficiently shown: particularly in 1 Cor. ii. 2, 'For I determined to know nothing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified;' that is, I determined to make known nothing among you, &c. If this sense of the word be admitted, the meaning of the passage will be, Of that day no one causeth men to know, but the Father: that is, when in his providence he shall bring the event to pass. In other words, the time of the destruction of Jerusalem shall not be disclosed by prophecy, but shall be made known only by the providence of God, bringing it to pass. I need not say that was literally the fact.

[2.] Christ himself informs us, that no one knows the Son but the Father, and that no man knows the Father but the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son shall reveal him.*

In this declaration Christ asserts, that he possesses an exclusive knowledge of the Father, in which no being whatever shares with him; a knowledge totally distinct from that which is acquired by revelation, and therefore immediate and underived.

He also declares, John v. 20, that 'the Father showeth him all things, that himself doeth;' that he 'searcheth the reins and the heart,' Rev. ii. 23; and that he 'is with his disciples alway, to the end of the world,' Matt. xxviii. 20, and therefore, omnipresent; Peter also says to him, John xxi. 17, 'Lord, thou knowest all things:' an ascription which, if not true, Christ could not have received without the grossest impiety; and which he yet did receive, because he did not reject nor reprove it.

But he, of whom these things are said, certainly foreknew the time of the destruction of Jerusalem. If, then, the objected text denotes that Christ did not know that time, the declaration cannot be true, except by being made concerning Christ considered in a totally different character and sense from those in which the same book teaches us that He 'knows the Father,' and 'knows all things.' It is, therefore, not a shift, or fetch, or evasion, in the Trinitarians to assert, that this passage, if thus understood, is spoken of Christ in his human nature only, and not in the nature exhibited in the passages with which it has been compared. On the contrary, it is a deduction from the Scriptures, irresistibly flowing from what they say, and the only means by which they can be either consistent or true.

* Matt. xi. 27.

(3.) It is objected by the Unitarians, that Christ has denied himself to be originally and supremely good.

The passage chosen to support this objection is the answer of Christ to the young ruler, Matt. xix. 17, 'Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one: that is God.' Here Christ is supposed to disclaim original and supreme goodness, as belonging to himself, and to distinguish between his own goodness and that of God.

What the real reason was for which Christ gave this answer, I shall not here examine. If Christ is not God, then he certainly would disclaim, and ought to disclaim, this character. If he is, then this assertion does not at all declare that he is not possessed of this goodness. The decision of this question will, therefore, determine the true application of this answer.

It has heretofore been proved in these Discourses, that Christ was the person who proclaimed on Mount Sinai his own name to Moses. This name he declared to be, 'the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, slow to anger, abundant in goodness and truth.' It will not be contested, that the person who made this proclamation was good in the original or absolute sense. Until this person is proved not to have been Christ, the objection founded on this text is a mere begging of the question.

But it is farther to be remembered, that Christ was also a man. According to the doctrines of the Trinitarians, therefore, as entirely as to that of their opposers, Christ used this declaration in the very sense in which they allege it, with the most perfect propriety.

(4.) Christ, as the Unitarians allege, exhibits his inferiority to the Father by praying to him.

How, if it be admitted, as Trinitarians universally admit, that he was a man, could he with propriety do otherwise? He was placed under the same law, and required, generally, to perform the same duties demanded of other men.

(5.) Christ declares himself to be inferior to the Father in express terms: 'My Father is greater than I;' and, 'My Father is greater than all.'

These declarations are perfectly consistent with the doctrine of the Trinity, in two ways. First, As Christ was a man; Secondly, As in the character of mediator, he acted under a commission from the Father. He who acts under a commission from another is, while thus acting, inferior to him from whom he received the commission.

But it is farther objected, that Christ is exhibited as inferior to the Father by the prophets and apostles.

It will be unnecessary, under this head, to mention more than a single instance. I shall select that instance, which seems to be the favourite one among the Unitarians. It is contained in the following words, taken from the 24th and 28th verses of 1 Cor. xv. 'Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father;' and, 'When all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subjected unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.'

To comprehend the apostle's meaning in these declarations, it is necessary to remember, that Christ, as sustaining the office of Mediator, received from the Father a kingdom, according to the Scriptures; and that when his mediatorial office ceases, because the purposes of it are accomplished, that kingdom, as we should naturally expect, is exhibited in the Scriptures as ceasing also; there being no end for which it should be any longer retained. Christ will, therefore, deliver it up to the Father when, at the consummation of all things, he 'presents' to him 'the church, as a glorious church, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing;' and makes his final triumphant entry into the heavens.

Concerning the latter article, here objected, that 'the Son shall then be subject to the Father,' it can scarcely be proper that I should attempt to determine the exact import. It is perfectly evident, however, that this must be true of the human nature of Christ. It is also evident, that the act of rendering up the kingdom which he had received, is an act of subjection to the Father: nor does the passage demand any other interpretation.

That these declarations do not intend what the objectors allege, we certainly know. 'For unto the Son' the Father saith (Heb. i. 8.) 'Thy throne, O God! is for ever and ever.' 'His dominion (says Daniel) is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away; and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.' 'He shall reign (said Gabriel to Mary) over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end.' 'The throne of God and the Lamb, is, as we are informed by St John, the throne of eternal dominion in the heavens; out of which 'proceeds the river of the water of life,' or the endless felicity and glory of all the happy inhabitants. To God and the Lamb also, are equally addressed those sublime ascriptions of praise which constitute the peculiar and everlasting worship of saints and angels. In this superior sense, therefore, the kingdom of Christ will literally endure for ever.

It ought here to be added, that the same apostle, who here says, that the Father put all things under Christ, informs us in the same paragraph, that Christ himself 'put all things under his feet:' and elsewhere, that Christ 'is able to subdue all things unto himself,' and that 'he is head over all things.' Phil. iii. 21; Eph. i. 22. How plain is it that he, 'who is able to subdue all things unto himself,' is able to do any thing? that he, 'who puts all things under his own feet,' does it by his own agency; and that he, who is now 'head over all things,' is of course qualified to be 'head over all things' for ever.

SERMON XL.

DIVINITY OF CHRIST.—OBJECTIONS TO THE DOCTRINE OF UNITARIANS.

The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain.—1 Cor. iii. 20.

In the preceding Discourse from these words, after observing that the reasonings of mankind, when employed in devising and establishing a scheme of theology, or attempting to amend that which is taught by God, are

vain; I mentioned that, in my own view, the Arians and Socinians were fairly included within this declaration of Scripture. For this assertion I considered myself bound to give my reasons, and proposed to do it under two heads:

I. *Answers to their objections against the doctrine of the Trinity;* and,

II. *Objections to the doctrines which they hold concerning Christ, and their conduct in the management of the controversy.* The former of these was the subject of the preceding Discourse; the first part of the latter shall furnish the materials of the present.

To the doctrines of the Unitarians, I make the following objections;—

I. *The Arians hold, that Christ is a super-angelic being, so much greater than all other creatures, as to be styled a God; and to perform the various divine offices ascribed to him in the Scriptures, by delegated power and authority.*

To my own mind, this doctrine is utterly inconsistent both with the Scriptures and reason.

The only argument which, so far as I know, is derived directly from the Scriptures to support this opinion, is, that angels are sometimes called Aleim, and that magistrates have once this name given to them. That neither of these facts will warrant the doctrine in question, will, I trust, be evident from the following reasons:

1. Angels and magistrates are called by this name only in the aggregate, *Gods;* no angel or magistrate being ever called, *God.* It is well known to my audience, that the same name is also given to the idols of the heathen; to animals, vegetables, the souls of departed men, or demons, and to all the other objects of heathen worship. The term *Gods,* is here evidently used in a figurative sense; natural and obvious, because the beings to whom it is applied, sustained, or were supposed to sustain, some attribute or character resembling those which belong to the true God. Thus God says to Moses (Exod. vii. 1), 'See, I have made thee a god to Pharaoh;' that is, I have given thee authority over him, and armed thee with power to control and punish him. In the same manner magistrates are called lords, and kings, because they rule with subordinate power and authority.

But the term God, in the absolute, is never given to any created being, unless Christ can be proved to be a creature: a thing which, it is apprehended, cannot be done. To him, however, it is applied in many instances, without any qualification, or any notice whatever that it is not applied in the highest sense. At the same time it is, when applied to him, connected with other objects attributable only to the Deity.

Thus in Rom. ix. 5, when Christ is said by the apostle to be God, He is also said to be 'over all things' and 'blessed for ever.' Thus when St John informs us that the 'Word was God,' he informs us also, that the 'Word was in the beginning,' or eternal; 'was in the beginning with God' or co-eternal with God; and that 'all things were made by him,' or that he was the Creator of all things. The attribution, therefore, of these things to Christ, when he is called God, viz. that he exists from eternity; is co-eternal with God, or the Father; and is the Creator and ruler of all things; marks in the most definite as well as decisive manner, the meaning of the word *God,* when applied to him; and proves that it is applied in the highest sense. Nothing parallel to this, or distantly resembling it, is found in any application of this term, to any other being, except God.

2. Christ is called by all the other names of God, except one, viz. the Father.

It has been shown in a former Discourse, that Christ is called 'the true God,' 'the great God,' 'the mighty God,' 'Jehovah,' &c. The application of these names to Christ, is clear evidence that, when he is called God, this appellation is given to him in the same sense in which it is given to the Father; to whom and the Holy Spirit, exclusively, these other names are also given.

3. The attributes and actions, universally, of God are ascribed to Christ. It is plain then, that the Scriptures, which give this name to Christ, connect with it all the other appellations, together with all the attributes and actions which make up the scriptural character of God. In all these respects, the application of the term *Gods* to angels and magistrates differs totally, and, I apprehend, infinitely from that of God to Christ. The application of the term *Gods* to angels and magistrates, therefore, furnishes not the least reason to believe that Christ is called God in the sense alleged, or that Christ is a delegated God.

Having removed the only scriptural argument on which I suppose any serious reliance to be placed, as a proof that Christ is a delegated God, I proceed to observe, that this scheme is utterly inconsistent with the things which are said of him in the Scriptures. It is utterly inconsistent with the ascription to him of the names, attributes, and actions which have been just now mentioned. Particularly it is inconsistent with the declarations, that he 'made all things,' and that 'he upholds all things by the word of his power.' In the account given us by St John and St Paul of the creation of all things by Christ, both apostles use phraseology which, with an exactness scarcely paralleled, denotes an absolute universality. 'By him,' says St Paul, 'were all things created that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by him, and for him.' 'All things' says St John, 'were made by him; and without him, was not one thing made, which hath been made.' If these two passages do not denote an absolute universality, language cannot express it. Every possible as well as actual thing is either visible or invisible. Every actual thing which is either visible or invisible, it is here expressly said, Christ created. 'Without him,' it is expressly said, 'was not one thing made, which hath been made.' Unless therefore something has been created that is neither 'visible nor invisible;' unless there is something existing in the creation, 'which has' not 'been made;' there is nothing which was not created by Christ.

The interpretation of these passages by the Unitarians, which makes them mean no more than that Christ published the gospel and constituted the church, is a violation of common sense and common decency. Let us try the same mode of construction with another passage, to which it must be acknowledged to be equally applicable. In the passage quoted from St Paul, it is said, that 'Christ created all things that are in heaven, and that are in earth.' This the Unitarians say, means no more than that Christ published the gospel, and constituted the Church. In the first verse in Genesis it is

said, 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.' This, I say, and upon their plan of construction am certainly warranted to say it, means no more than that in the beginning God published the gospel and constituted the church. Ought not any man to be deeply ashamed of the prejudice, and strongly to censure the confidence, which has led him to use such licentious freedom with language in any case; especially with 'words which were taught, not by man's wisdom, but by the Holy Ghost?'

Dr Price, and other Arians, attempt to evade the force of these and the like passages, by introducing a distinction between formation and creation. In this, however, they must be acknowledged to be unhappy. The words used by St John are εγενετο, and γεγονεν; the proper English of which is *existed*. Γινομαι, of which they are derivatives, signifies also *to be born, to spring up, to be brought into being, and to be caused to exist*. No word, therefore, more comprehensive or more appropriate to the object in view can be found, either in the Greek, or, so far as I can see, in any other language. The word used by St Paul is εκτισθη, from κτιζω; the appropriate meaning of which, as you well know, is *to create*. As, therefore, the act of creating all things in the most absolute sense is, in the most express and unequivocal language, ascribed to Christ by these apostles, by what authority or with what decency can it be denied by any man?

The work of creating all things Christ performed by his command. All things, also, he upholds by the same word of his power. If these acts, and this manner of performing them, are not proofs of infinite power, such proofs have never existed. It is to be remarked, that the apostle asserts directly, that Christ 'upholds all things by the word of his *own* power; τω ρηματι της δυναμεως αυτου. This act, therefore, is not performed by delegated power; and neither of these acts could possibly be performed by any being, except one, whose power is without limitation.

Among the numerous other things ascribed to Christ, which are utterly inconsistent with the supposition of his being a delegated God, I shall mention only two; as the mention of more would demand a longer time than can now be devoted to this part of the subject. The first is, that divine worship was rendered to him by inspired persons on earth, and is also rendered to him in heaven. This, it is presumed, has been proved beyond controversy. Stephen prayed to him. Paul prayed to him; and the whole Christian Church was, at its commencement, distinguished by the appellation of those who invoked the name of Christ in prayer. The anthems of praise in the heavens, sung by saints and angels, ascribe to him, both separately and jointly with the Father, that peculiar glory and honour which is expressive of the highest worship of the heavenly inhabitants. But Christ himself says, quoting Deut. vi. 13, and x. 20, 'Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.' No creature, therefore, can be lawfully worshipped; but Christ is lawfully worshipped; for he is worshipped by apostles, angels, and glorified saints.

The second and last thing of this nature is, that Christ is immutable. 'Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.' If Christ were only the exalted creature, the super-angelic being, the delegated God, whom the Arians declare him to be, he would of all virtuous beings be the most changeable; because, with his superior faculties and advantages, he would advance more rapidly in knowledge, and virtue, and in power also; for the increase of knowledge is in itself the increase of power. Such a being cannot possibly, therefore, be 'the Jesus Christ, who is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.' At the same time it is further to be remarked, that a wonderful instance of change is asserted of Christ, if he be this super-angelic being, in the Scriptures themselves. St Luke declares, that when he was twelve years old, 'he increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.' According to the Arians, this super-angelic being, the greatest of all created minds, brought into existence antecedently to every other creature, was united to the body of an infant, and born of the Virgin Mary, and thus constituted the person named Jesus Christ in the Scriptures. This infant differed so little from other infants as to intelligence, that the first time he was regarded as extraordinary, appears plainly to have been the time when he conversed with the Jewish doctors in the temple, as recorded in the second chapter of St Luke. At this time he was observed to increase in wisdom, so as to increase in favour with mankind. He also actually increased in wisdom, and actually increased in favour with God. He therefore changed, not only really, but obviously. If then, we admit that Christ was this super-angelic being, we must also admit that he was not the Christ, who was 'the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.' But we cannot admit Christ to be this being. From infancy to twelve years of age, he had unceasingly changed also. What, then, was his mind when he was born; or when he had arrived at one, or two years of age? Doubtless, as much inferior to what it was at twelve years of age, as other infants are to what they become at the same period. But how evident is it, that such an infantine mind could not be a super-angelic mind. The change, it is to be remembered, is declared by the evangelist to be real, and not merely apparent. And it is presumed no Arian will admit, that his infantine character was merely assumed and hypocritical. Arians will undoubtedly agree, that he was then equally sincere, as ever afterward. But a super-angelic mind must have lost all its peculiar powers and characteristics to have become such a mind as that of Christ in his infancy, or his childhood. Such a mind, originally formed with these sublime faculties, existing in a singular proximity to Jehovah, and expanded and exalted by his peculiar advantages for improving in knowledge and virtue, throughout four thousand years, must have risen to so transcendent a height of intellectual and moral attainments as, if it were not entirely changed in its whole character, must have excited the attention, the amazement, and probably, if it had not forbidden it, the worship of every spectator. At the same time, such powers and attainments must have been so utterly incomprehensible by mankind, that, however rapidly they had increased, the change could never have been perceptible by such eyes as theirs. It is therefore certain, that, if the Christ born in Bethlehem, was this super-angelic being, he ceased to be super-angelic, when united to the body of an infant; and differed in no other respects from the minds of other infants, except that he was perfectly holy, and possessed a superior susceptibility of wisdom. In other words, he was changed into a human being, perfect indeed, as such,

but still a human being; and shorn wholly of his super-angelic greatness. If Arians will put these things together, it is believed, that themselves will acknowledge *mysteries*, of an inexplicable kind, to be contained in this part of their system.

Nor is this idea of a delegated God a whit more consistent with reason. Nothing is more repugnant to reason, than that a finite being should have made the universe; should uphold it; should possess it; should govern it; should judge and reward its intelligent inhabitants; should forgive their sins; should be the source of life; should communicate endless life; and should be the ultimate end for which they and all things else were created. Every one of these things is not only utterly aside from the dictates of reason on this subject, a mystery utterly inexplicable; but is directly repugnant to common sense. Nothing is more strongly realized by reason, than that 'He who built all things is' very 'God;' that he who made the universe can alone uphold, possess, or govern it; or be the ultimate end for which it was created; or do all or any of the things just now recited. If this being be not God, in the absolute sense, reason has no knowledge and no evidence that there is a God.

Accordingly, Dr Priestley has, if I mistake not, observed, and justly, that no doctrine is more preposterous than the doctrine that Christ created the world, and that yet he is not God. Still the Scriptures assert in terms as comprehensive, as precise, as appropriate, and as unambiguous, as human language can furnish, that Christ 'created every' individual 'thing that hath been made.' Yet, in spite of this language, chosen by God himself to express his views on the subject, Dr Priestley asserts, that Christ is not God! The manner in which he satisfies himself concerning this declaration will he examined hereafter.

II. If these things are preposterously and irreconcilably asserted concerning a super-angelic being—a delegated God, what shall we say concerning their compatibility with the Socinian doctrine, that Christ is a mere man? If the fact had not already taken place, would it not be absolutely incredible, that any sober man living should believe such assertions as these? Let me, however, before I make them, instead of the name of a man substitute that of Gabriel; a being, in holiness, wisdom, and power, originally superior to any man; and in a still higher degree superior by the improvements made in them all through the four thousand years which preceded the work of redemption. This I do, that the repetition of the name of a man may not shock the ears of my audience, while I am making a simple and perfectly equitable statement, in that very form in which it must be made by every conscientious man, before he can feel himself warranted to receive it. 'In the beginning was' *Gabriel;* 'and' *Gabriel* 'was with God; and' *Gabriel* 'was God. The same was in the beginning with God. By him were all things made; and without him was not one thing made, which hath been made. And' *Gabriel* 'became flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth.'* 'For by' *Gabriel* 'were all things created, that are in heaven and that are in earth; visible and invisible. All things were created by him, and for him. And by him all things consist;'† 'And he is head over all things unto his church.' ‡ 'Of whom, as concerning the flesh,' *Gabriel* 'came, who is over all things, God blessed for ever.' § *Gabriel*, 'who, being in the form of God, thought it no robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men. And, being found in fashion as a man, he became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore, God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name, which is above every name; that at the name of' *Gabriel* 'every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess, that he is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.'‖ 'Hearken unto me, O Jacob my servant; and Israel whom I have called. I am he: I am the first; and I am the last. Mine hand also hath laid the foundation of the earth; and my right hand hath spanned the heavens; I call unto them; they stand up together. Come ye near unto me; hear ye this: I have not spoken in secret from the beginning. From the time that it was, there I am. And now the Lord Jehovah and his Spirit hath sent me.' ¶ 'God, who at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake in time past, unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by' *Gabriel*; 'who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power.'** 'The throne of God and' *Gabriel.*†† 'And' *Gabriel* 'hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, King of kings, and Lord of lords.' ‡‡ 'Every creature which is in heaven, and in earth, and under the earth, and in the sea, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth on the throne, and unto' *Gabriel*, 'for ever and ever.' §§

Is there a person present who is not shocked with these declarations? Would not the insertion of them in the sacred canon stumble, irrecoverably, every sober man who now believes it to be the word of God? Is it possible for the mind to ascribe the things declared in them to any being less than infinite? Is not this favoured angel infinitely too humble in his nature and station to claim and receive them? Who could bring himself to pray to Gabriel for the forgiveness of his enemies; for the acceptance of his soul, when expiring;‖‖ or for the removal of his distresses; or for any thing? Who could be baptized in his name; ¶¶ or receive a blessing from him united with the Father and the Holy Ghost? * But if these things are monstrous when applied to Gabriel, one of the highest created intelligences, how must they appear when applied to a man, one of the lowest? How would they appear, for example, were we to substitute the name of Moses, or the name of Paul, for that of Gabriel? Is it not plain that the incongruity would be so excessive as to appear to have been written, not in serious earnest, but in blasphemous sport, with a direct design to entail impiety and contempt upon the book in which they were found? And would they not, instead of being read with sobriety and reverence, fill a light mind with ludicrous emotions, and a serious mind with horror? Yet such, so far as I can see, is substantially the very alteration which must be made, according to the Socinian doc-

* John i. 1—3, 14.

† Col. i. 16, 17.
‡ Eph. i. 22.
§ Rom. ix. 5.
‖ Phil. ii. 6—11
¶ Isa. xlviii. 12, 13, 16.
** Heb. i. 1, 3.
†† Rev. xxii. 1, 3.
‡‡ Rev. xix. 16.
§§ Rev. v. 13.
‖‖ Acts vii. 59, 60.
¶¶ Mat. xxviii. 19.
* 2 Cor. xiii. 14.

trine, concerning Christ. It is true, that Socinians regard Christ as a wiser and better man than Moses or Paul, but in no other respect do they suppose him to differ from either.

III. *I object to the doctrine of the Unitarians, that it has compelled them to renounce, successively many other important doctrines of the gospel, beside that of the Trinity.*

The Deity of Christ must be acknowledged by all men, if it be real, to affect materially every thing which is said of him in the Scriptures. The difference between his character, according to this scheme, and according to the scheme which makes him a creature, is infinite. Every thing, therefore, which is recorded of him, and consequently every view which is formed of him, must be exceedingly diverse in the mind of a Trinitarian and the mind of a Unitarian. In the view of a Trinitarian, he is Jehovah, the Alpha and Omega, the first cause and the last end of all things. In that of an Arian, he is a being infinitely different; a creature somewhat higher than the angels, brought into being somewhat before them; and in that of a Socinian still different from this; a man, born about eighteen hundred years since in Judea; somewhat better than Moses, Isaiah, or Paul. Now nothing is more evident than that every thing belonging to the first of these beings,—his existence, actions, and attributes, together with the relations which he sustains to creatures, must be infinitely different from those which belong to either of the others. Those who adopt one of these opinions, naturally and necessarily fall into very different systems of thought concerning Christ; concerning the station which he holds in the universe, and the part which he acts in the work of redemption; and concerning many highly important doctrines of the Christian faith. Accordingly, the whole scheme of Christianity adopted by Trinitarians is widely different from those adopted by Arians and Socinians. That this is true is well known to all who are conversant with the schemes of doctrine embraced, severally, by these classes of men, and is abundantly confessed and boasted by the Unitarians themselves. Some very important doctrines, constituting and illustrating this difference, I shall now mention. If the doctrines of the Trinitarians are really contained in the Scriptures, if they are clearly and abundantly declared, and if they are accordant only with the divinity of Christ, then it will follow, by unavoidable consequence, that the Unitarians have been compelled to renounce them, in consequence of having renounced the divinity of Christ.

If, at the same time, the doctrines thus renounced are of high importance to the Christian system, and those which distinguish it from all philosophical systems of theology, then it will appear, that the renunciation of these doctrines is an error of dangerous influence, and deeply to be regretted; and, as it grows necessarily out of the renunciation of the divinity of Christ, that that is an error also, of the same unhappy nature. Of these doctrines,

The first which I shall mention is the doctrine of human depravity.

This doctrine, it is believed, has been fully evinced in these Discourses to be a doctrine of the Scriptures. If it has not, it must have arisen either from the weakness or the inattention of the preacher; for no truth is more clearly declared in any book, than this doctrine in the Scriptures; and none is more amply supported by the evidence of fact. In the Scriptures we are taught, in the most unequivocal language that 'all men have sinned and come short of the glory of God;' that 'all are concluded under sin;' that 'all are by nature children of wrath,' being 'children of disobedience;' that 'all are shapen in iniquity, and conceived in sin.' These declarations, to which the whole history of man, gives the fullest attestation; and to which there is not even one solitary contradiction in fact, certainly stand with Unitarians for nothing, or for nothing like what the words themselves customarily mean. In their view, we are not by nature the children of wrath, as not being children of disobedience; we are not shapen in iniquity, nor conceived in sin; we are not concluded, or shut up together, under sin; and every imagination of our hearts, as they believe, is not evil from our youth.

2. The impossibility of justification by our own righteousness, is another of these doctrines.

To justify is to declare a being, placed under a law, to be just or righteous; or, in other words, to have done that which the law required. Mankind are placed as subjects under the law of God. They have not done what the law required, and therefore cannot with truth, be declared to have done it; or, in other words, they cannot be justified. Accordingly, St Paul, after having proved at length that all men, both Jews and Gentiles, are sinners, says, 'Therefore, by deeds of law, there shall no flesh be justified in his sight.' And again, 'If there had been a law, which could have given life, verily, righteousness should have come by law; but, if righteousness come by law, then Christ died in vain.' But the Unitarians, in a vast multitude of instances, (for it is not true of them all,) utterly deny this doctrine, and hold that we are justified by our own repentance and obedience, both of which, they teach, are accepted for their own sake. God, therefore, is exhibited by them, as justifying us in direct opposition to the express language of his law: 'Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law, to do them.' 'He that doeth these things shall live by them; but the soul that sinneth shall die.' In direct contradiction to these declarations of God himself, they hold that the soul which sinneth shall not die; and that he is not cursed who does not continue in all things written in the law, to do them; while he who doeth not these things, shall yet, according to their scheme, live. Thus, although God has declared, 'that heaven and earth shall pass away, sooner than one jot or tittle of the law shall fail;' their doctrine teaches us, that the whole law, so far as its penalty is concerned, shall fail with respect to every person who repents. Not even an entire, unmingled repentance, is demanded; nor a pure, uncontaminated, future obedience. Both are professedly left imperfect. All the former sins are imperfectly repented of; and all the future obedience is mixed with sin. On the ground of this repentance and this obedience, God is expected to justify man, still placed under a legal dispensation.

3. Another doctrine of the same nature is the doctrine of Christ's atonement.

The Unitarians, to whom I referred under the last head, as not holding the doctrines opposed to it, are those who admit the doctrine of Christ's atonement. This I suppose to be true of some of the Socinians, and some of the Arians. Some of the Socinians hold, that 'the fulness of the Godhead dwells,' and will through

eternity dwell, 'in Christ, bodily.' What is supposed by them to be the proper import of this declaration, I know not that they have explained, and therefore may probably be unable to divine. So far as I can conjecture their intention, I should believe, with Dr Price, that they really make Christ God, and therefore may not unnaturally suppose that he accomplished an expiation for the sins of men. If this conjecture be just, they harmonize substantially with Praxeas, because, as they deny a distinction of persons in the Godhead, they must suppose the Father, by a mysterious union, to have dwelt in the man Christ Jesus; and thus influencing and directing all his conduct, to have accomplished, through him, an atonement for himself; a doctrine on account of which Praxeas and his followers were called Patripassians, as believing that the Father himself suffered. Some of the Arians also have acknowledged that Christ made atonement for the sins of men. In what manner this was done, or can be done, by a creature, a subject of law and government, all whose obedience is due to the utmost extent of his powers and circumstances, and through every moment of his existence, for himself, and for his own justification, I know not that they have attempted to explain. I rather suppose that, though professed enemies to mystery, they choose to leave this as a mystery which allows of no investigation. How an atonement can be made by such a being, and how it can be accepted by God, in accordance with the doctrines taught in the Scriptures, I confess myself unable to discern. Still it is but just to observe, that an atonement is believed by a number of both Socinians and Arians, to have been made by Christ. Dr Priestley, and most, if not all the modern Socinians, and many of the Arians, though I am not able to say how many, utterly deny, so far as my knowledge extends, any atonement at all; and thus take away from the Christian system what the great body of the church has, in every age, esteemed the capital doctrine in the scheme of redemption, and from mankind every rational hope of escape from future punishment. The only encouraging declaration to sinners, exclusive of those which are founded on it, which I can find in the gospel, is this: that 'Christ has redeemed us from under the curse of the law, by being made a curse for us.' Accordingly, this declaration, repeated in very numerous forms, is everywhere insisted on in the gospel, as the commanding theme, and as the only consolation to apostate men. If the doctrine contained in this declaration be taken out of the gospel, mankind are left wholly under the dominion of law, and must necessarily suffer its penalty.

In my own view, Dr Priestley, and those who accord with him in denying an atonement, are more consistent with themselves, or with the other parts of their system, than the rest of the Unitarians. He who denies the Deity of Christ, appears to me to cut off the possibility of any vicarious interference in the behalf of sinners. At the same time, the atonement of Christ is so plainly, so frequently, and so unequivocally asserted in the Scriptures, and the whole system of divine dispensations is made to depend upon it so extensively and essentially, that to deny it appears to me to be the same thing as to deny the Scriptures themselves. So necessary also, and so consolatory, is the doctrine of an atonement for sin, to such beings as we are, as well as so abundantly asserted in the Scriptures, that I can scarcely suppose any man willingly to deny it, unless compelled by something entirely different from the Scriptures themselves, and from the nature of the doctrine. One error infers another. The error of denying the Deity of Christ has, I apprehend, compelled those who have adopted it to deny also all the doctrines which have been here mentioned, and particularly the atonement, notwithstanding they were opposed in this denial by so many express declarations of the sacred volume.

4. The doctrine of justification by faith in Christ, is also of the same nature.

As mankind cannot be justified by their own righteousness, it is absolutely necessary, if they are justified at all, that they should be justified by the righteousness of another. Accordingly, the Scriptures assert, in the most direct and abundant manner, that we are 'justified by' mere 'grace,' or favour, on account of the righteousness of Christ, through that faith in him, in the exercise of which we give up ourselves to him, to be his here and for ever. As this doctrine is not only asserted in very many instances, and in the most express manner, but is also repeatedly proved in form, especially in the epistles to the Romans and the Galatians, it would seem incredible that it should be denied by any man who believed in divine revelation. Still it is abundantly denied by Unitarians. Nor do they only deny the doctrine generally, but all the particulars also of which it is made up. Beside rejecting the atonement of Christ, and the justification supposed to be accomplished by means of it, and the influence which faith is supposed to have in securing such justification to us, they deny, also, the very nature of the faith to which this influence is ascribed. The faith of the gospel is an affection of the heart, being no other than trust, or confidence. 'With the heart,' says St Paul, 'man believeth unto righteousness.' In direct opposition to this and many other passages of the Scriptures, the Unitarians, generally at least, consider faith as a mere assent of the understanding to probable evidence; the same which is called a speculative or historical faith. By this opinion they strip faith of the moral nature everywhere attributed to it in the gospel. 'Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness.' But surely no exercise of the understanding was ever counted for righteousness to any man, or can possess any moral nature whatever. 'Thou believest, that there is one God,' says St James; 'thou doest well. The devils also believe, and tremble.' Certainly, that affection of the mind, of which devils are the subjects, cannot possess moral excellence. 'Without faith it is impossible to please God.' But surely the faith which pleases God must be essentially different from the faith of devils.

5. Another doctrine of the same nature, is the regeneration of the human soul by the Spirit of God.

That, 'without holiness,' or moral excellence, 'no man shall see the Lord,' is, I think, the irresistible dictate of reason, as well as the express declaration of the Scriptures: for it cannot be supposed, that the infinitely holy God can be pleased with creatures who are wholly destitute of such excellence, and who, being wholly sinful, have nothing in them which he can approve, or with which he can be pleased. That 'in us, that is, in our flesh,' or original nature, 'dwelleth no good thing;' no holiness, no moral excellence, is, as you well know, a declaration contained in the Scriptures. From these two doctrines thus declared, arises indispensably the ne-

cessity of such a change in our character, as will make us the subjects of holiness. This change is in the Scriptures termed regeneration, being born again, being created anew; becoming new creatures, being renewed; and is expressed by other similar phraseology, and declared to be indispensable to our entrance into the divine kingdom. 'Except a man be born again,' said our Saviour to Nicodemus, 'he cannot see the kingdom of God.' The production of this change is in the Scriptures ascribed, as his peculiar work, to the Spirit of God. 'Except a man,' says our Saviour again, 'Except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God;' that is, except a man have his mind purified by the Spirit of God, as the body is purified by water, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. 'Not by works of righteousness which we have done,' says St Paul, 'but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.' Accordingly, those persons who experience this change of character, are said to be 'born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God:' that is, they derived this change of character, not from their parents, nor from their own efforts, nor from the efforts of any man, but from God.

But this change the Unitarians deny, and the agency of the Holy Spirit in effectuating it in the mind of man. Nay, they deny the existence of the Holy Spirit as a person, or agent. As a substitute for regeneration they declare mankind to become better in a gradual manner, by their own will or efforts, and the efforts or will of their fellow men, to such a degree, that God will accept them. In this manner they make the immense splendour of apparatus for our redemption and sanctification, and all the magnificent exhibitions of Christ and the Holy Spirit, terminate in this; that Christ came to declare divine truth to mankind, and to prove it to be divine truth; and that men, assenting to it with the understanding, change themselves by the ordinary efforts of a sinful mind, into such a character as is denoted in the Scriptures by being born again, and created anew. Such, it would seem, was not however the opinion of St Paul when he said, 'The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them; for they are spiritually discerned.

The present occasion will not permit me particularly to follow this subject any farther. It will be sufficient to mention, summarily, several other doctrines which have been denied by Dr Priestley and his followers.

Our Saviour says, 'A spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.' Dr Priestley, on the contrary, informs us, that the human spirit is constituted only of organized matter; that is, of flesh and bones. St Paul tells us, that when he is 'absent from the body,' he shall be 'present with the Lord.' Dr Priestley holds, that Paul was nothing but body; and therefore could not be absent from the body, unless the body could be absent from itself. When the body dies, the soul, according to Dr Priestley, terminates both its operations and its being, until the resurrection, then to be created again; and therefore is not, and cannot be, present with the Lord until after that period. The Scriptures assert the existence of angels of various orders, both good and evil; and delineate their character, stations, actions, and enjoyments. Dr Priestley utterly denies, and even ridicules, the doctrine, that evil angels exist; and labours very hard to disprove the existence of good angels. I do not remember that he expressly denies it, and am not in posession of the volume in which his opinions on this subject are expressed, but he says all that is short of such an explicit denial, and plainly indicates that he does not believe them to exist.

Beyond all this, he denies the plenary inspiration of the apostles; and declares, that we are to acknowledge them inspired only when they say they are inspired; and this, he says, we are to do because the apostles were honest men, and are to be believed in this, and all their other declarations. Dr Priestley says expressly, that he does not consider the books of Scripture as inspired, but as authentic records of the dispensations of God to mankind, with every particular of which we cannot be too well acquainted. The writers of the books of Scripture, he says, were men, and therefore fallible. But all that we have to do with them is in the character of historians, and witnesses of what they heard and saw: like all other historians, they were liable to mistakes. 'Neither I,' says he to Dr Price, 'nor, I presume, yourself, believe implicitly every thing which is advanced by any writer in the Old or New Testament. I believe them,' that is, the writers, 'to have been men, and therefore fallible.' And again: 'That the books of Scripture were written by particular divine inspiration, is a thing to which the writers themselves make no pretensions. It is a notion destitute of all proof, and that has done great injury to the evidence of Christianity.' The reasonings of the divine writers, he declares, we are fully at liberty to judge of, as we are those of other men. Accordingly, he asserts St Paul in a particular instance to have reasoned fallaciously; and maintains, that Christ was both fallible and peccable. Other English Socinians unite with Dr Priestley in these sentiments; while Socinians of other nations proceed so far as to treat the writers themselves, and their books, with marked contempt. In these several things there is plainly an utter denial that the Scriptures are a revelation from God. To all these opinions Dr Priestley was once directly opposed; for he was once a Trinitarian and a Calvinist. The inference seems, therefore, to be necessary, that he was led to them all by his denial of the Deity of Christ. A similar transformation appears to have been undergone by many other Socinians, and something very like it by no small number of Arians. The observation of Mr Wilberforce, therefore, seems to be but too well founded, when he says, 'In the course which we lately traced from nominal orthodoxy to absolute infidelity, Unitarianism is, indeed, a sort of half-way house, if the expression may be pardoned: a stage on the journey, where sometimes a person, indeed, finally stops; but where, not unfrequently, he only pauses for a while, and then pursues his progress.'

IV. *The last objection which I shall make at the present time against the doctrine of the Unitarians, is its immoral influence.*

Mr Belsham says, 'Rational Christians are often represented as indifferent to practical religion.' Dr Priestley says, 'A great number of the Unitarians of the present age are only men of good sense, and without much practical religion; and there is a greater apparent conformity to the world in them than is observable in others.' He also says, that he hopes they

have more of a real principle of religion than they seem to have. He farther allows, that Unitarians are peculiarly wanting in zeal for religion.

At the same time, Dr Priestley acknowledges that Calvinists have less apparent conformity to the world; and that they seem to have more of a real principle of religion than Socinians. He also acknowledges, that those who, from a principle of religion, ascribe more to God and less to man than other persons, are men of the greatest elevation of piety. Mr Wilberforce declares it to be an unquestionable fact, that Unitarians are not, in general, distinguished for superior purity of life; and that Unitarianism seems to be resorted to by those who seek a refuge from the strictness of the practical precepts contained in the Bible.

That the representations are just, I consider as completely proved by the Rev. A. Fuller, in his Letters; and no less completely the immoral tendency of the Socinian system.

It is also a well known truth, that Unitarian churches are in general moderately frequented on the sabbath; that the sermons of their preachers are generally cold, especially on the peculiar duties of religion; that they have never formed or united with others in forming missions for the propagation of the gospel among the heathens and Mohammedans, nor distinguished themselves by any discernible earnestness in the cause of practical Christianity. On the contrary, their own declarations, too numerous to be here recited, teach us abundantly that, in the view of a great part of them, almost all the seriousness, fervour, and self-denial, that deep sense of sin, and that prayerful, watchful, and strenuous opposition to temptation, which their opponents esteem indispensable to salvation, are mere enthusiasm, superstition, or melancholy. Christianity with them seems to be an easy, pleasant kind of religion, unincumbered by any peculiar restraints, admitting without difficulty of what are usually called the pleasures and amusements of the world, and only confining them within the bounds of delicacy and politeness. Can this, let me ask, be taking up the cross, denying ourselves, and following after Christ?

SERMON XLI.

DIVINITY OF CHRIST:—OBJECTIONS TO THE MODE IN WHICH THE UNITARIANS CONDUCT THE CONTROVERSY.

The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain.—1 Cor. iii. 20.

In my last discourse I proposed several objections against the doctrine of the Unitarians. I shall now allege *some objections against their conduct in the management of the controversy.*

Before I proceed to the execution of this design, I shall premise the following general doctrines concerning the Scriptures:—

That the Old and New Testaments were revealed to the several writers of them by the Spirit of God.

That, although the several writers were left to use their own characteristical style, or manner of writing, yet they have always written such 'words as the Holy Ghost taught,' and 'not such as are taught by the wisdom of man.'

That these Scriptures contain 'all things pertaining to life and to godliness.'

That they were written for the use of mankind, the learned and unlearned alike; and therefore were written in the usual language of men, with the usual signification of that language, as being that only which such men can understand.

That, therefore, they express true ideas of God, of Christ, of human nature, of human duty, and of the way of salvation, in such a manner that unlearned men, as are ninety-nine hundredths of those for whom they were written, can, and, if sincerely disposed, will understand them, so far as is necessary to enable them to perform their duty, and obtain their salvation.

Every one of these doctrines I believe not only to be strictly true, but capable of the most satisfactory proof; and proof of which I feel myself satisfactorily possessed. Occasional remarks I shall make on this subject in the present discourse; but a fuller discussion of it must be left to a future time. I have mentioned these doctrines here, because they are in my view just, important, and necessary to enable those who hear me to understand the real import of the following observations.

1. The Unitarians, to a great extent, have interpreted the Scriptures according to preconceived opinions of their own, and not according to the obvious meaning of the passages themselves.

That I may not be thought to charge this upon the Unitarians without ground, I will recite some of the opinions which they themselves have expressed concerning the Scriptures. You may remember that in my last discourse I mentioned that Dr Priestley pronounces Christ to be fallible, the Scriptures not to be written by particular inspiration, and the writers to make no pretensions to such inspiration. The contrary notion, also, he asserts to be destitute of all proof, and to have done great injury to the evidence of Christianity. He declares the writers of the New Testament to have improperly quoted some texts from the Old, and to have been sometimes misled by Jewish prejudices. Another Unitarian writer says, 'It is not the nature and design of the Scriptures to decide upon speculative, controverted questions, even in religion and morality; not to solve the doubts, but rather to make us obey the dictates of our consciences.' Mr Belsham says, 'The Bereans are commended for not taking the word even of an apostle; and pleads this as an example for us. Steinbart, a foreign Unitarian, speaking of the narrations in the New Testament, says, 'These narrations, true or false, are only suited to ignorant, uncultivated minds.' Semler

another, says, that 'Peter speaks according to the conception of the Jews, when he says, Prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost;' and adds, that 'the prophets may have delivered the offspring f their own brains as divine revelation.' Concerning the reasoning of the apostles, Dr Priestley says, 'We are to judge of it, as of that of other men, by a due consideration of the propositions they advance, and the arguments they allege.' That men who entertain such views concerning the Scriptures will not, and, according to their own opinions, ought not to receive the declarations of the Scriptures in any other manner than that in which they receive the declarations contained in every other book, is obvious to the least consideration. If the Scriptures were not written, and the writers do not pretend that they wrote, by particular divine inspiration, then they certainly stand on the same footing with all other books; and the writers are undoubtedly to be regarded, as Dr Priestley says, merely in the character of historians and witnesses.

If Christ and the apostles were fallible men, and St Paul has actually reasoned fallaciously, then, undoubtedly, their reasonings and all their doctrines are to be examined in the same manner as those of other men. If the Scriptures were not designed to settle speculative opinions or doctrines even in morality and religion, then it is plain, that they must be settled, if settled at all, by some other tribunal; and there is no other tribunal, but our own reason. If the doubts of conscience were not intended to be solved by the Scriptures, then, certainly, the mind must solve them, so far as it can, for itself. These gentlemen have, therefore, prescribed a rule for themselves, which every man may certainly know beforehand, even without reading their works, they could not fail to follow: for no man ever believed the Scriptures not to be an infallible rule of direction in these things, who did not also make his own reason his directory; unless he, indeed, implicitly submitted to the dictates of his fellow men. In truth it would be difficult to find a man who does not distinctly perceive that there is no other directory.

Accordingly, every reader of Unitarian books must have observed, that the writers evidently refer the interpretation of the Scriptures to their own pre-conceived opinions, or the previous decisions of their own reason. That is, they form their system of theology, and then make use of the Scriptures to support or countenance it. Wherever they find passages whose obvious meaning will countenance their own opinions, they make the most of them, by admitting this meaning. Wherever the obvious meaning, that is, the meaning derived from the language, according to customary use, or according to the tenor of the discourse of which it is a part, will not countenance their opinions, they contrive for it some other meaning which will better suit those opinions.

That the Unitarians have actually conducted the controversy in this manner, can be made abundantly evident by an appeal to their writings. One strong proof of this conduct is found in the Arian notion, that Christ is a delegated God. The present occasion will permit me to exhibit but one, out of several modes, in which the truth of this declaration may be evinced. Christ is undeniably many times asserted in the Scriptures to be God. These assertions are as unqualified and absolute as those in which the Father is declared to be God. They are also accompanied with a great variety of declarations, in which are ascribed to him, without any qualification, all the attributes, actions, and relations, attributable to God, exclusively of those which belong to the Father as such; and are also followed by the very same worship, unconditionally required, and actually rendered to him by inspired men, and by the host of heaven. Now, from all these assertions I will withdraw the name of Christ, and substitute that of the Father. Let me ask, Would any of the Arians have ever thought of denying that the name of God, in any one of these passages, did not mean the true and real God, but only a God by delegation? To this question there can be no answer but a negative. Whence, then, do they refuse to acknowledge the same passages to mean the same thing, as they now stand? Plainly for this undeniable reason, that they have beforehand determined that God is not, and cannot be tri-personal, or triune. In this determination, however, they are unhappy, as being unwarranted, not only by the Scriptures, but also by that very reason to which they make so confident an appeal; for nothing is more opposed to both, than that a finite, dependent being can have these things ascribed to him with truth.

On the same grounds do the Socinians declare Christ to be a mere man; not because he is not abundantly declared to be God in the Scriptures, but because they pre-determine by their reason, that a person cannot exist by the union of God with man; and that God cannot be triune. Let any man read their comments on the Scriptures relative to Christ, and he will see this to be abundantly shown by the nature of the comments, and the words in which they are uttered.

I have observed that the Arians are unhappy in choosing this position as the basis of their distinguishing doctrine; because it is unwarranted either by reason or revelation. Both they, and the Socinians, are unhappy on other accounts. They know not, and cannot know by any dictates of reason, that God is not triune. The nature and manner of his existence, so far as this subject is concerned, lie wholly beyond their reach, and beyond that of all other men. We cannot even begin to form ideas concerning them. It is, therefore, idle and fruitless to form propositions about them; still more idle to reason and conclude; and still more idle to make such conclusions the basis of our faith in a case of such magnitude. All that we know, or can know, is just that, and that only, which God has been pleased immediately to reveal.

The same observations are, with the same force, applicable to the doctrine of the union of the divine and human nature in the person of Christ. Of this subject we literally know nothing, beside what is revealed.

That a mere man, also, can have these names, attributes, actions, and relations, and this worship ascribed to him with truth, is not only unaccordant with reason, but common sobriety, or decency. A few more instances of this nature, which, because I have not the means of multiplying examples, nor time for such a purpose, I shall select wholly from Dr Priestley's Notes on the Books of Scripture.

In his notes on the first chapter of John, Dr Priestley informs us that the word Λογος, which, you know, is translated 'the Word,' is nothing more than the power of God, by which all things were made; and therefore, he says, it was no distinct, inferior principle, but God

himself. On this explanation I shall make but one general remark, viz. that this is the only known instance in which an attribute of God, either in sacred or profane writings, has been asserted to be God. If St John, therefore, had this meaning, he has used language to express it which was probably never used by any other human being.* Having premised this remark, I shall proceed to examine the soundness of the explanation by the most unobjectionable of all methods; viz. the substitution of the explanation for the thing explained; *Power* and *God*, for *the Word*, or Λογος; as being the two things, which the term Λογος is successively, declared to denote. This experiment, to which no Socinian can object, shall be first made with *power*. 'In the beginning was the *power* of God, and *this power* was with God, and *this power* was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by *it*, and without *it* was not any thing made, that was made. In *it* was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehended *it* not. *It* was in the world, and the world was made by *it*, and the world knew *it* not. *It* came unto *its* own, and *its* own received *it* not. But as many as received *it*, to them gave *it* power to become the sons of God; even to them that believe on *its* name. And the *power* was made flesh and dwelt among us (and we beheld *its* glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth. John bare witness of *it*, and cried, saying, This was *it* of which I spake: *It* that cometh after me is preferred before me, for *it* was before me. And of *its* fulness have we all received, and grace for grace. For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.'

Dr Priestley says, the *power* was God; St John says, it 'was made flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth.' According to his comment, therefore, God became flesh, and dwelt among us. According to his comment also, this power was Christ; for he says, it 'dwelt among us, full of grace and truth:' but St John immediately subjoins, 'Grace and truth came' (that is, into this world) 'by Jesus Christ.' Therefore, Jesus Christ is God.

This passage, formed in the very manner prescribed by Dr Priestley himself in his explanation, certainly can need no comment from me. I shall only say, that if there is a Socinian in the world who can make the parts of it, taken together, mean any intelligible thing, I think I may safely yield him the point in controversy.

Let us now make the trial with the other term, *God*. 'In the beginning was *God*, and *God* was with God and *God* was God.' Two verses more will suffice. 'And *God* was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory (the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth. No one hath seen God at any time, but the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.'

Once more, let us try the same experiment with the super-angelic being of the Arians. 'In the beginning was' *a super-angelic creature* 'named *the Word*,' 'and' this *super-angelic creature* 'was with God, and' this *super-angelic creature* was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by' this *super-angelic creature*, 'and without him was not any thing made that was made.' I presume, I need proceed no farther. That interpretation of a passage can need nothing added to it which makes God himself say, that a creature was in the beginning with God, and was God; and that although he was himself created or made, yet he made every thing that was made; and of course made himself. I had designed to subjoin two or three more specimens, but the time will not permit me to recite them. That which I have recited, will serve to show to what lengths the interpretation of the Scriptures, according to our preconceived opinions, will lead men of superior learning and abilities. At the reading of this only, how can we avoid exclaiming, 'Who is this, that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?'

On this plan of interpretation at large, I ask, Can it in any respect consist with what the Scriptures say of themselves? The prophet Isaiah (chap. viii. 29.) says, 'To the law, and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.'

'All Scripture,' says St Paul, 'is given by inspiration of God; and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto every good work.' 'No prophecy,' says St Peter, 'is of private interpretation: for never at any time, was prophecy brought by the will of man; but the holy men of God spake, being moved by the Holy Ghost.'* 'We,' says St Paul, speaking of himself, and his fellow apostles, 'have the mind of Christ.' And again, 'For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. And again, 'I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me, was not after man; for I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.'

In perfect harmony with these and the like declarations, Moses, the first of the inspired writers, says, 'Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you; neither shall ye diminish aught from it.' St John, the last of them, says at the close of his writings, 'For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, if any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book. And, if any man shall take away from the words of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life.' From these passages it is evident, that the character which the Scriptures attribute to themselves, is altogether opposite to that which has been mentioned in the former part of this Discourse, as given to them by the Unitarian writers: that they are, in fact, 'revealed by God, by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost;' that no man, therefore, can 'add to them, or diminish aught from them,' without exposing himself to the 'plagues' which they denounce, and to the loss of 'his part in the book of life.' 'If we speak not according to them,' it is declared that 'there is no light in us.' In our interpretation of them we are directed in the most solemn manner to receive the things which they declare. 'Let God be true,' says the apostle, 'but every man a liar,' 'See,' says Agur, 'that thou add not to his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar.' 'If we,' says St Paul, 'or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel, than that which we have preached, let him be ac-

* 1 John iv. 16. to be hereafter explained.

* Macknight.

cursed.' Who, with these solemn commands and awful denunciations before him, can think for a moment of rejecting the obvious meaning of the Scriptures, and substituting a meaning not contained in the words, but contrived by himself?

Nor are these gentlemen less unfortunate in another important particular. The Scriptures were written for mankind at large. Of these, ninety-nine hundredths, to say the least, are plain, uninformed men, incapable of understanding language in any other manner than the known, customary one. If, then, the obvious meaning is not the true one, they are absolutely unable ever to find the true one; and so far the Scriptures were written in vain. But it cannot be supposed that God would do any thing in vain; and still less that he would disregard the salvation and the souls of ninety-nine hundredths of his creatures, when publishing his word; and cause it to be so written that this great number could not, if ever so sincerely disposed, possibly find out its meaning, nor of course the way to eternal life; while, at the same time, he made provision for the remaining one hundredth. It will not, I suppose, be pretended that the soul of a learned man is of more value in the sight of God than that of an unlearned man. But if the meaning of the Scriptures is to be discovered, not by the words, but by a contrived accordance with pre-conceived philosophical opinions, no unlearned man can find out this meaning at all.

But the Scriptures themselves have decided this point. In Prov. viii. 8, 9, Christ says, 'All the words of my mouth are in righteousness; there is nothing froward or perverse in them. They are all plain to him that understandeth' (that is, to him that hath understanding; or, in other words, to him that departeth from evil); 'and right to them that find knowledge.' In John vii. 16, 17, the same glorious person says, 'My doctrine' (that is, the scheme of doctrine which I teach) 'is not mine, but his that sent me. If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God. Now it will not be pretended, that plain men do not depart from evil as truly and as often, in proportion to their number, as learned men. Of course, it must be confessed, that plain men find a plain meaning in the words of Christ, or of the Scriptures. It will be acknowledged, that unlearned men, in many instances at least, 'do the will of God;' and therefore, unless Christ has erred in this point, 'know of his doctrine, whether it is of God.'

One more passage will be amply sufficient to cut off even cavilling on this point. The prophet Isaiah (chap. xxxv, 8,) says, 'An highway shall be there, and it shall be called the way of holiness; and the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein.' It will hardly be necessary to observe, that this 'highway,' this 'way of holiness,' is no other than the gospel. But it is evidently impossible that plain men should ever find the meaning attached by Unitarians to the numerous passages which speak of Christ as God. No such man would ever mistrust that a super-angelic creature was 'called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the Father of the everlasting age, the Prince of Peace;' that 'of the increase of his government and peace there should be no end,' Isa. ix. 6: that 'his goings forth were from of old, from everlasting;' or, as in the original, 'from the days of eternity:' or that this creature 'was in the beginning with God, and was God:' that 'all things were made by him, and that without him was not any thing made that was made:' or that 'he was over all things, God blessed for evermore.' No such man would ever have thought of reading, 'In the beginning was divine power, and this power was with God, and this power was God. That it was in the world; that the world was made by it; and the world knew it not. That as many as received it, to them gave it power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on its name. That this power became flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld its glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth. John bare witness of it, and cried, saying, This was it of which I spake. It that cometh after me is preferred before me, for it was before me.' No plain man would ever have thought of reading, 'In the beginning was God, and God was with God, and God was God.'

Should it be said, in opposition to the observations which I have made concerning the intelligibleness of the Scriptures, that my antagonists will grant that the Scriptures are thus plain, in points of essential importance to our duty and salvation; but need not be supposed to be so in mere speculative opinions; I answer, that no doctrine is of more importance, whether speculative or practical, than that which teaches the character of Christ, except that which teaches the existence and perfections of God. If Christ be a creature, all the worship, and all other regard rendered to him as the Creator, is unquestionably mere idolatry; the sin which, of all sins, is the most strongly threatened and reproved in the Scriptures. If Christ is God, then a denial that he is God is all that is meant by impiety. It is a denial of his primary and essential character; of the attributes which, in this character, belong to him; of the relations which he sustains to the universe, and will for ever sustain; of the actions which he has performed, and will perform throughout eternity; and of the essential 'glory, which he had with the Father before ever the world was.' Man is a being, made up of an animal body and a rational mind. Should I deny that a particular person possessed a rational mind, would it not be justly said that I denied him to be a man, and refused to acknowledge his primary and most essential character? If Christ is God-man, and I deny him to be God, do I not at least as entirely deny his primary and most essential character. In other words, do I not plainly 'deny the Lord that bought me?' It is evidently impossible for him who makes this denial to render to Christ those regards, that confidence, love, reverence, and obedience, which a man, who believed Christ to be God, would feel himself indispensably bound to render. Indeed, were it possible, he would necessarily, and in the very act of rendering them, condemn himself as guilty of idolatry. On the other hand, he who believes Christ to be God, cannot refuse to render them, without condemning himself as guilty, and without being actually guilty, of the plainest and grossest impiety, because he withholds from the true God the homage and obedience due to his character. The Unitarians censure the system of the Trinitarians as being idolatrous, and them as being idolaters. If the Unitarian scheme is true, the censure is just. We, on the other hand, and with equal justice, if our scheme is true, declare them to be guilty of direct and gross impiety; because they worship not 'the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost;' the Jehovah of

the Scriptures; the Jehovah Aleim, 'who is one Jehovah;' but another and very different God.

The admission of the Deity of Christ, therefore, if he be really God, is a fundamental doctrine of Christianity, mistakes about which are altogether dangerous and dreadful. This is plainly felt to be the case by the plain people even among the Socinians. For Mrs Barbauld informs us, that although the errors of the Trinitarians 'are losing ground among thinking people, yet there is in that class (among the Socinians,) who are called serious Christians, a sort of leaning towards them; an idea that they are, if not true, at least good to be believed; and that a salutary error is better than a dangerous truth.'

Can it then be believed, that God can have directed the Scriptures to be so written that the true meaning of them, in a case of this fundamental importance,—a case in which mankind are in so imminent danger of becoming either impious or idolatrous,—is so obscure as to make plain men utterly unable to find it out, however honestly disposed? and that the great body of religious men should, in all ages of the church, have totally and infinitely mistaken their real intention? Can that mode of interpretation, which leads, of course, to this conclusion, be the true one?

II. *The Unitarians reject the doctrine, that Christ is God, and the obvious meaning of all those passages which teach it, because the doctrine is mysterious.*

This I object to as a totally irrational ground of such rejection. There are two reasons which will effectually prove this irrationality.

1. All mankind readily admit, and if they believe any thing, must every moment admit, mysteries as the objects of their faith. This world is made up of atoms. What are they? Dr Priestley informs us that they are 'centres of attraction and repulsion.' This definition, translated out of Latin-English into Saxon-English, is, that 'atoms are centres of drawing to, and driving from;' a definition which, I believe, it would puzzle Dr Priestley himself to unriddle, and at least as applicable to points of space as to atoms. They are also defined to be 'solid extended somethings.' What is the something thus solid and extended? Here our inquiries are stopped, and an atom is found to be an absolute mystery. The world is made up of atoms. What binds them together, so as to constitute a world? Attraction, it is answered. What is attraction? To this there is no answer. The world, then, on which we tread, in which we live, and about which we think we have extensive knowledge, is wholly formed out of particles absolutely mysterious, bound together by a power equally mysterious.

These atoms constitute vegetables. What is a vegetable? 'An organized body,' it is answered; 'the subject of vegetable life.' What is vegetable life? To this question there is no satisfactory answer. In the same manner are we conducted to a speedy end in all our inquiries concerning the mineral, vegetable, and rational worlds.

Mystery meets us at every step, and lies at the bottom of the whole. The power by which this Discourse was thought, or written, or spoken, defies all human investigation.

If mysteries, then, are found everywhere in the works of God, can it be supposed that they are not found in the character and being of the same God? There is nothing more mysterious, more absolutely inexplicable, in the doctrine of the Trinity, than in the power by which, and the manner in which, mind acts upon matter.

2. The Unitarians themselves, though professedly rejecting mysteries, admit them into their creed without number. That a creature created all things, upholds all things, possesses all things, rules all things, and is the final cause of their existence; that a creature should be 'the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever;' that he should be the final judge and rewarder of the just and the unjust; that he should sit on the throne of the heavens, and receive the prayers of inspired men in this world, and the everlasting praises of the heavenly host in the world to come; or that God, if these things are not so, should have caused or permitted them to be written in his word—are, to say the least, mysteries as entire and as inexplicable as any which have ever entered the thoughts of man. It ill becomes those, who admit these things, therefore, to reject any thing merely on account of its being mysterious.

III. *The Unitarians take an unwarrantable license with the language of the Scriptures.*

I know not that I can express my own views of this subject, within the same compass, better than in the following words of a respectable writer, which are part of some Observations concerning Dr Priestley's Notes on the Scriptures:—'It is a leading and determined purpose of Dr Priestley's Notes to serve the cause of what is arrogantly termed Unitarianism; and he has certainly kept this purpose in view. To say the least, he is a zealous and resolute advocate. His maxim seems to have been, to maintain his cause at all events. Seldom is he at a loss for a gloss or an evasion, in aiming at the accomplishment of his object. If he meets with a passage whose indubitable reading, and whose obvious plain meaning, are such as every unbiased man would pronounce favourable to the Deity and atonement of Christ, the Doctor is ready with ample stores of metaphorical, enigmatical, and idiomatical forms of interpretation; and stubborn must be that text which will not bend under one or other of his modes of treatment. In some cases, a various reading, though none of the best, is called in to his assistance. Should this aid fail, some learned critic or other is at hand with a conjectured alteration. Or, if none of these means appear advisable, the philosophical commentator has in reserve a kind of logical alkali, which will at least neutralize a pungent passage; for example, the sage observation, 'About the interpretation of it critics differ much.'

'And lastly, in very desperate instances, a method is resorted to, the most simple and comprehensive imaginable; and that is, to say nothing at all about them!'

One of the modes in which the Unitarians take unwarrantable license with the language of the Scriptures, is to pronounce passages to be interpolated, which are abundantly evidenced by manuscripts, ancient versions, and quotations in writings of the fathers, to be genuine parts of the Scriptures.

Another is, to declare, without warrant, words and phrases to be wanting; and then to supply them; where they are supplied by no authority but their own. Thus Grotius and Dr Clark supply the word ἐστω in that remarkable text, Rom. ix. 5; and then translate it, 'Of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God' BE 'blessed for evermore.'

This, it will be observed, does not aid them at

all, because he 'who is over all things,' is, of course, God.

Another mode is, to annex a meaning to some particular word or phrase, which suits their own purpose, but which is entirely aside from all customary use. Thus Pierce interprets ουκ αρπαγμον ηγησατο το ειναι ισα Θεω; 'He thought it no robbery to be equal with God;' to mean, *He was not eager, nor tenacious, to retain that likeness to God:* a translation which no criticism can justify, or satisfactorily explain.

Another mode of the same nature is, to suggest the conjectural opinion of some other critic, or some learned friend; which is introduced with so much gravity, as to give a kind of weight and speciousness to the peculiar interpretation proposed. Thus Dr Priestley,* commenting on John xiv. 2, 'In my Father's house are many mansions;' says, 'Perhaps, with a learned friend of mine, we may understand the mansions in his Father's house, of which Jesus here speaks, to signify, not places of rest and happiness in heaven, but stations of trust and usefulness upon earth; such as he was then about to quit,' &c. Here the house of God is made to mean *earth*, and mansions, *stations;* and Christ, of course, was *going away* to prepare a place for his apostles *here*, where he and they then were; and was to come again, to receive them in the place whither he himself was going, that 'they might be with him' *there*, by continuing *here*.

Another mode of the same nature is, an unbounded license in making the scriptural language figurative.

That the language of the Scriptures is to a great extent, and in a high degree, figurative, is unquestionably true. But certainly there are limits to this character, not only in scriptural, but all other language. It must, I think, be admitted, that we are to consider the language of the Scriptures especially, and of all other good writings generally, as figurative, only in accordance with the following rules:

(1.) That the figure be agreeable to the state of the mind of him who uses it; that is, to his views and feelings.

(2.) That it be founded on some analogy or relation to the subject.

(3.) That it accord with the discourse, so far as to make sense.

(4.) That in the Scriptures it violate no doctrine declared, at least by the writer.

(5.) That it be so obvious, as not to demand invention or contrivance in the reader.

(6.) That it be explicable according to the opinions, or other circumstances of those for whom it was written, so as to be capable of being understood by them.

(7.) That it suit the occasion and other circumstances of the discourse.

But how, according to these or any other rules of construing language, are we to interpret the declaration, 'For by him were created all things, that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers,' to mean that Christ published the gospel and constituted the Christian church? Is it the same thing to publish the gospel, as to create? Is it the same thing to constitute the church, as to create? Are the gospel and the church 'all things that are in heaven and that are in earth?' Are they 'all things visible and invisible?' Who are the 'thrones,' the 'dominions,' the 'principalities,' and the 'powers?' Are they bishops, elders, and deacons: the only officers ever supposed to belong to the church?

The Holy Ghost is by Unitarians denied to be a person, and is commonly asserted to be no other than the power of God: the name *Spirit* being, in their view, always figurative. According to what rules of construction are we, on this plan, to interpret the following passages; in which I shall substitute the word *power* for Ghost, or Spirit; always intending by it, however, the divine power.

'All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men; but the blasphemy against the Holy' *Power* 'shall not be forgiven unto men.' Matt. xii. 13. 'Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy' *Power*. Matt. xxviii. 19. 'Why has Satan filled thy heart, to lie unto the Holy' *Power?* Acts v. 3. 'God anointed Jesus with the Holy' *Power* 'and with power.' Acts x. 33. Rom. xv. 13, 'That ye may abound in hope through the power of the Holy' *Power*. Rom. xv. 19, 'Through mighty signs, and wonders, by the power of the' *Power* 'of God.' 'In demonstration of the' *Power*, 'and of power.' John xvi. 13, 'Howbeit, when he, the' *Power* 'of truth has come, he will guide you into all truth; for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak,' &c. &c.

More instances cannot, I think, be necessary to elucidate this part of the subject.

The last mode which I shall mention, a mode adopted when a passage is too stubborn to bend to any of the preceding, is, to leave it with such an observation as this: 'Critics are very much divided about the meaning of this passage:' insinuating to the reader, that the passage is so obscure and perplexed, that he is to despair of any explanation.

In this manner, it seems to me, the Scriptures must soon become such as the prophet Isaiah declared they would become to the Jews, at a certain future period. 'The vision of all,' says that prophet, chap. xxix. 11, 'is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed; which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee; and he saith, I cannot, for it is sealed; and the book is delivered to him that is not learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee; and he saith, I am not learned.'

IV. *I object to the Unitarians direct unfairness in their conduct towards Trinitarians.*

The unfairness here intended respects two particulars.

1. They treat the Trinitarians as if they were Tritheists, or held the existence of three Gods.

This they do in several methods, particularly, the name Unitarian, as I formerly observed, is designed to denote that they, among Christians, exclusively hold the existence of one God. The very name itself, therefore, is intended to declare, that Trinitarians hold the existence of more Gods than one. An imputation which, they well know, every Trinitarian rejects with abhorrence.

Again: In arguing with Trinitarians, they customarily undertake to prove that the Scriptures, in a great variety of passages, assert that there is but one God: as if this were the very point, or at least one point, in debate between them and Trinitarians. Accordingly, when they

* Eclectic Review, No. ii. Vol. ii.

have proved this point, which a child can easily do, they commonly triumph, and appear to consider the dispute as ended, and their antagonists overthrown. In this way they insinuate to their readers that Trinitarians hold the existence of more Gods than one; and that all their arguments are intended to support this doctrine. Whereas every Unitarian perfectly well knows, that the unity of God is as entirely and as professedly holden by Trinitarians as himself; that none of their arguments are directed against it; and that this point has never been, and never can be, in debate between him and them. That the doctrine of the Trinity involves or infers the existence of more Gods than one, every Unitarian has a right to prove, and may with perfect fairness prove, if he can. But to insinuate, that Trinitarians believe the existence of more Gods than one, and to treat them as if they thus believed, when it is perfectly well known that every Trinitarian disclaims such belief with indignation, is conduct which, in my view, admits of no justification.

2. The Unitarians customarily undertake to prove that Christ is a man; and thence triumph also, as if they had refuted the doctrine of their opposers. Now it is well known to every Unitarian, that the Trinitarians with one voice acknowledge Christ to be a man; and that this point, therefore, is not in controversy between him and them.

It is wholly disingenuous, therefore, to insinuate that it is in debate, or to attempt to make it a part of the controversy, when they know that Trinitarians as uniformly hold it as themselves. Of these facts, however, they usually take not the least notice, but appear to consider both points as the principal topics in debate. Such conduct in their antagonists the Unitarians would censure with severity.

I shall conclude this discussion with two observations.

The first is, that the Unitarians are extensively disagreed concerning the person of Christ. The Arians consider him as a super-angelic being: The Socinians partly as a man, 'in whom dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily;' and partly as a man, differing from other men only by being wiser and better: The Sabellians, as God manifested in one manner: The Patripassians, as the Father living and suffering in the man Jesus Christ. Some of the Unitarians hold, that he created the universe; some that he made an atonement for sin; some that he ought to be worshipped; and some deny all these doctrines. This difference is derived from two sources; one is, that their reason or philosophy dictates nothing concerning Christ in which they can harmonize. The other is, that the Scriptures in no very satisfactory manner support either of their opinions. But it ought to be observed, that this very difference is of such a nature as strongly to indicate that the Scriptures exhibit Christ as God.

The second observation is, that Unitarianism has an evident tendency to infidelity.

This is strongly evident in the manner in which the Unitarians speak of the Scriptures, the insufficiency which they attribute to them for settling religious doctrines, and the superior sufficiency which they attribute to reason. It is evident, also, in the laxity of their ideas concerning what genuine religion is; their want of veneration for the sabbath; their want of attendance on the public worship of God; and their devotion to the pleasures and amusements of life.

Dr Priestley acknowledges, that 'the Unitarian societies do not flourish: that their members have but a slight attachment to them, and easily desert them.'

Voltaire also says, 'that down to his own time only a very small number of those called Unitarians had held any religious meetings.'

Dr Priestley also says, that 'many Unitarians have become more indifferent to religion in general, than they were before; and to all the modes and doctrines of religion.' Concerning himself, he says, 'that he was once a Calvinist, and that of the straitest sect; then a high Arian; next a low Arian; then a Socinian; and in a little time a Socinian of the lowest kind, in which Jesus Christ is considered as a mere man, the son of Joseph and Mary, and naturally as fallible and peccable as Moses, or any other prophet.' He also says, 'he does not know when his creed will be fixed.' This I consider as the true progress, nature, and tendency, of Unitarianism. The end of this progress in most men is easily foreseen. Let him, therefore, who finds himself inclined to think favourably of these opinions, consider well before he embraces them, what will probably be the final termination of his religious system.

SERMON XLII.

INCARNATION OF CHRIST.

God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh.—Rom. viii. 3.

I have, in several preceding Discourses, endeavoured to settle the meaning of the phrase, 'God's own Son,' used in this passage of the Scriptures. This was indispensably necessary at the opening of all the observations intended to be made concerning the doctrines of the Christian system. As these doctrines are truths, partly unfolding to us the character and conduct of this wonderful Person, and partly disclosing to us the consequences of his interference in the behalf of mankind; as his character, in a greater or less degree, affects every doctrine of what is appropriately called the Christian religion; and as those who set out with different views of his character, proceed farther and farther asunder, so as to form in the end entirely different systems of religious doctrine; it became indispensable that this great point should, as far as possible, be fixed

at the beginning. If the attempt to do this has been successful, in the degree which I have hoped, it will contribute not a little to settle on a firm foundation most of the doctrines which remain to be investigated. My own views concerning them it will at least contribute to explain.

In this passage we are informed, that 'God sent his Son in the likeness of sinful flesh.' The meaning of this phrase ('the likeness of sinful flesh') will be obvious from similar phrases in Phil. ii. 7, 8, 'He was made,' or, as it is in the original, 'He existed in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man.' In the first of these phrases, the original word, ὁμοιωματι, is the same with that translated 'likeness,' in the text. In the second, it is σχηματι, a term of a kindred signification, denoting *form* or *fashion*. In the passage in Philippians, the phrases, 'He existed in the likeness of men,' and 'He was found in fashion as a man,' denote, that he was a real man. In the text, the phrase, 'the likeness of sinful flesh,' denotes, that he was sent in real flesh; here figuratively called sinful, because it is in all other instances, except that of Christ, the flesh, or body, of sinful beings.

The doctrine contained in this passage, is, therefore, the following:—

That Christ, when he appeared in the world was a real man.

This doctrine, like that of the Deity of Christ, has been extensively disputed.

The heretics generally, who embraced the Gnostic philosophy, denied Christ to have been a man. Some individuals and some classes held, that he was clothed in a body of air; that he suffered only in appearance; and that Judas Iscariot suffered in his stead.

To all these and the like doctrines, they were led by philosophizing on this subject. It is a just observation of Lardner, that 'heretics were, in the general, men of a curious and inquisitive turn of mind, and greatly indulged this disposition, which led them to speculate on many points of doctrine concerning which the Scriptures had afforded little or no light. When the Scriptures were in some cases inconsistent with their notions, they were for making them yield to their philosophical opinions. Thus the simplicity of truth was banished, and endless divisions arose.' Tertullian also says, that 'heresies are derived from philosophy; and that secular wisdom is a rash (or fool-hardy) interpreter of the divine nature and disposition.'

These observations are, with equal force and justice, applicable to heresies of modern days, and those of the ancients; and few of either will be found to have arisen from any other source, beside a philosophy too proud or too knowing to submit implicitly to the testimony of God.

There are two modes of conduct with respect to religion, in which the mind may be justly said to act rationally. One is, to determine antecedently to our knowledge of revelation, as well as we can, what is religious truth, by our reason; the other, to find out and embrace, when we have become acquainted with revelation, what it declares to be religious truth. In the former of these situations reason is our only guide. In the latter, its only business is to discover whether the professed revelation is a real one; and after this point is settled affirmatively, to discover and receive whatever it declares. God has now become our guide; and as he can neither deceive nor be deceived, our duty is to receive his testimony implicitly. Had this plain and equitable rule been uniformly followed, Christianity would never have been thus distorted, nor the church rent asunder by such lamentable divisions.

The reason why the Docetæ, one class of the ancient Unitarians, denied Christ to be a man, was the general principle of the Gnostics; that moral evil has its seat in matter. Hence they held that the human soul, which they believed to have been originally pure, derived its contamination solely from its union with the body. It was no unnatural consequence for those who embraced this doctrine to adopt the impossibility of a union between God and the human body; since such a union was, of course, supposed to be capable of contaminating even the divine purity.

Their philosophy, therefore, seems necessarily to have led them into the conclusion, that Christ, whom they believed to be God, was never united to a human body. In the same manner has the philosophy of other sects led them also to embrace doctrines directly opposed to the express declarations of the Scriptures.

That Christ was a man, in the absolute sense, is easily made evident by many kinds of proof, and by almost numberless passages of Scripture.

1. He is called a man, and the Son of Man, in a very great multitude of instances.

The number of instances in which he has this latter appellation is no less than seventy-one. In sixty-seven of these instances it is given to him by himself, once by Daniel, once by St Stephen, and twice by St John in the Revelation. In giving this appellation to himself, it will I suppose be acknowledged, that he disclosed his real character, and was what he calls himself, the Son of Man.

When he is styled a man, also, he is described with just such characteristics, those excepted which involve error or sin, as belong to other men. He is exhibited as meek, lowly, and dutiful to his parents; as hungry, thirsty, and weary; as sustained and refreshed by food, drink, and sleep; as the subject of natural affection; as weeping with tenderness and sorrow; as the subject of temptations, infirmities, and afflictions; and, generally, as having all the innocent characteristics which belong to our nature.

2. The history of his birth, life, and death, is unanswerable proof that Christ was a man.

Christ was born, lived, and died essentially in the same manner as other men. He 'increased in wisdom' as well as 'in stature:' wrought with his hands, ate, drank, slept, suffered on the cross, gave up the ghost, and was buried, in the same manner as other men.

3. This point is argued at large and proved by St Paul, in the second chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews.

In the passage containing this argument are the following declarations: 'Forasmuch, then, as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself took part of the same;' and, 'Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren.'

The proofs which I have alleged will, it is presumed, be considered as abundantly sufficient. That Christ had a human body cannot be questioned. It is equally unquestionable, that to increase in wisdom, to be tempted, to be sorrowful, to be dutiful to human parents, together with other things of a similar nature, are

attributable neither to God nor to the human body, but are appropriate characteristics of the human soul. Christ, therefore, had a human soul as well as a human body, and was in the absolute sense, a man.

But he was not a man only.

This also is evident from numerous scriptural declarations. St Paul says, Philip. ii. 5, he who was in the form of God, and thought it no robbery to be equal with God, nevertheless made himself of no reputation (εκενωσε, *emptied himself, or divested himself,* of this *form of God,* the glory and greatness which he before possessed); and, 'taking upon himself the form of a servant, was born (or existed) in the likeness of men.' It is not my intention in quoting this passage, to insist on the Deity of Christ, so unequivocally declared in it; but only to observe, that he who was thus a man was, antecedently to his appearance in this human character, a person entirely distinct from what he was as a man.

Antecedently to his 'being born in the likeness of men,' he existed, and existed in 'the form of God, and thought it no robbery to be equal with God. Nevertheless (ἑαυτον εκενωσε), he emptied himself.' He existed, therefore, previously to his appearance as a man, and 'emptied himself' voluntarily, when he (voluntarily, also) 'took upon himself the form of a servant, and was born in the likeness of men.' In other words, the person, here spoken of as 'being in the form of God, became incarnate. This person, I have attempted to show, was divine; and no other than *the Word, or Son of God.*

The great objection to the doctrine of the incarnation of Christ is an objection of philosophy only, and in my view a very unphilosophical objection. 'It is a doctrine,' say the objectors, 'wholly mysterious and inexplicable.'

After what was urged in the preceding Discourse on the subject of mysteries, very little can be thought necessary to be added here. Let it however be observed, that the truth of the objection is cheerfully acknowledged by me; and, so far as I know, by all who hold this doctrine. At the same time, it is an objection without force; and is idly urged, to say the least, by Unitarians. When the Arians will explain how their super-angelic being became the infant, and ultimately the man, Jesus Christ, and did, and suffered, and accomplished the things asserted of Christ; when the Socinians will explain how he was created by the Holy Ghost, was born of Joseph and Mary; how organized matter thinks; how he who begun to exist at his birth, existed antecedently 'in the form of God;' 'emptied himself;' and was then 'born in the likeness of men;' and when both, or either, of them will explain how the things said in the Scriptures concerning Christ, are true, and at the same time consistent with their respective schemes; or how God could say them, if they were not true; I think I may venture upon an attempt to explain the mystery of the incarnation. Until we know the nature of the divine existence, and the nature of the human soul, we shall never be able to determine how far God may unite himself with such a soul, or whether such a union is impossible.

On this and every other question concerning the nature of the divine existence, and of the existence of finite minds, we cannot even begin to form ideas, but must be indebted, for whatever facts we either know or believe, to the testimony of God.

For aught that we are able to determine, a finite mind may be so far united to the infinite mind, as that all the views, affections, purposes, ends, and agency of both, which are not discordant in their very nature, may exactly coincide; and, independently of their character as finite or infinite, constitute but a single character and a single agency. But, as I have before said, for all our just conceptions on this subject, we are and must be indebted, to the testimony of God only; and beyond this testimony, as well as without it, we literally know nothing.

This testimony, as it relates to the doctrine under consideration, is in my view complete. That Christ is truly and essentially God, has, if I mistake not, been sufficiently evinced; and also that he appeared in this world a man in the absolute and perfect sense. This account of his character will be advantageously elucidated by a summary comparison of the representations made of him in both these characters.

As God it is said:	As man it is said:
That he is God, the true God, the mighty God, the great God, Jehovah, I am, and Emmanuel, &c. That his goings forth were from of old, from everlasting; that he was in the beginning; set up from everlasting, or ever the earth was, &c. That he was in the beginning with God; rejoicing alway before him; present, when he prepared the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth; and possessed of glory with him before ever the world was. With reference to his greatness as God united to man, it is said, that Gabriel predicted his birth, an angel declared to the shepherds of Bethlehem that he was born, and a choir of the heavenly host sung together his natal hymn.	That he was an infant, a child, a man, a carpenter, the son of Joseph and Mary, and the brother, or cousin-german, of James and Joses. That he was born in the reign of Herod the Great, and of the Roman emperor Augustus Cæsar. That he was born in Judea; in Bethlehem, the city of David; in the stable of an inn; and was cradled in a manger. That he was refused a place in the inn, forgotten in the stable, and unfurnished even with the ordinary comforts provided for the children of peasants.
That he is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.	That he grew while a child really and perceptibly, in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man, and therefore changed day by day, and that through his life.
That all things are his; that he upholds them by the word of his power, and that they were made for him, and by him.	That he had not where to lay his head, and was sustained, without any property of his own, by the bounty of his disciples, and, at times, of others.
That he is Lord of all things, of angels, principalities, and powers; and will subdue, and is able to subdue, all things unto himself, and put all opposi-	That he was subject to the Jewish and Roman governments, paid tribute, and performed all the usual duties of a child to his parents, and of a subject to

tion under his feet: and that his throne and dominion are for ever and ever.

That he was originally rich in the possession of all things; and the continual delight of his Father in the heavens; where the angels unceasingly worshipped him.

That at the close of this world, he will come in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory, and with all his holy angels; will summon the dead from their graves; will gather all nations before the throne of his glory; will judge both angels and men according to their works; will punish the wicked with an everlasting destruction from the glory of his power; will conduct the righteous into heaven; and will cause them to live, and reign, with him for ever and ever.

Finally, in his divine character, it is said, that he was in the form of God, and thought it no robbery to be equal with God.

his ruler; and was exposed to the direct assaults and temptations of the devil.

That, for our sakes, he became poor, afflicted, despised, and rejected of men; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; lightly esteemed, hated, and persecuted.

That he was betrayed by Judas; seized by the Roman soldiers; brought before the Sanhedrim; judged, and condemned to death; again brought before Pilate, judged, and condemned; buffeted, crowned with thorns, mocked, spit upon, scourged, nailed to the cross, and carried to the tomb.

But that having emptied himself, and taken upon him the form of a servant, he was born in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

At the close of this wonderful career he was raised from the dead. He himself informs us, that 'he laid down his own life, voluntarily, and that no one was 'able to take it out of his hands.' He also informs us, that 'he himself took it up again.' Accordingly, he rose from the grave on the third day, and after conversing familiarly with his disciples 'concerning the things pertaining to the kingdom of God,' forty days, he ascended to heaven in a cloud of glory, attended by the heavenly host; entered the world of glory in triumph, and 'sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high;' or as it is elsewhere expressed, 'This man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, sat down for ever on the right hand of God.' 'At his name,' henceforth, 'every knee' is required to 'bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and every tongue to confess, that he is the Lord,' or sovereign of all things, 'to the glory of God the Father.' The throne of infinite dominion is accordingly, and appropriately, styled 'the throne of God and the Lamb.' Before this throne, 'the four living ones cry, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who wast, and who art, and who art to come. The four-and-twenty elders cast their crowns at his feet, and say, Thou art worthy, O Lord! to receive glory, and honour, and power, for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created. And the multitude of angels round about the throne, and the living ones, and the elders, say with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing: and every creature, which is in heaven, on the earth, under the earth, and in the sea, is heard, saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.' To this divine ascription, the four living ones subjoin their solemn 'Amen.'

On this comparative view of the wonderful subject under consideration, I make the following remarks:—

1. It is evident to the least consideration, that the things which are here said of Christ are exceedingly unlike each other.

So unlike are they, that if we suppose two beings to be the subjects of holiness, their characters cannot be more different from each other than the things which are here declared concerning Christ.

Let any man attempt to describe two, the most distant characters of two, the most distant holy beings, and he will find himself unable to place them farther asunder than these two characters of Christ are placed: therefore,

2. These two characters cannot be given to any being possessed of a simple nature.

That they are truly said will not be here called in question. If we suppose the person of whom they are said to be only God, we shall be obliged either to say, with the Sabellians, that Christ was no other than God manifesting himself in one particular form; or, with the Patripassians, that the Father lived here, suffered, and died, as a man; or, with the Docetæ, that Christ was God only; that his appearance as a man was an illusion; that he had a visionary body, and suffered only in appearance and pretence; while Judas Iscariot, or some other culprit, was crucified in his stead.

It is plainly impossible, that the same simple being should be 'set up from everlasting,' be the 'Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending,' and yet 'be born in Judea in the reign of Herod the Great;' be 'the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever,' and yet 'increase in wisdom, and in favour with God and man;' 'create all things, visible and invisible,' and yet 'be made of a woman;' be the lawgiver to the universe, and yet 'be made under the law;' 'uphold all things by the word of his power,' and yet be a petitioner for the daily supplies of his wants, and the protection of his person; possess all things, and yet 'have not where to lay his head;' 'know all things,' and yet not know, as, if we adopt the common interpretation, we must suppose he did not know, the time of the destruction of Jerusalem; be the final judge and rewarder of the quick and the dead, and yet be tried, condemned, and executed by men; and be 'in the form of God,' and justly 'think it no robbery to be equal with God,' and yet 'be a servant,' a man, and a frail and dying man.

But all these things, and innumerable others, substantially of the same nature in both respects, are declared concerning Christ. All also are declared by God himself. They are therefore true, and true in the natural, obvious sense. Of course, they are 'worthy of all acceptation.'

It follows then that Christ is, notwithstanding the sneers of Unitarians, God and man. In the language of the Scriptures, 'The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us.' Yet, humble as were the station and circumstances in which he appeared, 'we' are able still to

'behold his' glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father.

3. There are three important facts recorded concerning Christ, in which he differs wholly from all created beings, and which merit the attentive consideration of every serious man.

(1.) He always taught in his own name, even when altering and annulling the acknowledged word of God.

Christ came to change the Mosaic system into the Christian; and accordingly substituted the latter for the former. In every part of this employment he taught in his own name. The preceding prophets had uniformly introduced their instructions with 'Thus saith the Lord;'—'Thus saith Jehovah.' Christ, immediately after addressing his consolations to his disciples by way of preface, introduces his sermon on the mount in the following manner: 'Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets;' that is, the system of religion in the Old Testament; 'I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily *I* say unto you.' &c. This phraseology he repeats everywhere throughout this sermon, and throughout the gospel. Not once does he say, 'Thus saith the Lord,' during his ministry, nor teach with any authority except his own, Now it is evident, that the authority which he actually assumed was equal in his view, and in the view of the Scriptures, to that which sanctioned the declarations of the Old Testament, because he changes and annuls both the doctrines and the precepts of the Old Testament at his pleasure.

In the same manner, when he appeared unto St Paul in the way to Damascus, after informing Paul that he was 'Jesus whom he persecuted,' he commissioned him to preach the gospel to the Gentiles, and sent him as his apostle to them, by his own authority, without appealing to any other.

As, therefore, the authority assumed in these cases is equivalent to that by which the Old Testament was revealed, he who rightfully assumed it was God.

The same authority, also, Christ assumed and exhibited, generally, when he wrought miracles; and he never makes mention of any other.

(2.) The apostles uniformly appeal to the authority of Christ in their preaching and miracles.

'In the name of Jesus Christ,' says St Peter to the impotent man, 'rise up and walk.'

'By what power,' said the Sanhedrim to Peter and his companions, 'or by what name, have you done this?' that is, healed the impotent man. 'Be it known unto you all,' answered the apostle, 'and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole.' 'Æneas,' said Peter, 'Jesus Christ maketh you whole.' 'All authority,' says our Saviour, 'is delivered to me in heaven and in earth. As my Father hath sent me, so I send you.'

Under this commission the apostles preached and acted, and in multiplied instances have declared to us that it was the authority of God.

A single declaration of this sort will suffice for them all. Mark xvi. 20, 'And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen.'

(3.) In the Revelation of St John, it is to be observed, Christ receives the praises of the heavenly host both simply and in conjunction with the Father, but never unites in them.

Neither Christ nor the Holy Spirit is ever called upon to perform the great duty of all creatures—to praise God, or to pray to him. Both these duties Christ performed as a man, when here on earth, but he is never exhibited as performing the duty of praise in heaven. All other virtuous beings are exhibited as making this their constant worship, and a prime part of their duty. But amid all their ascriptions of praise to God, Christ is nowhere exhibited as uniting with them in this duty, in itself so delightful to a virtuous mind, and so naturally and obviously obligatory on every rational being. The whole multitude of saints and angels, with the four living ones at their head, join without exception in the heavenly song, 'Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth on the throne.' But the only part ever attributed to Christ, is to be united in receiving the ascription together with 'him that sitteth on the throne;' for the ascription is made 'to him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb, for ever and ever.'*

I have now finished the observations which I intended to make concerning this interesting subject, and exhibited what appears to me to be the true meaning of the remarkable phraseology in the text, 'God sending his own Son, in the likeness of sinful flesh;' and of other similar passages found in the Scriptures; such as, 'The Word was made flesh;' 'the seed of David according to the flesh;' 'of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came;' 'Christ is come in the flesh,' &c.

I shall now conclude the Discourse with the following

REMARKS.

1. This doctrine teaches us, in the strongest manner, the condescension of Christ.

In this light it is considered by St Paul, in that memorable passage, Phil. ii. 5, &c. 'Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men.'

No subject presents to us so wonderful an example of condescension as the incarnation of Christ; nor could any fact fill our minds with the same astonishment, were it not that we have been accustomed to hear it repeated from the cradle, and, like the state of the weather, rendered an object of perpetual familiarity; a thing almost of course, in the ordinary current of our thoughts by unceasing inculcation.

From these causes we pass it without serious attention, and, even when we dwell upon it, scarcely realize its nature. The impressions which it makes on the mind, resemble those made on the eye of such as have been long accustomed to them, by a delightful landscape, a stupendous cataract, or a mountain which loses its summit in the clouds. At the view of these a stranger is fixed in exquisite delight, and has all his thoughts engrossed and his emotions absorbed by the wonderful scene. No language will, in his view, serve to describe, and no picture to image, on the one hand, the beauty, or on the other, the sublimity, of these illustrious objects. To do them justice in his representations, and to spread

* Rev. v. 13.

fairly before others the views, formed of them by his own mind, he will labour in thought, select and refuse, alternately, the language which offers itself, and will at last sit down discouraged, without a hope of being able to render his conceptions visible to other eyes, or to do any thing like justice to what was so magnificent in the view of his own. Those, in the meantime, who have long lived in the neighbourhood of the same objects, will in many, though not indeed in all instances, survey them without emotion, and even without attention; apparently as insensible to their beauty and grandeur as the horses which they ride, or the oxen which they drive.

Such seem but too commonly to be the views formed by most men concerning the incarnation of Christ, and such the insensibility with which it is but too generally regarded. Even Christians, like their predecessors mentioned in the Gospel, are, in innumerable instances, 'fools' in this respect, 'and slow of heart to believe,' or even to realize.

But let us, for a moment at least, lay aside these obtuse views, these 'eyes' which 'are dull of seeing,' these 'hearts' too 'gross to understand.' Let us shake off the torpor which benumbs our frame, and rouse ourselves to perception and feeling. Let us regard this wonderful subject with common justice, and common candour.

The glorious Person, who in the Scriptures is designated by the appellation, ὁ Λογος του Θεου, or the Word of God, 'in the beginning created the heavens and the earth;' and said, 'Let there be light, and there was light;' 'Let there be a firmament, and there was a firmament.' His hand also lighted up the flame of the sun, and kindled the stars. He 'upholds' the universe 'by the word of his power;' and preserves order and regularity throughout all the parts of this amazing system.

In the heavens he shines with inexpressible splendour. On the earth he lives and works, provides and sustains, and satisfies the wants of every living thing. Throughout immensity he quickens into life, action, and enjoyment the innumerable multitudes of intelligent beings. The universe which he made, he also governs. The worlds of which it is composed, he rolls through the infinite expanse with an almighty and unwearied hand, and preserves them in their respective places and motions with an unerring harmony. From the vast storehouse of his bounty, he feeds and clothes the endless millions whom his hand has made, and from the riches of his own unchangeable mind, informs the innumerable host of intelligent creatures with ever improving virtue, dignity, and glory. To all these he allots the respective parts which they are qualified to act in the boundless system of good which his wisdom contrived, and his power has begun to execute; furnishes them with the means of being useful in his eternal kingdom; and thus prepares them to be amiable and excellent in his sight, and instruments of perpetually increasing good to each other.

At the head of this great kingdom he 'sits upon a throne high and lifted up,' 'far exalted above all heavens;' surveys, with an intuitive view, and with divine complacency, the amazing work which his voice has called into being, and beholds it increasing without intermission in happiness, wisdom, and virtue, and advancing, with a regular progress, towards consummate glory and perfection.

Although 'he is not worshipped, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth unto all life, and breath, and all things;' yet before him angels bow and veil their faces. 'The four living ones rest not day nor night, crying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who wast, and who art, and who art to come.' And the whole multitude of the heavenly host, 'the number of whom is ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands,' unite in the everlasting song, 'Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever.'

From this stupendous height of greatness and enjoyment, this divine Person, passing all the bounds between God and man, between the infinite mind, and lifeless matter, united himself to 'man, who is but a worm;' assumed to himself a human soul and a human body, and in a manner incomprehensible by us, and not improbably by all other creatures, became thenceforth God-man, inseparably united in one most wonderful and mysterious Person.

Of this singular act, the end was not less glorious than the act itself was amazing. It was to save a race of rebellious creatures, whom he needed not, from misery and ruin; of creatures, whom with a word he could have returned to their original nothing, and whose places with another word he could have filled with equal or greater numbers, at his pleasure; all obedient, faithful, and happy. I shall not, however, dwell on this subject at the present time. Occasions still more appropriate will hereafter bring it up to view. The single point on which I would now insist, is the infinite condescension of Christ.

This glorious person 'humbles himself to behold the things which are done under the sun.' How much more when he came from his 'high and holy place' to dwell beneath that sun, and take up his residence on his footstool! All this, however, he was pleased to do. 'He emptied himself, took upon himself the form of a servant, and was born in the likeness of men.'

What were the views which angels formed of this new and astonishing event? Easily may we imagine, that all heaven was lost in wonder, and buried in silence, to behold this transition from infinite glory to supreme humiliation, from the throne of the universe to a tenement of clay. How instinctively ought we, uniting with angels in the same views and the same emotions, to behold, wonder, and adore!

2. What a pattern of condescension is here set before us for our imitation. St Paul makes this practical use of the doctrine under consideration. 'Let the same mind be in you,' says he to the Philippians, 'which was also in Christ.'

Condescension is here enforced on the race of man with an authority and example literally infinite. The divine wisdom dictated the condescension of Christ, and the divine goodness carried it into execution. In it we see the manner in which the infinite mind is pleased to act, and which boundless excellence approves and loves. This, then, is a character and conduct to which we are urged by the highest of all considerations, the approbation and example of God. Would we, then, be like God; would we be 'perfect as he is perfect;' would we obtain his approbation; would we inherit the blessings which he confers on those who are approved by him; would we become really excellent and lovely; we shall 'give all diligence,' that 'the same mind may be in us which was also in Christ.' We shall 'conde-

scend to men of low degree;' be 'meek and lowly of heart:' be satisfied with humble stations, offices, and employments; and feel that no human interest is beneath our notice, and no human business unfit for us to perform, when we are called to perform it, and when others by the performance can be relieved, disposed to virtue, or made happy.

But how different is the usual conduct and the prevailing character of man! All men sigh to be rich, and none are contented with humble circumstances. All men pant to be great, and none are satisfied with a lowly condition. The rich despise the poor, the great trample on the small. When we become rich, we sigh for additional riches. When we become great, we toil, and watch, and weary ourselves through life, to become greater. All beneath us in these mere accidents, we overlook, contemn, insult, and style the dirt and scum of the earth.

Christ, on the contrary, became, voluntarily, not only a man, but a poor man, a lowly man, the son of a carpenter, humble in his station, without place, or power, or wealth, and perfectly satisfied to be without them all. His friends, his disciples, his apostles, were selected from the poor and lowly; and he alleged it as one unanswerable proof of his Messiahship, that by him 'the poor had the gospel preached unto them.' This was the character of him whom angels worship, and whom the universe obeys.

Christ descended to these lowly men, and to these humble circumstances, from the throne of the heavens. Shall not we, then, be willing to let ourselves down from the side, or even the summit of our ant-hill, to visit our fellow emmets at the bottom? How small the descent at the utmost! How silly, how base, how contradictory to common-sense, the pride which refuses to make it!

Often, very often, the men whom we despise as greatly beneath us, are better, wiser, and more excellent in the sight of God than ourselves. Always we are odious to him, and contemptible in the eye of reason, for this very pride. Let every proud man then feel, that for this very character which he so fondly cherishes, he is hateful in the sight of God, and justly contemptible in that of men; that the character which he despises is the very character in which Christ chose to appear; and that the men whom he treats with abuse and insolence, are of that very class out of which Christ selected his friends and apostles.

SERMON XLIII

COVENANT OF REDEMPTION.

When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied, by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.—Isa. liii. 10—12.

If his soul shall make a propitiatory sacrifice, he shall see a seed, which shall prolong their days; and the gracious purpose of Jehovah shall prosper in his hands. Of the travail of his soul he shall see (the fruit) and be satisfied: by the knowledge of him shall my servant justify many; for the punishment of their iniquities he shall bear. Therefore will I distribute to him the many for his portion; and the mighty people shall he share for his spoil: because he poured out his soul unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many; and made intercession for the transgressors.—Lowth.

In the first chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians, St Paul declares, that 'God hath chosen us in Christ, before the foundation of the world; having predestinated us to the adoption of children, by Jesus Christ, to himself; according to the good pleasure of his will; to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved.'

The manner in which this transaction took place, and in which the purposes of it were accomplished, is recorded in the text. The Person who speaks in the text is unquestionably God the Father; as is evident from the fact, that he calls Christ in the 11th verse 'my servant.' The context, as you well know, is an eminent and remarkable prophecy concerning the birth, life, and sufferings of Christ; and has been acknowledged as such, so far as my information extends, by both the Jewish and Christian churches universally, in every age since it was written. Almost the whole of it is occupied by an account of his humiliation and sufferings, described with such a degree of minuteness and exactness, as to wear the appearance rather of a history than of prophecy.

In the text, a covenant is made on the part of the speaker, with the Person of whom he speaks; or, on the part of God the Father with the Son. In the tenth verse, the first of the text, it is proposed, conditionally, in the following terms: 'When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed; he shall prolong his days; and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.' In the translation of Bishop Lowth, which differs from the common one only by being more correct and explicit, it is, 'If his soul shall make a propitiatory sacrifice, he shall see a seed, which shall prolong their days; and the gracious purpose of Jehovah shall prosper in his hands.' The difference lies, principally, in the second clause, 'He shall see *a*

seed which shall prolong *their* days.' It could not, I think, with propriety be promised, as a reward to Christ for his sufferings, that, in any sense he should prolong his own days; but, with the most perfect propriety that he should see a seed which, in a sense hereafter to be explained, should prolong their days. The days of him, who 'is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever;' 'the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the ending, could not in any sense be prolonged in consequence of his sufferings, or of any other possible event. The word *his*, supplied by the translators, is supplied erroneously: since in the present translation it presents a meaning which plainly cannot be admitted. The justice of these remarks will be farther evident from the repetition of the same covenant in the 11th verse: 'He shall see of the travail of his soul;' that is, as explained by Lowth, 'Of the travail of his soul he shall see the fruit, and be satisfied; 'By his knowledge,' or, as Lowth more correctly renders it, 'By the knowledge of him shall my servant justify many.' The justification of the many, here spoken of, connected with its consequences, is the very reward promised in the preceding verse, in the words, 'He shall see a seed, which shall prolong their days:' and here the reward promised is no other than the justification, and consequent eternal life, of those who should become interested in his death.

Still farther is this interpretation evinced to be just, by the repetition of the promise in the twelfth verse, or third of the text; 'Therefore I will divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death;' or, as more happily rendered by Bishop Lowth, 'Therefore I will distribute to him the many for his portion; and the mighty people shall he share for his spoil, because he poured out his soul unto death.' It is not true that Christ has a portion divided to him with the great, or a spoil divided to him with the strong. 'He trode the wine-press alone, and of the people there was none with him.' Nor is there any one to share with him the reward of his sufferings; but he was alone in the sufferings and the reward alike. Accordingly, in the Septuagint this passage is rendered, 'For this cause shall he receive many for his inheritance, and shall share spoils of the strong.'

Finally: The same thing is abundantly evinced in Psal. lxxxix. where also the same covenant is recorded. 'Once have I sworn by my holiness, that I will not lie unto David. His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me.' And again: 'His seed also will I make to endure for ever, and his throne as the days of heaven.' It is to be observed, that in all these passages the reward promised to Christ consists in giving persons to him, as 'seed,' 'the many,' 'the mighty people.' These are undoubtedly no other than 'the general assembly and church of the first-born;' styled elsewhere 'the children of God;' 'little children;' 'sons and daughters.' They are his own people, those in whom he has a peculiar property; persons justified in this manner have become 'his portion,' 'his spoil,' 'his seed.' The reward of his sufferings here promised is to consist of these.

It is not, however, to consist in the persons only, but in their circumstances also. It is not promised, merely that they shall be given to him as a possession, but that they shall be given to him in a peculiar manner; attended with one circumstance, at least, which in the eye of the Promiser was considered as materially important to the nature of the gift. 'He shall see a seed, which shall prolong their days;' or, as in the corresponding passage, 'shall endure for ever.' The meaning of this phraseology is to be sought in the use of it in parallel passages, found in the Scriptures. In Psal. xv. David inquires, 'Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill?' and immediately answers, 'He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness.' In Psal. xlix. 12, he says of the wicked, that, 'being in honour, they abide not, but are like the beasts that perish.' In Psal. cxxv. 1, he says, 'They that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever.' In John xv. 10, our Saviour saith to his disciples, 'If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love, even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.' In 1 John ii. 17, it is said, 'And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.' In Psal. cii. 28, it is said, 'The children of thy servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before thee.'

We are now prepared to settle the meaning of the phrase under consideration. 'To prolong their days,' 'to endure for ever,' is to 'abide in the tabernacle of God,' 'in his holy hill,' 'in the heavens:' 'to abide in the love of Christ, as he abides in his Father's love, for ever:' to abide, when 'the world has passed away, and the lust thereof:' 'to be established before God,' or in his presence. In a word, it is to dwell for ever in heaven, amid the enjoyments of a happy immortality. This is what the Scriptures consider as abiding, enduring, and being established, whenever this language is applied to men. In opposition to this, the wicked are said to be cut off, and to perish, to be as the grass, to be destroyed, to be no more; and 'their candle,' is said to go out. This part of the promise, then, is no other than that the seed of Christ shall enjoy a blessed eternity.

In the passages quoted from Psal lxxxix. an additional promise is made in the same covenant. It is there said, that 'his seed shall endure for ever, and his throne,' that is, his dominion over them particularly, 'as the days of heaven.' The same thing is also covenanted, in different phraseology, in Isa. ix. 6, 7, 'For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Father of the everlasting age, and the Prince of peace. And of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end.' Here we are taught, that 'of the increase of the government' of Christ, that is, of its splendour and glory, 'and of the peace,' or prosperity of his subjects accomplished by it, 'there shall be no end:' in other words, that the glory of his government, and the happiness of his church, shall increase for ever.

The condition on his part, to which these rewards are promised, is, that 'he shall make his soul an offering for sin,' or a propitiatory sacrifice. Another condition is also specified, as the procuring cause of the reward, in the last verse; and therefore was undoubtedly included, although not expressed, in the two former verses; this is, that 'he made intercession for the transgressors.

In this passage, then, we have the substance of the mediation of Christ drawn out in the essential particulars: his humiliation, atonement, and intercession. The reward, also, that is, the great object which was his inducement to undertake this mediation, is distinctly expressed: viz. that 'he should see a seed, which should prolong their days,' and that; the gracious purpose of Jehovah should prosper in his hands.' This, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, is by St Paul styled 'the joy set before him;' that is, set before him in this promise, or covenant; for which, he informs us, 'Christ endured the cross, and despised the shame.'

In the text also we are taught the means by which on their part, mankind become his seed, expressed in the following declaration: 'By the knowledge of him shall my servant justify many.' By the knowledge of Christ here we are unquestionably to understand, that knowledge of God the Father, and Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent, which in John xvii. 3, he declares to be 'life eternal;' and which in the 8th verse he speaks of as being the same with evangelical faith. 'They have known surely, that I have come out from thee; and they have believed that thou didst send me.' By this faith, as you well know, we are abundantly declared in the Scriptures to be justified. The declaration of Paul to Peter, when, at Antioch, 'he separated himself from the Gentiles, through fear of them that were of the circumcision, and was therefore to be blamed,' may stand in the place of all other passages, on this point. 'We, who are Jews, and not sinners of the Gentiles, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.' The faith of the gospel is, therefore, the knowledge by which, it is said in the text, Christ 'shall justify many.' The reason why it is called knowledge here and elsewhere is, that it involves views so just, extensive, and firmly established concerning this glorious Person; whereas, in the same mind no such views existed, antecedently to the exercise of this faith. For Christ, like every other spiritual object, can only be 'spiritually discerned.'

All these things, also, are exhibited to us in the form of a covenant. To this covenant, as to every other, there are two parties; God, who promises; and his Servant, who was to justify many. A condition is specified, to which is annexed a promise of reward. The condition is, that Christ should 'make his soul an offering for sin,' and 'make intercession for the transgressors;' or, in other words, execute the whole office of a priest for mankind. The reward is, that he should 'receive the many for his portion,' and that they should 'prolong their days,' or endure for ever. It is remarkable, that this covenant on the part of God the Father, like that made with Noah, and that made with Abraham, and various others recorded in the Scriptures, is in Psalm lxxxix. exhibited as a promissory oath. 'Once have I sworn by my holiness, that I will not lie unto David: his seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as long as the sun.'

I have dwelt minutely on the explanation of this passage of Scripture, because I have not seen it discussed in this manner, or with a reference to what is the main subject of it; and because I believed that a minute examination was necessary to a distinct and satisfactory knowledge of what is contained in it.

If this explanation be admitted, the text contains the following

DOCTRINE.

That God the Father entered into a covenant with Christ, in which he promised him, on condition that he should become a propitiation and intercessor for sinners, as a reward of his labours and sufferings, the future possession of a church, which under his government should be glorious and happy for ever.

Concerning this covenant, usually called the Covenant of Redemption, I make the following observations:—

1. This covenant was made from eternity.

In the first chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians, St Paul, speaking of himself and his fellow Christians, says, 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in (or through) Christ, according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love; having predestinated us unto the adoption of children, by Jesus Christ, to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will. In this passage St Paul teaches us, that God blesses his church, or Christians, with all spiritual blessings; or, as in the original, 'with every spiritual blessing; through Christ, according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world:' and that he has 'predestinated us,' particularly 'unto the adoption of children unto himself,' through Christ also.

This choice of his church, then, this 'predestination of it to the adoption of children through Christ,' existed 'before the foundation of the world.' But this choice, this 'predestination of the church to the adoption of children, unto himself through Christ,' is the very same thing which, in another form, is declared in the text. The covenant mentioned in the text was therefore a transaction existing before the foundation of the world; or, as this phraseology uniformly means in the Scriptures, from eternity.

The text itself was written seven hundred years before Christ. It will not be supposed, that the transaction recorded in it was then first admitted into the counsels of God; or that he, 'with whom is no variableness, nor shadow of turning,' changed his mind in the days of Isaiah concerning this mighty object. If any person should be at a loss concerning this fact, let him remember that this covenant contains the very same promises which were made to David, Abraham, and our first parents; to all of whom the same wonderful transaction was, in terms less explicit, disclosed. The transaction itself, and the objects which it involved, were unquestionably the most important parts of the providence of God towards this world. It cannot, therefore, be believed, that it was left unprovided for when the system was originally formed. Undoubtedly it was the object which was chiefly in view in the providence of God, and was an original part of the system. Accordingly, St Peter says concerning Christ, that 'he was foreordained before the foundation of the world;' St John calls him, 'the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world;' and Christ himself, at the day of judgment, styles the state of glory and happiness, destined for the righteous, 'the kingdom prepared from the foundation of the world.' 'Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of

the world.' But this kingdom, and the church which inherits it, is the very subject of the covenant contained in the text.

2. This covenant was the basis, on which was founded the whole system of providential dispensations towards the church.

Out of this covenant arose the mediation of Christ; his incarnation, life, preaching, miracles, humiliation, sufferings, and glorification. Out of this covenant arose the mission of the Spirit of grace, who came into the world to execute the purposes of Christ's redemption. Out of this covenant arose the Gospel, or the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, which that Spirit taught to the prophets and apostles, and which communicates to us all the knowledge which we possess of the will of God concerning the salvation of mankind. Out of this covenant arise the renovation and purification of the human soul; the light, comfort, peace, hope, and joy which it receives in the present world, and in the end, its admission into the heavens. Finally, out of this covenant will arise the glory, peace, and happiness which will be found in that pure and exalted world by the whole 'assembly of the first-born.' All these, and all things pertaining to them, result obviously from the wonderful transaction recorded in the text.

3. The church, thus promised to Christ as the reward of his mediation, is formed of a great multitude of mankind.

It will not be necessary for me to inquire at the present time, either in what manner this multitude will be gathered, or of whom it will be composed. It is sufficient for the present purpose, that the assertion which I have made is expressly contained in the text. 'By the knowledge of him shall my servant justify many.' 'I will distribute the many to him for his portion, and the mighty people,' that is, a great multitude, 'shall he share for his spoil.' Accordingly, St John informs us, that he saw in the heavens 'a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, standing before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; crying with a loud voice, and saying, Salvation to our God, who sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb.

4. In this covenant a reward was promised to Christ, sufficiently great to induce him to undergo all the humiliation and sufferings of his mediatorial character.

This we know by the fact. In accordance with this covenant he actually assumed this character, and voluntarily underwent all its sufferings. But, were we at a loss concerning this subject otherwise, we are directly assured by St Paul, that Christ 'for the joy set before him, endured the cross, and despised the shame.' What the joy of Christ was, he himself has, I apprehend, expressly declared to us in the 8th chapter of Proverbs. His words are, 'When he appointed the foundations of the earth, then was I by him, as one brought up with him; I was daily his delight, rejoicing alway before him; rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth, and my delights were with the sons of men:' that is, with his church, the glorious reward, which was promised to him from the beginning.

From these summary observations, concerning the Covenant of Redemption, I derive, by way of inference, the following

REMARKS.

1. The salvation of the church of God, that is, of all righteous men, was an original part of the system of God's providence towards the inhabitants of this world.

If the observations made in the progress of this Discourse are just, then it follows, by irresistible consequence, that the salvation of the righteous, or of all who will be ultimately saved, was contemplated and resolved on by God from the beginning, or from everlasting. It was, also, made the subject of a solemn covenant between the Father and the Son. It was not, therefore, in any sense, a thing which grew out of a contingency according to the scheme of Dr Price and others; a remedy provided for evils unforeseen; a thing grafted upon the fall of man, which they consider as an accident, springing out of that liberty of contingency which they suppose indispensable to the free volitions of a moral being. St Paul teaches us, that God the Father 'created all things by Jesus Christ; to the intent, that now unto principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God: according to the eternal purpose, which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.' Here it is declared to be a part of the eternal purpose of God in Jesus Christ, to create all things by him, to the intent that principalities and powers might know, by means of the church, that is, by means of his dispensation to the church, 'the manifold wisdom of God.' Of course, the existence of the church was an essential part of this eternal purpose. Of course, also, the existence of the church was foreknown and resolved on, as a part of this purpose. Its existence, therefore, was in no sense contingent, in no sense accidental, in no sense dependent on any thing by which it could be prevented. In accordance with this declaration, St Paul says, 2 Tim. i. 9, 'Who hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us before the world began.' In this passage Christians are said to be 'saved according to the purpose and grace of God, given to them,' in the strong figurative language of the apostle, 'before the world began;' that is, in simpler language, resolved on, established for them, given in the counsels of God, so as to be indefeasible by any subsequent event. Thus in this passage, explained in the corresponding one of Titus i. 2, 'In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began.' Here the grace and salvation, said in the passage last quoted to be given, is called 'eternal life,' and is declared to be 'promised before the world began.' The existence of the church, the eternal life of its members, and the grace by which that life is attained, were all 'promised before the world began,' promised, I apprehend, in the covenant which we have been contemplating; and, plainly, an essential part of the providential system relating immediately to the inhabitants of this world.

2. The salvation of the righteous is certain.

If the salvation of the righteous was an original and essential part of the providential system; if it was contemplated, purposed, and resolved on; if it was promised to Christ, as the reward of his labours and sufferings; if it was the condition on the part of the Father in a covenant with the Son; then it is perfectly evident that it cannot fail; but will certainly be ac-

complished. The language of God on this subject is, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.'

As the salvation of the church is thus certain, the salvation of every righteous man is for the same reason equally certain. Every righteous man is a part of the church; one of the many thus promised to Christ in the covenant of redemption, and assured of the certain attainment of eternal life by the unchangeable promise of God. Let no such man indulge a moment's apprehension that he shall be forgotten of God, either in this life, or in death, or at the resurrection, or at the judgment, or at the final entrance of the church into heaven. He who has given 'a cup of cold water to a disciple in the name of a disciple;' he who has consecrated 'two mites' to the service of God; he who has willingly befriended the least of Christ's brethren, is absolutely certain of his reward.

3. We are taught by this doctrine, that the mediation of Christ furnishes a complete foundation for our acceptance with God.

The mediation of Christ was the condition of our acceptance, which God himself proposed, and proceeding from his own good pleasure. It was, therefore, originally and absolutely pleasing to him. He is 'the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.' It will, of course, be always and equally pleasing. We are not, therefore, left to the necessity of debating, or even inquiring, whether the satisfaction of Christ is sufficient for all men; that is, whether there is a quantum of merit, mathematically estimated, on which every man may rely, because it is so great, as to rise to any definite or supposed limit. Independently of all discussions of this nature, every man is assured that, if he is interested in this covenant by becoming one of 'the seed,' or followers of Christ, by possessing that 'knowledge' or faith which is the condition of justification; he will certainly also be accepted of God, as being one of those whom this promise included.

The number and the greatness of the sins committed by any man, and the degree of guilt which he has accumulated, however discouraging or overwhelming it may prove in the hour of deep contrition, ought in nowise to persuade the penitent to doubt even for a moment, of the sufficiency of Christ, as an expiation for him. One sin only is mentioned in the Scriptures as admitting of no atonement; viz., 'blasphemy against the Holy Ghost.' Others are, indeed, exhibited as peculiarly dangerous; because, acquiring peculiar strength by habit, they conduct men, with few exceptions, to final impenitence and immovable hardness of heart. But none of these is declared to be in itself beyond the reach of forgiveness. For the sin against the Holy Ghost repentance never existed. He, therefore, who has good reason to believe that he is the subject of faith in the Redeemer, and repentance towards God, has equal reason to believe that his sins are blotted out, and his soul accepted through the atonement of Christ, sufficient for him, and for all others who are like him.

With the same confidence may the anxious, trembling sinner rely on the same righteousness as the ground of his own future acceptance with God. The language of God on this subject is 'Him that cometh unto me,' that is, in this manner, 'will I in no wise cast out.' The sole concern of every sinner ought, therefore, to be the attainment of this evangelical character; the very thing which is intended by coming to God; and not curious inquiries, nor anxious doubts, concerning a point so easily settled in this manner, and so clearly decided by the Scriptures.

4. The salvation of the church is here shown to be an object of inestimable greatness and importance.

It has I trust been proved, that this event was a primary part of the providential system of God towards mankind, and the subject of a solemn covenant between the Father and the Son in the ages of eternity. For the accomplishment of it, as one primary object, this world was created, and a mysterious and most wonderful system of providence carried into execution. For the accomplishment of it the Son of God condescended to be born, to lead a life of humiliation and suffering, to die on the cross, and to be buried in the tomb. For the accomplishment of it he rose again from the dead on the third day, ascended into heaven, 'sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high,' and makes an unceasing and effectual intercession. For the same end the Spirit of truth came into the world on a divine and benevolent mission, and here renews and purifies the souls of men, and conducts them to the heavenly world. For the same end the world itself will be consumed with fire, the visible 'heavens pass away with a great noise,' 'they that are in their graves hear the voice of the Son of God, and come forth;' the 'judgment' be 'set,' angels and men be tried, and sentenced to their respective rewards; 'new heavens and a new earth be created, wherein righteousness shall dwell for ever:' while, at the same time 'the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.'

Each of these things declares, in a forcible manner, the importance of this mighty object in the sight of God. In his providence the means are never greater, more numerous, or more splendid, than the nature of the end will amply justify. The means which I have recited, are the most magnificent and awful events of which we have any knowledge. The greatness of the end is proportional. Accordingly, St Paul, in a most sublime exhibition of this subject, in the eighth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, declares, that 'the earnest expectation of the creature' (in the Greek, *creation*) 'waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God:' and that 'the whole creation groaneth and travaileth together in pain,' with this divine and most wonderful birth.

If then, the salvation of the church holds this high place in the divine estimation, it ought unquestionably to hold the same place in ours. By each of us it ought to be regarded as an event of incomprehensible magnitude, of transcendent glory, and of an importance sufficient to reward, with propriety, the labours and sufferings of the Son of God.

Of proportional importance is the salvation of each of the individuals of which this assembly of the righteous is composed. Lord Shaftesbury has decided, that no conduct in which future good to one's self is the motive of action, can be virtuous. Proofs of the soundness of this decision his lordship has not however furnished, and plainly was not able to furnish; for it is a decision contradicting alike the voice of common sense, and the voice of God. God, by commanding us to 'flee from the wrath to come,' and to 'lay hold on eternal life,' has assured us of the rectitude of this conduct. In the observations contained in this Discourse, we have seen

ample reason for this command; and ample proof of the rectitude of the conduct which it requires. If the salvation of the church was so great and glorious a thing in the sight of God, the salvation of each individual which it contains is proportionally important; a thing in itself great and good, incomprehensibly great and good, deserving our supreme attention, most anxious labours, and most fervent prayers. The attainment of it, in every instance, is pleasing to our Creator; makes man lovely in his sight; and diffuses a peculiar joy over that happy world, where all the virtuous are assembled together. Let every one of us, therefore, 'with all humility of mind,' with 'strong crying and many tears,' begin and carry on this prime business of life unseduced by sophistry, unwarped by temptation, unbroken by discouragement; and 'by a patient continuance in all well-doing seek' so faithfully 'for glory, honour, and immortality,' as to obtain in the end 'everlasting life.'

SERMON XLIV.

CHRIST A PROPHET.—HIS PERSONAL PREACHING.

And he said unto them, What things? And they said unto him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a Prophet, mighty in deed and word, before God and all the people.—Luke xxiv. 19.

In the preceding Discourse I considered, at some length, the Covenant of Redemption. In the terms of this covenant, I observed, was contained the substance of Christ's employment, as the Mediator between God and man, and the reward which he was to receive in this character. By the substance of his employment, I intend the things which he did and suffered, alike, while in the execution of the mediatorial office. These things naturally follow the Covenant of Redemption, in a system of theology, and therefore naturally demand our next examination.

In the Scriptures, Christ is frequently spoken of as the Prophet, Priest, and King, of mankind. This distribution of his mediatorial character into three great and distinguishing parts is, undoubtedly, the most proper which can be made; and is amply authorized by the Spirit of God. It will, therefore, be followed in these Discourses.

The first, and at the same time the most remarkable, designation of the Redeemer as a *Prophet*, is found in the 18th chapter of Deuteronomy. In the 15th verse, Moses says to the Israelites: 'The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken.' This promise, we learn from the verses immediately following, was given to the Israelites, in answer to their petition, at the foot of Mount Horeb: 'Let us not hear again the voice of the Lord our God, neither let us see this great fire any more, that we die not.' In answer to this petition, the Lord said unto Moses: 'They have well spoken that which they have spoken. I will raise them up a prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee; and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words, which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him.'

In this very remarkable prediction we are taught,

(1.) That a Prophet should, at some subsequent period, be raised up in the Jewish church, and of that nation, who should be like unto Moses: that is, one who like Moses, introduced a new dispensation, to stand in the place of the Mosaic; as that, at the time of this prophecy, was introduced into the place of the patriarchal dispensation. In the last chapter of Deuteronomy written, not improbably by several hands, and closed perhaps by Ezra, it is said, 'There arose not a prophet since in Israel, like unto Moses.' If this was really written by Ezra, it is a direct testimony, that the Prophet marked out in this prediction, did not arise until after the captivity. In John i. 19—21, we are informed, that the Jews, to wit, the Sanhedrim, to whom belonged the right of inquiring into the authority and commissions of prophets, sent a solemn delegation to John the Baptist, to demand of him an account of his character. They first asked him, particularly, 'Art thou Elias?' and, upon his answering in the negative, asked him again, 'Art thou that Prophet?'—ὁ προφητης, *The Prophet*, by way of eminence. In John vi. 14, the five thousand Jews whom Christ fed with five loaves and two fishes, under the strong impression of that wonderful miracle, said, concerning Christ, 'This is of a truth that Prophet, that should come into the world.' In John vii. 40, we are told, that the multitude of the Jews in the temple, after hearing the discourses of Christ recorded in this chapter, said, 'Of a truth, this is THE Prophet.'

The first of these passages assures us that, in the judgment of the Sanhedrim, the Prophet foretold by Moses, who was to be 'like unto him,' had not arisen when John the Baptist began to preach; and the two last assure us of the same fact, according to the judgment of the people at large. Of course, it is fairly presumed to have been the belief of every succeeding age. The two last passages also teach us, that Christ appeared in a character so like that of the expected Prophet, as to be repeatedly acknowledged in this character by the Jewish people.

(2.) This Prophet was to appear with a divine commission, as an inspired teacher from God: 'I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak unto them all that I command him.'

(3.) His appearance was to be such, as not to alarm or terrify the people of the Jews.

This is evident from the fact, that he was promised in answer to a petition of that people, in which they requested that they might no more hear the awful voice of God, nor see the fire by which Mount Sinai was surrounded. God, approving of the request, answers, that he will 'raise them up a Prophet from the midst of them;' one who should be of 'their brethren;' one, of course, who was to be like themselves; a man conversing with them, as friend with friend; who should 'not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the streets;'* but who should be anointed by the Spirit of the Lord to preach good tidings to the meek; and to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord,'† with the 'still, small voice' of wisdom, truth, and righteousness.

From these things it is evident, that no other prophet sustained all these characteristics but Christ, even his 'enemies themselves being the judges.' That Christ sustains them all is unanswerably certain; particularly, that he wrought 'mighty signs and wonders,' and that 'he was known of God face to face.' St Peter, in his sermon to the Jews, Acts iii. has, by directly applying this prophecy to Christ, assured us, that he was the prophet intended, and therefore precluded the necessity of any farther inquiry.

In the text, the same character is attributed to him by Cleophas, as he himself decisively informs us, by adding, in a following verse, 'We trusted, that it had been he who should have redeemed Israel.' At the same time, the text furnishes us with a summary account of the manner in which the Redeemer discharged his prophetical office, by declaring, that he 'was a prophet mighty in deed and word, before God and all the people.' To discuss this subject is the design of the following discourse.

Prophecy may naturally be divided into two parts: The communication of the will of God to mankind, concerning their duty and salvation; and the prediction of future events.

The power by which both these were done was no other than inspiration; for man is as unable to divine the will of God, as to foresee future events. Both these parts of the prophetical character of Christ sustained in the most perfect degree; but the revelation of the will of God to mankind, the original, and far the most important part of the business of a prophet, and that which is alike pointed out in the text, and in the prediction of Moses, is the characteristic of the Redeemer especially intended to be, at this time, the subject of consideration.

In Newton's Dissertations on the Prophecies may be found an ample illustration of the nature and extent of Christ's predictions.

The prophetical instruction or preaching of Christ, is in the Scriptures, distributed into that which he communicated in his own person, and that which he communicated by his apostles. The former of these shall be first considered.

In an examination of the personal preaching of Christ, the following things demand our attention.

I. *The necessity of his executing the office of a preacher.*

II. *The things which he taught.*

III. *The manner in which he taught.* And,

IV. *The consequence of his preaching.*

I. *I shall consider the necessity of Christ's assuming the office of a preacher.*

It is obvious to every man, that Christ might have appeared in the world in the humble character in which he actually appeared; have wrought the miracles recorded of him; suffered the death of the cross; and, generally, have done every thing recorded of him, either as an act, or a suffering; and then, instead of teaching mankind the way of life and salvation with his own mouth, might have taught it to his apostles by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, and commissioned them to publish it to mankind.

This course, however, he did not pursue. On the contrary, he has chosen to teach it extensively in his own person. For this conduct of his there were, doubtless, very substantial reasons. Some of them were probably withholden from mankind. Others are discernible with sufficient clearness. Even these are not, indeed, very often called up to view, and by most men are probably unknown and unthought of. Yet, so far as they can be known, they are capable of being highly useful, and means of no small satisfaction to a serious mind. Among them the following, may, I think, be mentioned, as possessing a real and sufficiently obvious importance.

1. Christ may be fairly believed to have assumed the office of a preacher (or that branch of the prophetical office which I have specified as the subject of discourse,) that the gospel might appear plainly and undeniably to be his.

Christ is, and from everlasting was designed to be, the great and visible agent in all things pertaining to the present world. In Col. i. 14, &c. we have the following account of his character: 'In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins. Who is the image of the invisible God; the first-born of every creature. For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him. And he is before all things; and by him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead; that in all things he might have the pre-eminence. For it pleased the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell.' In this passage Christ is declared to be the 'image,' or manifest representative, of the invisible God; and the 'first-born,' or head, of the whole creation; the Creator of all things, existing before all things; the Upholder of all things; and the 'first-born from the dead;' a character which he is said to hold, 'that in all things he might have the pre-eminence;' because, as the apostle adds, it was well-pleasing * to the Father, that in him all fulness should dwell.' Now, it is evident, that it was a necessary as well as proper part of this great design, not only that he should be the author of the gospel, but that this fact should be completely proved, and perfectly known. The publication of the gospel to mankind is evidently one of the chief dispensations of divine providence in the present world. As, therefore, it was the 'good pleasure of the Father, that in all things he should have the pre-eminence,' so it was peculiarly proper, that he should be pre-eminent in a thing so important and glorious as the publication of the gospel.

* Isa. xlii. 2. † Isa. lxi. 2.

* Ευδοκησε.

St James, in the ivth chapter and 10th verse of his Epistle, informs us, that in the church of God 'there is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy,' that is, Christ. Christ, then, being the only lawgiver in his church, it seems to be indispensable, that the gospel, which contains his laws, should be seen to be his; that all who read it may know his pleasure with certainty, and never be left to doubt whether any given doctrine or precept was given by him, or was derived from the comments of others. The difference between these two cases cannot, I suppose, need any explanation.

But if Christ, instead of preaching the gospel in person, had left it to be published by the apostles only, the question, whether it was his gospel, would have been instantly raised up against its acceptance by mankind. Infidels would have boldly denied it to be his; and Christians would have been perplexed, not only concerning their proper answer to this denial, but also concerning their own faith and duty. Even now, Unitarians, as well as infidels, hold out a distinction between the gospel,—that is, as they intend, the personal instructions of Christ,—and the epistles, which they consider as the mere comments of Christ's followers. Thus Lord Bolingbroke declares the system of religion, both natural and revealed, to be excellent, and plainly taught, as it was taught by Christ, and recorded by his evangelists: 'a complete system to all the purposes of religion.'* Nay, he speaks of it directly as revealed by God himself.† 'Christianity, genuine Christianity,' he says again, 'is contained in the gospel: it is the word of God.'‡ At the same time Lord Bolingbroke declares, that St Paul has preached another gospel; and that the New Testament contains two Gospels. In the same manner Mr Chubb declares, that St Paul preached another Gospel, which was contradictory to that of Christ. Unitarians also are plainly unwilling to allow the same respect and confidence to be due to the apostolic writings, which they appear to consider as due to the words of Christ; and, like the infidels abovementioned, admit that the gospels possess a higher character than the epistles.

To what a length this scheme of thought would have been carried, had Christ never preached at all, and how far the character of the New Testament, as an undoubted revelation, would have been acknowledged, if the doctrines and precepts which it contains had been declared by the apostles only, it is difficult to divine. From the nature of the subject, the facts just recited, and others like them, it may be easily believed, that the character of the New Testament, as inspired, would have been seriously affected; and with respect to multitudes, who now admit it unconditionally, overthrown; and that the character of Christ, as the lawgiver of the church, would have been obscured. In some instances it would have been doubted, and in others denied; and his great pre-eminence in this important particular would, to a great extent, have been unseen and unregarded.

2. It was necessary that Christ should preach the gospel, that he might sanction its doctrines, precepts, and ordinances, with his own authority.

The doctrines, precepts, and ordinances of the gospel, are rules of the faith, practice, and worship, of all to whom it is made known. Whenever a rule of this nature is published to any man, the great question naturally asked by him is always, 'By what authority am I required to conform to this rule?' In matters of conscience, even an ignorant man knows that no being except God has any right to prescribe to him rules of obedience. When God prescribes to him, the prescription is a law; when man prescribes to him, it is only advice: but between law and advice the difference, in this case, is infinite.

Christ, as has been remarked, is the only and the rightful lawgiver to the church. Had he not declared the gospel in his own person, the question whether it was his gospel, would have arisen, not only against its claims to be a revelation, but also against its authority, and consequent obligation. The authority of the apostles, as men, is certainly less than that of Christ, as a man; for he was a wiser and better man than they.

According to every scheme of Christianity, even according to that of the Socinians, the authority of the gospel terminates in Christ, as the original publisher of it to mankind; and in this view is of more import, and higher obligation, than if it had terminated in the apostles. The apostles might, indeed, have been admitted as upright and unexceptionable witnesses of facts, and full credit might have been given to their testimony. But when they prescribed rules of faith and practice, their authority would easily have been questioned, for in this case they would have needed not only an unexceptionable character, but a divine commission. Had the apostles told us (as, if Christ had not personally preached the gospel, they must have told us) only, that Christ was born, lived, and died at such a time, and in such a manner; it is not easy to conceive how they would have proved satisfactorily to mankind their reception of such a commission from him. The mind would instinctively, fondly, and anxiously have asked, 'whether this distinguished person did not, while in the world, teach those around him the superior wisdom which he possessed; if he did not, why he did not; if he did, why his instructions were not recorded.'

The absolute want of an answer to these questions, would, I think, have left this subject in a state of obscurity, not only distressing, but perplexing and dangerous.

Of this obscurity infidels would not have failed to avail themselves, as they now do, of every seeming difficulty and disadvantage under which they suppose Christianity to labour. They would have asked triumphantly, 'How does it appear that these doctrines, precepts, or ordinances, are Christ's, and not merely the dictates of his followers? In many instances we acknowledge them to be true doctrines, sound and useful precepts, and harmless ordinances, such as may be believed, and obeyed, reasonably enough; but where is the proof, that they were intended to be laws of faith and conduct, binding the consciences of men? If this had been their character, would not Christ, the source of this system, have declared it, during his residence on earth? The fact, that he did not, to say the least, renders the point doubtful; and, of course, releases mankind from any obligation to obey.'

What infidels would thus have boldly advanced, Socinians would probably have readily admitted; and multitudes of cold and timid believers would, as probably, have followed in their train. In this manner, the whole system might have assumed a new face, and the whole church a different character.

All these things would, also, have acquired peculiar

* Leland, vol. ii. p. 163, 164. † Ib. p. 169. ‡ Ibid.

strength and consistency, from the fact, that the apostles attribute the gospel wholly to Christ, as being originally and exclusively his. 'Where,' it would be asked, 'is the proof of this great fact! No record is left of the instructions of Christ himself, to indicate his pleasure. This certainly is strange, and, if it was really his will that we should obey these precepts and receive these doctrines, unaccountable. In a case of such importance, he cannot be believed to have left us in any doubt, much less in so serious a perplexity. His absolute silence, therefore, in a matter of this magnitude, furnishes no small reason to believe, that he intended and required no conformity or obedience, of this nature, on our part.'

From these objections, and others like them, the church and those individually and successively of whom in every period it was to be formed, would undoubtedly have experienced many difficulties and perplexities in the way of their faith and obedience. Nor would the powerful arguments, derived from the lives and the miracles of the apostles, be able to remove these difficulties. In spite of these arguments, difficulties even now exist, sufficiently perplexing to stumble the weak, and insnare the unguarded. It is hardly necessary to add, that by the supposed silence of Christ all these would be mightily enhanced.

The gospel is probably reverenced by those, who reverence it at all, in a degree generally proportioned to their views concerning its author. Trinitarians regard it with the highest veneration; Arians with a less degree; and Socinians, particularly the followers of Dr Priestley, with the least. Even these, however, regard Christ with more respect than they render to the apostles. Had the gospel been preached by the apostles only there is reason to fear that, by every one of these classes of men, it would have been regarded with a still lower degree of veneration. To believe its doctrines, to obey its precepts, and to celebrate its ordinances, would have been felt to be a duty less powerfully incumbent on mankind, less obligatory, and less necessary to the attainment of salvation.

It ought here to be remarked, that the Scriptures themselves furnish a solid foundation for this distinction. St Paul, Heb. ii. 1—3, says, 'Therefore' (that is, on account of the exalted character of Christ, displayed in the preceding chapter), 'we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by those that heard him? In the preceding chapter, the apostle had proved the entire and infinite superiority of Christ to angels. From this character of the Saviour he derives the inference just read; viz. the utter hopelessness of escape to such as neglect the salvation, which He published with his own mouth. The justice of the inference he proves by the fact, that even those who disobeyed the word spoken by angels were uniformly and equitably punished. Those, therefore, he says, cannot possibly escape punishment, who neglect the word spoken by Christ, a person so much greater and better than angels.

Again, chap. x. 28, 29, he says, 'He that despised Moses's law died without mercy. Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden underfoot the Son of God?' In both these instances the apostle evidently considers the guilt of disobeying Christ as greater than that of disobeying other publishers of the word of God; and of course attributes to Christ, as a preacher of the gospel, an authority superior to that of any other person. These very passages, had they been written, as substantially they might have been, would perhaps have been quoted against the apostles themselves, if Christ had not preached the gospel in person.

3. It was necessary that Christ should preach the gospel, that he might appear in the world as a preacher of truth and righteousness.

The importance of Christ's assumption of this character will be evident from the following particulars:

(1.) The importance of the character itself.

No intellectual character is so great or so important as this. The highest wisdom and authority are here united, and exhibited with unrivalled lustre. The subjects unfolded are the most interesting in the universe; the character, pleasure, and works of God; the nature and destiny of man; the nature of holiness and sin; the laws by which our duty is prescribed and regulated; the means by which eternal life is obtained; the termination of this earthly system; and the introduction of another, wholly new, immortal, and divine.

In the assumption of this character, Christ became the lawgiver and teacher of a world, and indeed of the universe; unfolded all the wisdom and all the holiness attainable by mankind, throughout endless duration; and disclosed the perfect attributes, and immeasurable glories of Jehovah. Angels, in his instructions saw what all the splendours of the heavenly system had never illuminated; and found a wisdom displayed on the footstool of the Creator, which their own exalted world, notwithstanding the perfection with which it is arrayed, had never ushered into light. In this character, then, it was suitable to the glory of Christ that he should have the pre-eminence.

(2.) The lustre which it shed upon his life.

Christ is the only teacher ever found in this world, whose life exactly and perfectly accorded with his instructions. No object is so edifying as this accordance. The perfect holiness of the Redeemer would have been less clearly seen, and less deeply felt, if we could not have compared his actions with the perfect rules of life uttered by his own mouth. This truth needs no other evidence, except the continual appeal to the fact, made by all Christians in their conversation and writings; an appeal showing more forcibly than arguments can do, the strong impressions made by this fact on their minds. The peculiar excellence and dignity of Christ is here seen with the highest advantage, as being seen in the strongest light, and seen alone.

(3.) The proof which is furnished, that all his precepts are capable of being obeyed, with a situable disposition, by a human being.

Christ was a man, as well as God; differing from other men only in wisdom and excellence. In this character he perfectly observed every precept which he uttered, so far as it was applicable to himself. In this manner he taught, unanswerably, that other teachers, and all other men, would do the same, if they possessed, and so far as they possessed, the same disposition. The precepts, therefore, are reasonable in themselves, and

all the difficulty found by us in obeying them, arises from our disinclination. Had Christ left the gospel to be preached by the apostles only, this trait in his character would, at the best, have been dimly seen, and feebly regarded.

(4.) The example which he has furnished to all future preachers of the gospel.

The example of Christ in this respect is perfect. A particular display of its excellences will, however, be more advantageously made hereafter. Suffice it now to observe, that it was an example indispensably necessary for men in every period of time, and peculiarly at the time when it was furnished. The gospel then began to be preached; and the manner in which it ought to be preached, all future preachers needed to know for their direction; the gentleness, meekness, candour, patience, clearness, simplicity, firmness, boldness, and unwavering integrity which every preacher ought to display, which Christ alone has perfectly displayed, but which thousands of preachers have exhibited in far higher degrees than they would ever have reached, if they had not been presented with this glorious example to direct and animate them in this great duty.

The examples of this nature, actually existing at that time in the world, where such as tended only to mislead and corrupt those who followed them. The pride of both Jewish and heathen teachers, the dissoluteness of their lives, their covetousness, their sickly love of human applause, the blind devotion of the former to the silly and immoral traditions of the elders, and the theoretical spirit, the sophistry, and the empty declamation of the latter, rendered a new example, free from all these deplorable defects, indispensable to all future teachers who wished to benefit their fellow men.

4. It was necessary that Christ should preach the gospel, in order to the authoritative abolition of the peculiarities of the Mosaic system.

These peculiarities are called by St Peter, Acts xv. 10, 'a yoke which neither our fathers, nor we' (that is, the Jews) 'were able to bear.' For the Gentiles at large it would have been not only an insupportable yoke, but a system of rights and duties with which their accordance would, in many cases, have been impossible. Still all these were sanctioned by an authority confessedly divine. Equal authority was necessary to abrogate them. Yet this abrogation was absolutely necessary to the success of the gospel. The authority of the apostles would not, I think, in this case, have been submitted to by the Jews, nor easily have been placed in their estimation above, nor in an even balance with that of Moses, but would probably have been classed with that of the prophets who succeeded Moses, and who were universally and justly considered as possessing an authority inferior to his.

The Jews were taught to expect the only material change which would ever exist in the Mosaic system from that Prophet, 'whom the Lord their God was to raise up to them, like unto Moses.' This prophet, not one of the apostles could claim to be. Not one of them, therefore, could arrogate to himself the authority by which that system was to be changed. This belonged exclusively to Christ, the prophet thus foretold; the prophet from whom the Scriptures themselves taught the Jews to expect material alterations in their religion.

Had Christ, then, been silent on this subject, it is not easy to conceive how the Jews could have been persuaded that the system was to be changed at all; nor if they had not been persuaded, how the Gentiles could either have realized or maintained this important fact.

5. It was necessary, that Christ should preach the gospel, to furnish an opportunity of faith and conversion to the Jews, who lived at that time.

Although Christ, as a preacher, was less successful than his apostles, yet we learn from the Scriptures, that several hundreds, and, if I mistake not, that in all probability, thousands believed his word. The importance of this event needs no explanation, so far as the salvation of these believers only is considered. But there is another point of view in which this subject demands an explanation at the present time. The persons converted by the preaching of Christ, were themselves the only preachers of the gospel whom at his ascension he left behind him in the world. From his preaching they derived their own conversion, and their qualifications for the business of converting others. The existence of these preachers, since all Christians become converts by means of the truths contained in the gospel, was absolutely necessary to the conversion of their fellow men; and the preaching of Christ was equally necessary to the conversion of themselves.

When we remember, that in the number of the preachers of the gospel, the apostles are included, the importance of this article will appear in its proper light. To them the whole Christian world, throughout the past, present, and future ages of time, confessedly owes its redemption from spiritual darkness, and its introduction 'into the marvellous light' of Christ's kingdom.

But it is only indebted to them in the immediate sense. Ultimately, this immense blessing is owing to the preaching of the Redeemer himself. The importance of his preaching, therefore, may be fairly estimated from the greatness of the blessing.

6. It was necessary that Christ should preach the gospel, for the purpose of furnishing important evidence of its divine origin.

Interesting evidence of the divine origin of the gospel is derived from the fact, that it was preached by Christ; and that in two ways.

(1.) It cannot be rationally supposed, that a mere man, educated as he was, without any advantages beside those enjoyed by the poor people of the Jewish nation generally, could have devised the gospel by the strength of his own mind.

The Jews asked, with the utmost good sense, this question concerning our Saviour: 'How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?' John vii. 15. The only rational answer to this inquiry is, that what they meant by letters, viz. the wisdom which he taught, he received immediately from God. It is plainly impossible, that he should have devised this wisdom, had he been ever so advantageously educated, either from the frivolous and superstitious doctrines of his countrymen, or from the vain, gross, erring, and self-contradictory philosophy of the heathen. Scarcely any thing can be imagined more unlike the gospel of Christ, than the instructions given by both these classes of men. But Christ was not thus educated. On the contrary, he was in the proper sense an unlearned man. That which he taught sprang up, therefore, originally in his own mind. But no other such mind ever appeared in this world. Nor was such wisdom ever taught here by any man, whether learned or unlearned. That it should be taught

by a man unlearned, as he was, from the mere force of his own mind, is a far more improbable counteraction of those laws, which regulate and limit the nature of man, than a revelation from God can be, of any supposable laws of nature.

(2.) Christ proved the gospel to be from God by his life and miracles.

Christ asserted his doctrine to be derived immediately from God. To prove the truth of this assertion, he wrought a multitude of wonderful miracles, and appealed to them as decisive evidence that it was true. A miracle can be wrought by none but God; for no other being can suspend or counteract that infinite power, which is unceasingly employed in bringing events to pass, according to those which are called the laws of nature. But God cannot work a miracle to support a falsehood; for this would be no other than a declaration that the falsehood was true. The miracles of Christ, therefore, were an unquestionable proof that his gospel is a revelation from God.

The holiness of his life is another proof of the divine origin of the gospel; a proof not less solid, although, perhaps, less frequently allowed its full force. No miracle is a more palpable contradiction to the laws which respect the nature of man in this world, than the perfect holiness of Christ. At the same time, this character forbids, as absurd and contemptible, the supposition, that he was capable of uttering a known falsehood.

But Christ declared that his gospel was from God. Coming from such a person, the assertion cannot without perfect irrationality, be called in question.

Had not these proofs of the divine origin of the gospel been furnished by Christ, the evidence on this subject would undoubtedly stand on very different ground, and want not a little of its present strength and completeness.

7. It was necessary that Christ should preach the gospel, in order to the fulfilment of numerous prophecies, which foretold this part of his character.

One of these, contained in Isa. lxi. and applied by Christ to himself, Luke iv. 18, 19, may stand in the place of others. 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind: to set at liberty them that are bruised; to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.'

The predictions of the Scriptures were not written merely that they might be fulfilled; but when they were written, it became indispensable that they should be fulfilled. The prophetical character of Christ was predicted, because it was an event determined on by infinite wisdom, because of its own intrinsic importance and utility to the universe, and because the prediction itself also was in many respects useful and important. After it was once written, those who hear me will, without the aid of an explanation, discern with a glance, that its fulfilment became indispensable.

For all these reasons, and some others, which we can comprehend, and undoubtedly for others which lie beyond our reach, it was necessary, that Christ should assume and execute the office of a preacher of the gospel. It is hoped that this attempt to elucidate a subject, so interesting in itself, of such magnitude in the scheme of redemption, and yet so rarely an object of investigation, or even of attention, will not be unedifying to those persons who regard the mediation of Christ with reverence and complacency.

SERMON XLV.

CHRIST A PROPHET.—HIS PERSONAL PREACHING.—THE THINGS WHICH HE TAUGHT.

The officers answered, Never man spake like this man.—John vii. 46.

In my last Discourse, I proposed to consider the character of Christ as a prophet, or, as the great preacher of truth and righteousness, under the following heads:—

I. *The necessity of his preaching the gospel:*

II. *The things which he taught:*

III. *The manner of his preaching:* and,

IV. *The consequence of his preaching.*

The first of these subjects I discussed at that time, I shall now proceed to an examination of

II. *The things which he taught.*

In the context we are informed, that the Sanhedrim sent officers to take Christ, as he was preaching in the temple, and bring him before them. When they returned without him, they were asked by the Sanhedrim, why they had not brought him. They answered in the words of the text, 'Never man spake like this man:' that is, The things which he said, and the manner in which he said them, were such as never before were exhibited by any human being.

These words were uttered by Jews, his enemies; by officers and dependants of the Sanhedrim, his most bitter enemies; by those officers when commissioned to seize him for trial, and punishment; by those officers, therefore, when under the strongest motives to take him, as being exposed to danger and punishment, if they did not take him; and, finally, are uttered, as containing the only reason why they did not take him. All these facts teach us, that the thing which Christ spoke by and the manner in which he spoke them, were singularly excellent and impressive; so excellent and impressive, as to induce these Jews to allege it, as the only reason why they had not performed their official duty. It is not easy to conceive how a more convincing testimony could have been given to the unrivalled excellency of Christ's preaching. Particularly will this appear, if we remember, that the doctrines and precepts of Christ violated all the prejudices of the human heart, especially of Jews: and that there was nothing in his manner of the kind which is usually called popular, or calculated to catch, for the moment, the applause of his

audience, and produce a favourable bias towards the speaker. In the consideration of this and the following heads, we shall have opportunity to examine, in some measure how far the things recorded of Christ will warrant us to entertain the same opinion.

Among other things taught by Christ, I shall mention,

1. The abolition of the peculiarities of the Mosaic system.

The Mosaic system consisted of three great parts; the moral, the judicial or political, and the ceremonial. All the peculiarities of this system belong to the two last; the first being in its own nature applicable to mankind generally, in all circumstances. That these peculiarities were one day to be abolished was often indicated by the prophets of the Old Testament, from the days of Moses down to those of Malachi. This seems to be sufficiently indicated by our Saviour himself, in his discourse to the disciples going to Emmaus. Luke xxiv. 25, &c. 'Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken. Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And, beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them, in all the Scriptures, the things concerning himself.' The things concerning Christ are here asserted to have been spoken by Moses and all the prophets: viz. his life, death, and exaltation. But with these, we know, was interwoven a change in the Mosaic system; a change, therefore, more or less exhibited by Moses, and by all the succeeding prophets; by some of them expressly, by others only in hint, allusion, or inference.

St Paul, who informs us, that Christ hath 'blotted out this hand-writing of ordinances, which was against us, and contrary to us; taken it out of the way, and nailed it to his cross;' who declares, that 'Christ hath made both' (Jews and Gentiles) 'one; and broken down the middle wall of partition; abolished in his flesh the enmity between them, even the law of commandments, contained in ordinances,' argues this fact also at length, as declared by the prophet Jeremiah. 'For,' saith he, 'if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second. But finding fault, he saith, Behold the days come, saith the Lord, when I will complete a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, &c. By saying A new covenant, he hath made the former old. Now that which decayeth, and waxeth old, is ready to vanish.'* See Jer. xxxi. 31, &c. Heb. viii. 7, &c.

The Mosaic system, therefore, was originally designed in part (viz. that part of it, which consisted of 'the commandments contained in ordinances') to be abolished at some future period. It was also to be abolished, when the new covenant was to be completed; the covenant originally published to Abraham, but completed under the Christian dispensation.

That it was to be abolished by Christ, is indicated in the prophecy concerning him, dwelt on so largely in the preceding Discourse. 'I will raise up unto them a Prophet like unto thee;' that is, a Prophet who, like thee, shall bring into the Church a new dispensation, and change whatever needs alteration in the old, even as thou hast done with respect to the patriarchal dispensation.

The same truth is also abundantly declared by preceding prophets, especially Isaiah, who describes at large the very changes actually made by Christ in this dispensation almost as distinctly as the apostles; at least in several particulars.

Christ published this abolition of the peculiarities of the Mosaic system.

(1.) By teaching that the Gentiles, as well as the Jews, were henceforth to be the people of God.

'And I,' saith he, 'if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me.' John xii. 32. Again: 'And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold; them also must I bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold and one Shepherd.'

The Jews under the dispensation of Moses, were the only people of God. All others who became members of the church, became such by being proselyted to the Jewish religion, and obeying the Jewish laws throughout; in other words, by becoming Jews, in every thing except blood. But Christ here declares, that the Gentiles, as such, shall become members of his church, and belong to his fold; hear and follow him, and thus constitute a part of the people of God.

(2.) By teaching the uselessness of external rites.

Christ exhibited in many ways the emptiness of external rites; particularly by declaring, that 'meats and washings,' and other things of the like nature, neither purified on the one hand, nor, on the other, defiled the man; and universally by showing, that internal purity and integrity constituted the only object of the divine approbation, and the only title to the kingdom of God.

(3.) By instituting a new ministry in the church.

This he did by commissioning the apostles, and all other ministers, Matt. xxviii. 18, &c. to 'go into all the world, preaching the gospel, and discipling all nations, and baptizing them in (or into) the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.' In this commission he invested a new set of men in the place of Jewish priests and Levites, with all the authority and offices of ministers in the future church of God. The Jewish ministry was, therefore, henceforth done away.

(4.) By substituting baptism and the Lord's Supper for the Jewish sacraments of circumcision and the passover.

Christ made baptism the initiatory ordinance of the Christian church, and the Lord's Supper the confirmatory one. Circumcision, therefore, and the passover, ceased of course. Besides, the death of Christ, the antitype of the passover, having taken place, the passover which typified it ceased of course.

(5.) By substituting a new, simple, and spiritual worship for the ceremonial worship of the Jews.

In his discourse with the Samaritan woman, Christ said, 'The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father, in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit; and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth.'

In the parable of the sower also, he declares, that they who 'received the seed in good ground, are such as receive the word in an honest and good heart;' and that these only are either fruitful or accepted.

(6.) By teaching that God was to be worshipped acceptably, wherever he was sincerely worshipped, and not in the temple at Jerusalem only.

In the above-mentioned conversation with the Samaritan woman, Christ said, 'Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain,

* Macknight.

nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father.' He also, as you well know, predicted the destruction of Jerusalem, the temple, and its services; declaring that 'not one stone' of the temple 'should be left upon another, which should not be thrown down;' that 'Jerusalem should be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles should be fulfilled;' and that 'all these things should come to pass' during the continuance of the then existing generation. In the meantime, he declared to his disciples, that 'wherever two or three of them should be met together in his name, there he would be in the midst of them.'

It needs no proof, that in these declarations he 'caused the sacrifice and the oblation to cease,' and put a final end to the peculiarities of the Mosaic system.

2. Christ taught the same system of religion which was taught by Moses.

The system of religion taught in the Old and New Testament is one and the same. This Christ has himself sufficiently declared in his sermon on the Mount. One of the first declarations in it is this: 'Think not I am come to destroy the law and the prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill.'

The system of natural religion taught in the Scriptures is one and unchangeable. 'Sooner shall heaven and earth pass away than one jot or one tittle of the law' on which it is founded, and by which the duties of it are required. As the law is unchangeable, so the duties which it requires are unchangeable also. The relations on which this law is founded, and whence these duties arise, are eternal and immutable. Of course, the law itself, the duties which it requires, and the conditions of acceptance and rejection, together with all the truths or doctrines which, in natural religion, or the religion founded on mere law, are the proper, obligatory objects of faith, must for ever be the same. Accordingly, our Saviour, when the lawyer asked him, 'Which is the first and great commandment of the law?' declared, after reciting the two great commands, that 'on these two hang all the law and the prophets,' or the system of religion contained in the Old Testament. At the same time, he recited these commands as being those on which was also suspended his own religion, which were still in full force, and the foundation of all virtue or moral excellence.

Nor is the Christian system substantially different in the New Testament from what it is in the Old. By the Christian system, I intend the system of doctrines and duties, by means of which apostate creatures are restored to obedience and favour. 'The gospel,' says St Paul, 'was preached to Abraham.' It was also disclosed to our first parents. 'Christ,' says St Peter, 'preached' (that is, by the voice of Noah) 'to the spirits in prison:' viz. the rebellious world, imprisoned under the divine sentence, during one hundred and twenty years preceding the deluge. 'Your father Abraham,' says our Saviour to the Jews, 'rejoiced to see my day; and he saw it, and was glad,' 'All these,' says St Paul, speaking of the Old Testament witnesses, from Abel to Daniel and his companions, 'died in faith;' that is, the faith of the gospel. 'Now, therefore,' says the same apostle again to the Ephesian Christians, 'ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God: and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets; Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone.' It would be useless to recite more passages to this purpose, although many more might easily be recited. These prove in the most decisive manner, that there is one system of religion only taught in the Old and New Testament; one law, on which the whole is ultimately founded; one system of doctrines and duties of what is called natural religion; one system of doctrines and duties of the Christian system, appropriately so called: that the gospel was preached not only to Abraham, but to the Jewish and patriarchal churches in every age: that good men have always died in the faith of the gospel; that the foundation of the prophets and apostles is the same; and that of both, Jesus Christ is the chief corner-stone.

3. Christ taught all the fundamental doctrines of this system.

By the fundamental doctrines of the Christian system, I intend those which are necessary to be believed and obeyed in order to the attainment of salvation. Such, for example, are the existence and perfections of the one God; the law of God; its righteous and reasonable character; the rebellion, apostasy, and corruption of man; the impossibility of justification by the works of the law; Christ's own divine character as the Son of God, and the Saviour of men; justification by faith in him; the nature and necessity of regeneration, faith, repentance, and holiness of heart and life; a future state; a judgment; and recompense of reward to the righteous and the wicked, beyond the grave.

I will not say, that the belief of every one of these is indispensable to salvation, but they are all essential parts of one system; and within this list is found whatever is thus necessary to be believed. That Christ taught all these things will not, I suppose, be questioned by any man who admits that they are at all taught in the Scriptures.

4. Christ taught the religion of the Scriptures more plainly and perfectly than those who went before him.

In a former Discourse, I considered the character of the Redeemer as the light of the world; and observed, that he is exhibited in the Scriptures as the source of all knowledge, natural, revealed, and spiritual, concerning moral subjects. Agreeably to this general character, he appeared with peculiar splendour as the great luminary of the world while executing the office of a preacher of truth and righteousness. Every subject which he discussed, he illustrated, and every duty enjoined by him, he inculcated with a force, distinctness, and impression, utterly unrivaled by any preceding instructor.

Particularly, he explained the nature and extent of the divine law far more perfectly than Moses and the prophets. Of this truth his Sermon on the Mount is the most illustrious instance of which we are able to form a conception. In this wonderful discourse he inverted some, and subverted others, of the Jewish opinions, established a long time before he commenced his ministry, concerning the substance of the Mosaic religious system; explained the extent and comprehensiveness of the law; and taught the wonderfully various, minute, and exact manner in which its precepts are applicable to the moral concerns of mankind. David had formerly said, while addressing himself to the Most High, 'Thy commandment is exceeding broad.' But Christ first unfolded the extension of the divine law to every thought and affection, as well as to every word and ac-

tion, of mankind. At the same time, he exhibited the nature of genuine obedience in a light new and altogether nobler than had before been imagined; presenting to the eyes of mankind this obedience, otherwise termed holiness or virtue, as more expanded, more dignified, more refined, and formed for a destination superior to what was found in the instructions given by the wisest men under the Mosaic dispensation. Whatever was limited, and merely Jewish, he took away; cleansing the intellect from every film which had bedimmed or narrowed its views; and releasing the heart from every clog which had checked the progress of its affections. The soul, therefore, freed in this manner from its former corporeal encumbrances, was prepared by his instructions to 'renew its strength, to mount up with wings as an eagle, to run' in the Christian course, 'and not be weary, to walk and not faint.'

In the same perfect manner, and to a considerable extent in this very discourse, as well as more fully in his discourses at large, he explained the gospel to mankind. The scheme of salvation to apostates through a Redeemer was very imperfectly taught by Moses, and was left in no small degree of obscurity even by David and Isaiah. It was reserved for Christ, by whom 'came grace and truth,' to make the 'way of holiness a highway, in which wayfaring men, though fools,' were by no necessity compelled to 'err.' So fully, so distinctly, so completely has Christ pointed out the way to eternal life, that we often see heathens, savages, slaves, and even little children, as well as unlettered men in Christian countries, entering into it, and walking safely onward to the end.

Among the things which Christ has thus clearly explained to mankind, I have selected the following:—

(1.) He taught mankind, that the heart is the seat of all virtue and vice; or, in scriptural language, of holiness and sin.

Matt. xv. 16, 'Jesus said to his disciples, Are ye also yet without understanding? Do not ye yet understand, that whatsoever entereth in at the mouth goeth into the belly, and is cast out into the draught. But those things which proceed out of the mouth, come forth from the heart, and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man; but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man.' And again, Matth. xii. 34, 'He said to the Pharisees, O generation of vipers! how can ye, being evil, speak good things; for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man, out of the good treasure of the heart, bringeth forth good things; and an evil man, out of the evil treasure, bringeth forth evil things.'

By declaring, that the heart was the only seat of good and evil, Christ taught us several lessons of great importance to our safety and well-being.

[1.] He taught us particularly how to distinguish with accuracy between moral good and evil.

So long as men supposed moral good and evil to lie either wholly or partially in their external actions, it was impossible that they should make this distinction with any degree of accuracy; for the very same external actions, so entirely the same as to be distinguished by no human eye, proceed from principles directly opposite, and are intended to promote directly opposite ends. In the actions themselves, therefore, there is no difference; and, of course, no foundation for any distinction in their moral character. But when the good and evil are referred to the heart, the intention, the accordance with different motives, we cannot fail, unless through an unnecessary, and therefore criminal, negligence, to discern whether we form good or bad intentions, and whether we accord with good or evil motives. In this manner our duty, and our disobedience also, are in ordinary cases, to say the least, made plain and obvious; and we are saved from that perplexity and suspense, whose only influence it is to delay, bewilder, and distress the mind.

[2.] In this manner, also, Christ has taught us where our principal safety lies; viz. in carefully watching our thoughts.

David, in those golden precepts recited by Solomon in the fourth chapter of Proverbs, had, long before our Saviour's incarnation, said, 'Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.' But this precept seems to have been imperfectly understood, and little insisted on, and its importance imperfectly realized, by those who preceded the Redeemer. He, on the contrary, by showing that the heart was the only seat of good and evil, and teaching that the nature of the streams was derived solely from the fountain, taught also, in a manner which could not be misapprehended, that the supreme duty and interest of man lay in guarding the fountain itself from every impurity. As all good and all evil commence here, to watch the state of the thoughts and affections becomes a duty of immeasurable importance. Proportionally important is the lesson by which this duty is taught and enjoined.

[3.] In the same manner, also, Christ taught the emptiness of external and ceremonial performances.

Many of the Jews, and all the heathen, placed the whole of their religion in such performances. Christ struck at the root of this fruitful stem of falsehood; a production not unnaturally cherished by the splendid ceremonies of the Mosaic ritual.

Although the religion of the heart was actually taught, and taught with great force and propriety, in the Mosaic system; yet the splendour of the worship which it enjoined, and the strong impressions made on the imagination by the nature and multitude of its rites, easily drew off the attention of gross and careless minds from the thing typified to the type, from spiritual worship and real duty to a mere external observance.

For several ages before Christ appeared, the Jews, and among them the teachers of their law, had leaned more and more towards an unqualified approbation of mere external rites, and a general substitution of mere external conduct for the duties enjoined by religion. To the opinions of these men Christ, on many occasions, opposed himself in form, and with irresistible efficacy. Whatever stress may be laid upon them by others, it is impossible for his disciples to regard them as being virtuous, even in the remotest sense; or as being of any moral use, except as occasional aids and means of virtue.

(2.) Christ taught mankind, that virtue consists solely in loving God with all the heart, and our neighbour as ourselves.

'On these two commands,' said he to the scribe, 'hang all the law and the prophets.' Out of these commands arise all the precepts taught by Moses and the prophets; precepts which have no other nature nor end

but to explain and enjoin the universal law of God. He who keeps these, therefore, keeps them all. Of course, he is the subject of that obedience which God has required; of moral excellence, of real amiableness in the sight of his Maker.

The distinction between virtue and vice, exhibited under the first head, as so successfully made by the doctrine there specified, was here completed. When virtue is made to consist wholly in love, and love itself is at the same time so exactly defined, all the facility is given which can be desired, for the purpose of discriminating between virtue and sin.

(3.) Christ taught, that the meek and lowly virtues, as they are called, or, in other words, exercises of virtue, are superior in their excellency to any others.

Mankind have universally admired magnanimity, active courage, contempt of danger and death, and other exercises of a bold and vigorous spirit. Nay, so greatly have they admired them, not only as to regard with a forgiving eye those who have exhibited them, even in the midst of crimes and excesses, but to yield to them, when guilty of every enormity, their universal and unqualified applause. I do not deny, that these may be indications and exercises of virtue. There are undoubtedly occasions, on which we are required to be 'strong, and of a good courage;' and, when we assume this character from a sense of duty, and for just and benevolent purposes, we are really, and may be, eminently virtuous.

On the other hand, the meek and lowly exercises of this spirit; such as meekness, humility, patience, submission, gentleness, placability, moderation, and forgiveness, although perhaps by most persons allowed to be virtuous, are yet by almost all unadmired and unesteemed. Still, our Saviour has unquestionably exhibited these, both in his instructions and in his example, as wholly superior to the others. He descants on them oftener; he dwells on them more; he presents them more frequently to us in his life; or rather, his whole life is an uninterrupted exhibition of them. He plainly attaches to them a higher importance, as they are in themselves; and he makes them more essential to the character of a Christian, and to the attainment of salvation. This, it must be acknowledged, is a current of instruction running directly counter to that of poets, historians, and philosophers, in all ages, and to the general course of human feelings relating to this subject. It cannot but be useful to examine for a moment, how far this conduct of the Redeemer accords with the decisions of experience and common sense.

It is evident, beyond a debate, that the meek and lowly virtues have in themselves no tendency to produce any part of those miseries with which mankind have afflicted each other. If we were humble, we should never become the authors of those evils which have regularly sprung from pride. If we were meek, we should not impatiently feel injuries, nor give pain in those numerous instances in which it is created by wrath. If we were gentle, we should not do injuries to others. If we were forgiving, we should not revenge them on others. If we were moderate, we should prevent the evil effects which always spring from ungoverned passions, particularly from envy, wrath, and the passion for pleasure. If we were placable, we should cut off the mass of calamities which is found in alienation of heart, unrelenting aversion, and irreconcilable estrangement of affection; and instate in its place that serene and self-approved enjoyment which springs from the cordial reconcilement of minds, previously the seats of real though imperfect good-will. If we were patient, we should neither murmur at God, nor at each other, and should at the same time lessen half the evils which we felt, by a quiet submission to the hand of our Creator. Who does not see that, if these virtues had their full and proper influence on human hearts and human affairs, man would assume a new character, and the world a new face? Who does not see, that a great part of the guilt and misery now suffered would vanish, and that in its place would be found peace and happiness, transcending all easy estimation?

Equally evident is it also from experience, that those in whom these virtues presided, have never in fact produced these miseries. Often have they been among the principal sufferers, but never numbered among the actors of this tragedy. As this position cannot, and will not be denied, to insist on it any farther would be useless.

On the other hand, to that characteristic of man, which is styled heroism, have been owing a great part, and that usually the most dreadful part, of human sufferings. Active courage has, in every age, filled the world with tumult, contention, and bloodshed; destroyed the labours and enjoyments, the peace and hopes of men: overturned temples, consumed cities with fire, and converted kingdoms into deserts. All these are causes of misery only. At the same time, it has rarely done good except by accident; and, however admired and applauded by the silly mind of man, has undoubtedly been one of the chief curses which God has permitted to visit this unhappy world.

I have already said, that I do not deny these exercises of heroism to be capable, in certain circumstances, of being virtuous, and even eminently virtuous. Still it ought to be remarked, that if the other class of virtues were to have their proper influence on mankind, these would not exist, because there would be no occasion for them. Were no injuries done, there could be no occasion for resisting them, and, of course, no demand for active courage. The exercises of this spirit therefore are, at the most, of a secondary importance, and can be called forth only by preceding crimes. The meek and lowly virtues are, on the other hand, original and essential ingredients of happiness in every world, are indispensable to all private and public enjoyment, and are, therefore, of primary and inestimable value. The preference given by our Saviour to these virtues, is, of course, a proof of real and divine wisdom.

(4.) Christ in the same complete manner taught the way in which fallen beings may again become virtuous and happy.

He explained his own character as the propitiation for sin, and the Saviour of sinners; the willingness of God to pardon, justify, and accept them on account of his righteousness, through faith in him, accompanied by repentance, and followed by holiness of heart and life. He taught mankind, that their character by nature is sinful and odious to God, and that their own obedience can never be accepted as an expiation for their sin, or a ground of their justification; that, unless they are born again of the Spirit of God, and possess a new and spiritual character, they cannot see the kingdom of

God; and that in acquiring this character they become his disciples indeed, and prove themselves to be such by 'doing whatsoever he hath commanded.' All these things, united, constitute that character, which being assumed, those who before were apostates return to God, and to their obedience of his will; and may evangelically claim, through his promise, a title to eternal life.

(5.) Christ established his church in a new form, appointed in it new ministers, constituted a new discipline, and directed anew the peculiar duties of both its officers and members.

The church under the Mosaic dispensation was properly a national one; consisting, with the exception of such as became proselytes, and thus in a sense Israelites, of those only, and of all those, who were descended from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Christ constituted the church of the spiritual children of Abraham, who were 'Jews inwardly,' though not 'according to the flesh;' and 'whose praise is not of man, but of God.' Instead of the priests, who were ministers of the Jewish church, he appointed ministers of the gospel to be officers in the Christian church. Its discipline, also, ceased to be the severe and dreadful system of proceedings enjoined under the Mosaic dispensation, and became a course of advice, reproof, and, in cases of irreclaimable obstinacy, a solemn separation from the offender; all administered with the most prudent care, the tenderest good-will, and the most exemplary moderation. The peculiar duties of Christians towards each other were summarily directed by the new commandment; which, to the common benevolence required by the moral law towards all men, superadds brotherly love, or the exercise of complacency towards the evangelical character of their fellow Christians. The peculiar duties of ministers, as enjoined by Christ, are generally to preside over the worship and discipline of the church, to preach the gospel, to dispense, and, together with their fellow Christians whose duty it is also, to receive, the sacraments of the New Testament.

(6.) Christ taught also the great doctrines concerning a future state of being.

These are the separate existence of the soul after death, the resurrection from the dead, the final judgment, the misery of the wicked, and the happiness of the righteous, throughout eternity. Concerning these great subjects, the heathen only formed conjectures, supported by very imperfect arguments. The Jewish Scriptures also, although really containing these doctrines in substance, exhibited them in dim and distant view. 'Life and immortality were brought to light,' that is, were clearly shown and fully proved, 'by Christ' alone. To him the world is indebted for its certain knowledge and extensive views of things beyond the grave; things in comparison with which all that exists in the present life is 'nothing, less than nothing, and vanity.'

From this summary view of the instructions of Christ, it is evident, that he has taught every thing necessary for the knowledge of our duty, the attainment of holiness, and the best conduct of a virtuous life; has established his church on a new and happier foundation; instituted a simpler and purer worship; suited its whole economy to the circumstances of all nations; prepared it to extend easily and happily throughout the world; furnished mankind with the best means of obtaining salvation; and engaged them by the most cogent motives, placed before their eyes, to seek effectually a glorious and blessed immortality.

SERMON XLVI.

CHRIST A PROPHET.—THE MANNER OF HIS PREACHING.

Never man spake like this man.—JOHN vii. 46.

IN my last Discourse, I considered the second division of the proposed examination of Christ's prophetical character, viz. the things which he taught. I shall now proceed to consider,

III. *The manner of his preaching.*

Concerning this subject I observe, that Christ preached,

1. With perfect plainness and simplicity.

By the plainness of Christ's preaching, I intend generally, that he preached in such a manner as to be easily understood by all who were willing to understand him.

Particularly, he used the plain, common language of mankind; and, on no occasion, the technical language customarily used by men of science, and extensively used at that period by all the votaries of the fashionable philosophy. That he has never used this language will undoubtedly be admitted by those who read his instructions, there being not even a solitary instance of it in all his discourses.

That Christ acted with entire wisdom in this particular, is manifest from many considerations. The common language of men is the only language which men, generally, can understand. If Christ had used any other language, particularly technical language, scarcely one of a hundred of those who heard him, or of those who read his discourses, would have been able to know what he meant. To all these the book containing his instructions would have been 'a sealed book;' and almost every man who read it would have been obliged to say, I cannot understand it, for 'I am unlearned.'

Nor would technical language have been of much real use to learned men. In natural and mathematical science this language has, I acknowledge, been employed with success, and that to a considerable extent. But in moral science, which involves all the instructions of Christ, the same thing cannot be said without many abatements. The subjects of moral science are, generally, less distinctly and definitely conceived of, than

those of natural, particularly of mathematical science; and on this account, and because we have no sensible, exact standard, to which we may refer them, the terms of moral science are, to a great extent, used at first indefinitely, and are afterward rendered still more indefinite by the looseness and imperfection of thinking in succeeding writers.

At the same time, moral subjects are so important, so deeply interest the feelings, and awaken so many biases and prejudices, that where our discernment, left to itself, might enable us to fasten on definite ideas, and to choose proper terms to express them, our biases still lead us into error, and prevent us partly from perceiving the true import of the language used by others, and partly from an unwillingness to accord with it, when perceived.

From these causes, and others like them, the technical language of moral science has generally been loose and indefinite, to a greater degree than the common language of men; and such must have been the language used by our Saviour, if he had adopted the technical language of his time. This language also, originally difficult to be understood, would have been rendered still more obscure by every attempt to translate it into the languages of other nations. Terms of this kind have often no customary use which can be appealed to, to fix their signification; and, being used only by some individual author, or in a peculiar sense by that author, it must be left to criticism, and often to conjecture, to determine their meaning. When used by several authors, they are commonly used with some variation of sense, either light or serious. In this case, their signification becomes more doubtful, and the discourses in which they are found more perplexed. If I mistake not, no terms in ancient authors are so doubtful as those appropriated to philosophy; many of which seem to have their meaning scarcely settled even at the present time. With these sources of doubt before them, translators would have been extremely perplexed, and would have perplexed their readers still more by their own terms, chosen, often erroneously, to express the doubtful meaning of their originals. But the language used by our Saviour, was suited to all men; the best language for philosophers themselves, the only language for other men. All men can understand it better than any other; most men can understand no other.

The plainness of our Saviour's manner is conspicuous, also, in the obvious nature of his allusions and illustrations. These were all derived from objects familiar to the apprehensions of mankind at large, according to the rule of eloquence in this respect laid down by Cicero. Every reader of our Saviour's discourses must have observed this fact. The 'city set on a hill;' 'the salt of the earth:' 'the candle, which is not to be set under a bushel, but on a candlestick;' 'the vine and the branches;' 'the shepherd and the sheep;' are instances which cannot be forgotten. These, and others of the like nature, are the happiest of all allusions, and the best of all illustrations. They are natural, but forcible; every where offering themselves, and every where beautiful; familiar, but possessed of sufficient dignity; and attended always with this high recommendation, that they are easily understood by men in every situation of life.

The plainness of our Saviour's manner is remarkably evident, also, in his parables. Instruction appears to have been communicated in allegorical discourses generally resembling these, from the earliest ages. But no instructor ever formed them so happily as Christ. The subjects alluded to are chosen with supreme felicity, and the allusions are conducted with the utmost skill and success. The allegorical part of the story is always just and impressive, commonly beautiful, not unfrequently sublime, and in several instances eminently pathetic. The meaning which it is intended to convey is at the same time definite, clear, and obvious. The parable, instead of shading the thought, illumines it, and instead of leaving the reader in doubt, contributes not a little to the satisfaction of his inquiries. When we consider the perplexed enigmatical manner in which both Jewish and Gentile teachers, at that time, conveyed many of their most important instructions, we shall, on the one hand see this characteristic of our Saviour's discourses in a stronger light, and, on the other, shall be led to admire suitably the wisdom with which in this respect he taught mankind.

Nearly allied to the plainness of our Saviour's instructions is their simplicity. By simplicity, in this case, I mean that general characteristic of discourse, in which both the thoughts and words appear to have been adopted without the effort of selecting, and merely because they offered themselves; and to follow each other in the order in which they offered themselves, without contrivance, and in the manner most remote from either study or affectation. Of this important characteristic, as critics universally agree, the ancient writers furnish more numerous and more perfect examples than the moderns. Among ancient writers, those who penned the Scriptures hold, by general acknowledgment, also, the first place. But amid these, as well as all other instructors of mankind, Christ as a pattern of perfect simplicity stands unrivalled. His discourses, though fraught with doctrines of the most profound and wonderful wisdom, and sentiments of the highest sublimity and beauty, appear still, as if neither the words nor the thoughts were the result of the least study, but sprang up spontaneously in his mind, and flowed from his tongue in a sense instinctively, in a manner strongly resembling that of children. The impression made by the manner in which they are delivered, is, that they are the result of mere unadulterated nature, prompting the speaker with an unresisted impulse, as if he knew how to speak in no other manner. The effect of this manner of discoursing is undoubtedly in an eminent degree happy, whatever may be the subject or the drift of the discourse. When this is didactic, simplicity gives the teacher the most desirable aspect of artlessness, candour and sincerity. When it is historical, beside presenting the speaker as invested with these important characteristics, it lends the utmost beauty and impressiveness to his narration. When it is sublime or pathetic, it presents the objects which excite these emotions in the strongest light, and excites the emotions themselves in the highest degree which is possible. As examples, illustrating in the most perfect manner the truth of all these observations, I allege particularly, Christ's Sermon on the Mount; his Parabolic Sermon, recorded Matt. xiii. several of his discourses with the Jews, recorded by St John; those addressed to his disciples commencing with the xivth chapter; his intercessory prayer, in the xviith of that evangelist; the Lord's Prayer; the parables of the Prodigal Son, the Rich Man and Lazarus, and the good Samaritan; and the discourses concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, and the final judgment, in the xxivth and xxvth of Matthew. The para-

ble of the Prodigal Son, particularly, may be alleged as the first example of beautiful and pathetic simplicity which has been ever given to mankind; as without a rival, and without a second.

2. Christ exhibited, in his manner of instructing, the most perfect modesty and delicacy.

Both Jewish and heathen teachers, before the time of Christ, were remarkable for pride, vanity, and of course for boasting. Pharisaical and stoical pride have been proverbial for near two thousand years. The Grecian philosophers exhibited to the world their true character, in this respect, by calling themselves σοφοι, or *wise* men. Those of the East assumed denominations equally arrogant and contemptible. The pride and vanity which they exhibited in this manner, they manifested also in every other form, and on every convenient occasion. Like a disagreeable odour, this unbecoming character eludes every attempt to conceal it, and forces itself upon the mind, wherever the writer becomes the subject of his own thoughts.

In direct and perfect opposition to them all, Christ, though teaching with a wisdom and greatness of character altogether unrivalled, has not suffered, I need not say a proud or vain thought, but even the most distant appearance of such a thought, to escape from his lips. Though more frequently than any other teacher compelled, by the nature of his mediatorial office, the tenor of his discourses, and the disputes in which he was engaged with the Jews, to become the subject of his instructions to them; and although doing and saying that which, far more than any thing ever done or said, must awaken the conviction of personal greatness and superiority, yet he has never, even in the most remote hint or allusion, intimated a single indulgence of either pride or vanity in his own mind. No resemblance of boasting can be found in all his discourses. Himself, as an object of admiration or applause, is for ever out of sight and out of remembrance.

Delicacy is the kindred, the ally of modesty, and an attribute of instruction as well as an excellency of character which appears to have been very imperfectly known to the teachers, both Jewish and heathen, who lived at or before the time of our Saviour. From them all he is perfectly distinguished by the most complete exhibition of this excellence. Not a sentiment, not a word, has fallen from his lips which can give pain, in this respect, to a mind of the most finished refinement and virtue; not a word, not a sentiment, fitted to awaken one improper thought, or to allure in the least degree to any unbecoming action.

3. Christ taught with entire boldness and integrity.

These highly honourable characteristics of our Saviour's instruction are every where visible, and, so far as I know, universally acknowledged. Particularly are they conspicuous in his open, intrepid attacks on the Pharisees and Sadducees; the men who at that time held the whole power of the Jewish government, and the whole influence over the Jewish nation. These sects also were the leaders of that nation in all their bigotry, their miserable superstition, and their deplorable devotion to a mere outside morality and worship. They corrupted them in their moral and religious principles, and introduced a sensual, loose, and nearly atheistical system of doctrine and practice. To these men Christ, with no defence but his own wisdom, innocence, and purity, opposed himself with uniformity, vigour, and immovable firmness; exposing the unsoundness of their wretched doctrines, the futility of their arguments, the hypocrisy of their professions, and the enormous turpitude of their lives. All this he did with such clearness of evidence, and such pungency of reproof, that they themselves often shrunk from the detection, and trembled for the very existence of their principles and their power.

At the same time, and in the same manner, he reproved and exposed all the popular prejudices of his country. Gentle, modest, and humble beyond example, he united with this character an unyielding fixedness of principle and deportment, and a perfect destitution of that love of popularity, and that desire of applause, which are such prominent traits in the character of most of those who have attempted the instruction of mankind. There is not in his instructions a single instance of the least concession to any religious, civil, or personal prejudice of his countrymen. On the contrary, he treated them all openly, uniformly, and alike. Even their favourite doctrine, that they were, and were ever to be, the peculiar people of God, together with all the mischievous consequences which they derived from it, he resisted on many occasions, and in many forms; declaring that they were not, in the true and scriptural sense, the children of Abraham; and showing them, that their natural descent from this patriarch would not, by itself, be of the least advantage to them, while the abuse of their privileges would only increase their guilt, and enhance their final condemnation.

Nor was Christ less direct and sincere in reproving his friends. In them, notwithstanding all the gentleness and tenderness with which he taught them, he allowed no variation from truth or duty; and reproved them on every occasion for their prejudices, bigotry, unbelief, contentions, faults, and follies of every kind. Exact truth and unwarping holiness appear evidently to have been the objects which he made the standard of all his instructions, as well as of his life. No tenderness, friendship, or gentleness of disposition, no fear of the populace or the powerful, prevented him from reaching the standard on every occasion; no zeal transported him beyond it. He, and he alone, among those who have taught mankind, knew how to make all the affections of man perfectly accordant with truth and duty, and perfectly subservient to the establishment of them in the world.

4. Christ taught mankind with an authority peculiar to himself.

This characteristic of Christ's teaching was twofold.

(1.) The authority derived from the weight of his precepts, and the manner in which they were inculcated.

This I take to be especially what is intended by St Matthew in the following passage; 'And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings' (that is, the sayings contained in his sermon on the mount), 'the people were astonished at his doctrine; for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.' In the authority of this kind, Christ far excelled every other instructor. No precepts are so important as his, no manner of teaching is so dignified and so commanding. When we remember that he appeared as a poor man, without friends or influence, without power or splendour; that he proposed a new system of religion and morals; that he attacked, in many respects, the former system, the bigotry with which it was regarded, the

prejudices of the multitude, and the enormous wickedness of the great; when we farther remember, that in the minds of many, he overset them all, and in the minds of many more, shook them to their foundations: we cannot hesitate to acknowledge, with the Jewish officers, that, in this particular, 'Never man spake like this man.'

(2.) Christ taught mankind with a single official authority.

This is conspicuous in two things.

[1.] He uttered neither opinions nor advice.

All the dictates of Christ's teaching are of the kind which the Greeks call *dogmas*, that is, positions peremptorily asserted, without any doubt expressed, any wavering, any uncertainty, any suggestion of the possibility of error. Every doctrine is exhibited as an absolute law of faith, and every precept as a positive rule of practice. Every thing which he uttered carries with it evidently the assurance, that his doctrines are true and certain, that his precepts are just and reasonable, and that himself is invested with full authority to prescribe both, as obligatory rules of faith and practice.

[2.] Christ taught in his own name, and without appealing to any authority but his own.

This fact was mentioned in a former discourse; but it will be proper briefly to consider it, also, at the present time. All the prophets of the Old Testament prefaced their instructions with 'Thus saith the Lord.' Christ commenced his ministry with explaining, altering, and annulling many things said by them under this authority, and acknowledged by him to be thus said. His own instructions, however, he never prefaced in this manner, but merely said, 'I say unto you;' or, on solemn occasions, 'Amen; Verily, I say unto you.' The authority here assumed by him was such, as to warrant him in repealing that which had been spoken by prophets in the name and by the authority of God, and was, therefore, an authority equal to that under which these prophets had spoken.

In this exercise of authority Christ stands alone, being wholly distinguished from all other teachers both sacred and profane. The apostles, it will be remembered, taught only in the name of Christ.

5. Christ taught with uniform and singular patience, gentleness, and kindness.

I have grouped these excellencies of our Saviour's manner of teaching, as I have several of those already mentioned, on account of the intimate relation which they bear to each other.

To dwell on this subject with minuteness cannot be necessary. All readers of the gospel know how often Christ bore with the dulness, prejudices, and unbelief, of his disciples; how often he reiterated the same instructions; how patiently he removed their prejudices; how frequently he had occasion to pronounce them 'of little faith;' and how universally, and how often without reproving them, he bore with their numerous infirmities. There is not an instance in his life of an impatient petulant word; not a single expression of the kind which we term passionate; not an occasion on which he lost, in the least degree, that absolute self-control, by which he was elevated above all the children of Adam. When the ambitious sons of Zebedee, through their more ambitious mother, asked of him the privilege of 'sitting, the one on his right hand, and the other on his left;' he calmly replied, 'It is not mine to give.' When the body of his disciples 'strove, which of them should be greatest, he took a little child and set him in the midst of them; and when he had taken him in his arms, he said unto them, Whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name, receiveth me; and whosoever shall receive me, receiveth not me, but him that sent me.' When Peter denied him in so shameful and bitter a manner, the only reproof which he gave him is recorded in these words, 'and the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter.' Over Jerusalem, the seat of so much guilt, the scene of the messages and of the slaughter of so many prophets, and speedily about to be the scene of his own sufferings, he wept with inexpressible tenderness, and said, 'How often would I have gathered thy children, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings; but ye would not!'

6. Christ taught by his example.

It is a proverbial observation, that example is far more instructive than precept; an observation verified by the experience of mankind every day and in every place. No precepts are, indeed, seriously influential on the mind of the pupil, unless they are believed to have some good degree of influence upon the life of his instructor. On the contrary, where the instructor is supposed to speak with sincerity, and from the heart, and to be himself governed in his conduct by the very principles which he recommends to others, very plain instructions have commonly very great power. Example, therefore, may be safely pronounced to be the best of all instructions, and the only mode of consummating the instruction of the voice.

In this kind of teaching Christ stands alone. The prophets and apostles are here left out of comparison, and out of sight. As for the heathen philosophers, their example was a mere contrast to their instructions, I mean, to such parts of it as were just and commendable. What they taught of this nature, they refuted in the daily conduct of their lives. But Christ's life was a perfect practical comment on all that he taught, and a perfect illustration of the nature and efficacy of his precepts. Hence his instructions have been unrivalled in their influence on mankind, and have produced effects to which there has been in the history of the world no parallel.

I have here mentioned several primary characteristics of the manner in which Christ taught mankind. To form a more complete estimate of its excellence, it will however be necessary to consider what he did not do, as well as what he did. The superlative wisdom of the Redeemer was manifested as truly in what he avoided, as in what he accomplished.

On this subject I observe,

1. That he utterly declined to gratify the mere curiosity of men.

Many questions were proposed to him by the Jews, of such a nature as to demand answers which could only gratify curiosity. Several more of the same kind, were addressed to him by his disciples. To all these he declined the answers which were solicited. There are, also, very many subjects concerning which curiosity has ever been awake, and which not only are intimately connected with the scriptural system of religion, but are mentioned by Christ in many forms, and in some particulars extensively discussed. But such parts of these subjects as excite mere curiosity, he has invariably left in silence; and never tempted nor satisfied at all this roving, restless propensity. Over all subjects of this

kind, he has drawn the curtain of absolute concealment, and hidden them entirely from human eyes.

Among these subjects, it will be sufficient to mention one. The circumstances which attend a future state of happiness awaken, perhaps, as extensively and naturally, the wishes of the mind to be minutely informed, as any thing belonging to the destiny of man. On this immense subject Christ has, however, taught nothing except what we plainly needed to know, and has withheld every thing else from our investigation. Others have often indulged a wandering fancy, and, in the wildest excursions concerning a future state, have attempted to explore the regions of future being, as travellers search distant countries in the present world. But Christ has chosen barely to inform us of the existence and general nature of these regions,—things which we are deeply interested to know,—and left these outlines to be filled up by our own actual experience, when we shall have become possessed of that happy state of being. When we remember how many uncertainties would have arisen out of such a disclosure, had it been made; how many questions of difficult solution, or incapable of being solved; and, in a word, how greatly and how often the mind would have been perplexed concerning subjects unconnected with its real good, we cannot hesitate to acknowledge the perfect wisdom manifested in this concealment.

2. Christ taught without sophistry.

The integrity displayed in the reasonings of our Saviour, is equally exact and perfect with that exhibited in his declarations of facts. In the age in which he lived, both the Jewish and heathen teachers were distinguished for false reasoning, as a species of art. The doctrines which they taught needed this defence. Accordingly, we find it employed by them on almost every occasion. Many specimens of the subtleties of the Sadducees and Pharisees are recited to us in the New Testament, particularly in the Gospels. Quibbles, paradoxes, and fetches, were the custom of the time, and were shamelessly employed to defend every favourite opinion, and attack every adversary. But false reasoning is as real a violation of integrity as false declarations, is often as mischievous, and is always a proof of gross depravity, or gross inattention to our duty. Christ, therefore, the perfect pattern in this as in all other conduct, has alleged no argument but a real one, has given no argument any more force than it really possesses, and has expressed no more confidence in any argument than he really felt. The glorious contrast which he exhibited, in the exact simplicity and sincerity with which he reasoned on every occasion, to the subtlety and sophistry of all with whom he reasoned, and of a vast multitude of other teachers, is a pattern for all succeeding reasoners, which, if universally followed, would free the world from a great part of its doubts and errors, and the deplorable guilt and misery by which they are followed.

3. Christ has authorised no intolerance.

It is well known that the Jews, who were distinguished for their spiritual pride and bigotry, and who regarded other nations with an almost absolute intolerance, were never more strongly marked by these characteristics than at the time when our Saviour appeared. Even the apostles were not exempt from a share of this character. 'Master,' said John, 'we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and we forbade him, because he followeth not with us. And Jesus said unto him, Forbid him not; for he that is not against us is for us.' Again, John and James, moved with indignation against the inhabitants of a Samaritan village, because they declined to receive their Master, said to him, 'Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, as Elias did? But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them.' So intolerant was the spirit even of the beloved disciple, and so benevolent, it ought to be added, was that of Christ.

In this nation, and at this period, was Christ born an educated. But instead of imbibing, countenancing, or warranting intolerance and bigotry, he taught, in all instances, their odiousness and guilt, and enjoined, with respect to every subject and person, the most absolute moderation, liberality, and candour; not, indeed, the fashionable liberality of licentious men in modern times, a professed indifference to truth and holiness, but a benevolent and catholic spirit towards every man, and a candid and just one towards every argument and opinion. Distinctions of nations, sect, or party, as such, were to him nothing; distinctions of truth and falsehood, right and wrong, were to him every thing. According to this scheme he framed both his instructions and his life.

4. Christ taught without enthusiasm.

All the language and all the sentiments of our Saviour, were the language and sentiments of a person perfectly satisfied of the goodness of the cause which he had espoused, immovably attached to it, and earnestly engaged to promote it among mankind. Still, this earnestness, this fixedness of character, differed greatly from that of most persons who have undertaken the reformation of their fellow men. In our own, as in all preceding ages, those who have assumed the character of reformers almost of course make a parade of their piety, and a merit of their peculiar devotion to the cause in which they have embarked, and aim at gaining proselytes by a nice scrupulosity concerning things commonly esteemed innocent, animosity against those whose opinions they censure, and impassioned addresses to such as listen to their instructions. Christ was the opposite of all these. Little things always in his instructions appeared little. Harmless things he regarded as harmless. Great and important things only has he taught us to regard as great and important. In his life there was no ostentation of any thing. He 'came eating and drinking' like other men, and in his human nature and appearance differed from them in nothing but superior wisdom and purity of character. In his discourses every thing is serious, solemn, and earnest; but every thing, at the same time, is uttered with moderation, without passion, without declamation.

No discourses in the world are more distant from fanatical declamation, and no character is more unlike that of an enthusiast, than the discourses and character of Christ. A spirit of serenity, of self-possession, of impassionate sweetness, of principled excellence, reigns throughout all his instructions and throughout all his life, of which elsewhere there is no example.

5. Our Saviour sought in his instructions for no applause.

In this characteristic also he was equally singular and perfect. The love of applause is the most univer-

sal, and probably the most seductive, of all human passions, particularly in minds raised by intelligence above the common level. So seductive is it, that Cicero pronounced it to be true virtue. But of this passion not a single trace appears in the whole history of Christ. The good or ill opinion, the applause or censure, of his fellow men, whether friends or enemies, seem as if they had not been thought of by him, and as if no capacity of being influenced by them had been an original attribute of his mind. With a magnetic constancy, his thoughts and discourses were pointed alway to truth and rectitude; and the world had no power of producing in them a momentary variation.

Such was the manner in which Christ taught mankind: a manner all his own; copied from none who preceded him, and imperfectly imitated by the best and wisest of those who came after him; a manner perfectly suited to the supreme excellence of his character, to the divine commission which he bore, to the illustrious system of truth which he taught, to the glorious errand on which he was sent, and to the perfect nature of that Being whose representative he was to the children of men.

SERMON XLVII.

CHRIST A PROPHET.—CONSEQUENCES OF HIS PREACHING.

And the officers answered, saying, Never man spake like this man.—John vii. 46.

In the three preceding Discourses, I have considered the prophetical character of Christ, under these three heads: 1. The necessity of his assuming the office of a prophet; 2. The things which he taught; and, 3. The manner in which he taught them.

I shall now proceed to the consideration of the fourth head originally proposed concerning this subject, viz. *The consequences of his preaching;* and, after a brief examination of these, shall conclude my observations on the personal preaching of Christ with a few remarks.

The preaching of Christ produced,

1. A general astonishment in those who heard him.

'And it came to pass,' says St Matthew, that 'when Jesus had ended all these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine; for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.' Two things are here mentioned as causes of the astonishment occasioned by Christ's sermon on the mount: the things which he taught, and the manner of teaching. 'The people were astonished at his doctrine; for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.' It cannot be thought strange, that a scheme of doctrines so new, so solemn, so simple, so pure, so amply fraught with inherent evidence of its truth, and in all these respects so opposite to that which they were accustomed to hear from their own teachers, should produce an unusual degree of wonder in the minds of this people. Nor is it any more strange, that such a manner of teaching as that employed by Christ should have its share in producing this effect, and enhance the surprise occasioned by his instructions. We, who hear these instructions from the cradle, to whom they are presented weekly from the desk, and daily by the Bible, cannot easily conceive the degree in which they could not fail to impress the minds of men when they were first published in the world. They were then new and strange, and, both in the matter and the manner, were in a great measure singular. They were employed on the most important of all subjects, the sin and holiness, the ruin and recovery of mankind. They professed to contain and communicate the will of God concerning these subjects, and of course to be a message from heaven.

At the same time, they censured, both implicitly and explicitly, most of the doctrines taught by the Pharisees and Sadducees, most of their precepts, and the general tenor of their lives. The doctrines they showed to be false; the precepts unsound and immoral; and the conduct of those who taught them, to be unworthy of the profession which they made, and contrary to the Scriptures which, in pretence at least, they believed. These men, either alternately or conjointly, had for a long period held an entire and commanding influence over the Jewish nation. Highly venerated for their wisdom, and in many instances for their apparent sanctity, their countrymen scarcely called in question their claims to this influence, or to the character on which it was founded. But, when Christ entered on his ministry, he stripped off the mask by which they had been so long concealed, and left both their folly and their wickedness naked to every eye. The system which they had so long taught without opposition he showed, irresistibly, to be a strange compound of truths derived from the Scriptures, of falsehood and weakness, of superstitious scrupulosity and fanatical zeal, professedly drawn from the traditions of the elders, and of gross immorality and glaring hypocrisy, generated by their own minds. Their pretended sanctity both of doctrine and deportment, he proved to be a mere veil, assumed to conceal their enormous avarice and ambition, pride and cruelty. As the means of future acceptance with God, he showed that they could never avail, and that, therefore, they could only delude and destroy their credulous disciples. That such instructions as these, delivered by a person whose whole life was a direct contrast to that of those whom he thus censured and refuted, who evidently appeared to be under the influence of no selfish passion and no sinister motive, whose precepts required and whose conduct exemplified piety and benevolence without a mixture; delivered too in a manner so clear, so direct, and solemn, so universally convincing and impressive, should astonish all who heard them, cannot be thought strange even by us. Such was, indeed, their effect; and to such a degree, as to induce those who heard them to pronounce the teacher on different occasions, 'a prophet,' 'a great prophet,' '*the* prophet foretold by Moses,' and 'the Messiah.' When we re-

member, that this teacher appeared in the character and circumstances of a Jewish peasant, without a name, without education, without friends, we cannot but perceive that the effect of his teaching was, in this respect, very great.

2. The preaching of Christ produced great opposition both to himself and to his doctrines.

I have already recited many cases of this opposition. There were many more; but all of them may with propriety be reduced under these general heads. The novelty and excellency of his doctrines, the strictness and purity of his precepts, his birth, his character, the justice and pungency of his reproofs, the disappointment of the expectations of the Jews concerning the glory and splendour of his Messiahship, and the fears of the Pharisees and Sadducees that he would destroy their influence and power. All these things thwarted some selfish passion of his hearers, and many of them thwarted every such passion. It is not therefore to be wondered at, that they should oppose one who taught and lived so as uniformly to reprove them for their whole moral character and daily conduct.

This opposition commenced almost with his ministry, and was carried on to its termination. It was however carried on with different degrees of vehemence by the different classes of Jews. The *great*, that is, the Pharisees and Sadducees, hated Christ with far more uniformity and rancour than the common people. The reasons are obvious. He exposed their systems of doctrine and modes of teaching, refuted their arguments, reproved their abominable conduct, displayed to the people at large their folly and wickedness, and threatened them with the total ruin of their reputation and authority. These were offences not to be forgiven by proud, bigotted, unprincipled, and malignant men. They were not, in fact, forgiven. Throughout his whole public life they exercised the most furious resentment against him, and hesitated not to adopt every measure to compass his destruction. All that sagacity could devise, or art execute, was employed to ensnare and entrap the Redeemer in his words and actions. When these measures failed, as they always did, resort was had to violence and power. These at length succeeded, and the most perfect human malignity was finally gratified by seeing the Saviour nailed to the cross.

The people at large regarded him with far less bitterness than their leaders. It is several times mentioned, that the efforts of the Sadducees and Pharisees to destroy Christ were prevented of success by their fear of the people. It is frequently testified in substance, that 'the common people heard him gladly.' It is also evident, that, had not appeals been made to their doubts, fears, and prejudices, with great art and perseverance, and on many occasions, their attachment both to him and his doctrines would have risen still higher, and much more nearly accorded with their interest and duty. On a number of occasions, however, they indulged the most violent animosity against him. Almost at the commencement of his preaching, the inhabitants of Nazareth attempted to put him to a violent death, by forcing him down the precipice of the hill on which their city was built. Several times afterward their countrymen endeavoured to stone him, and in the end united, at the instigation of their rulers, in accomplishing his death, with a fury approximating to madness.

3. The preaching of Christ produced the conversion of a considerable number of his hearers.

The number of those who were converted by the preaching of Christ cannot be estimated with any exactness. The eleven apostles, the seventy, the more than five hundred brethren, to whom at one time Christ appeared in Galilee after his resurrection, are numbers mentioned in the Scriptures. The last not improbably included the two first. To these, we ought, I think, to add a considerable number more, since it is often said, that 'some of the people,' and 'many of the people, believed on him.' No reason occurs to me why we should not, generally at least, consider the faith here spoken of as evangelical. If this be admitted, the number of converts made by the preaching of Christ must have greatly exceeded the largest number specified in the gospel.

Still it is, I suppose, generally believed, that the success with which Christ preached the gospel was small, compared with that of the apostles, and compared with that which we should naturally expect to follow preaching of such singular excellence; especially when the perfection of his life, and the glory of his miracles are connected with the nature of his preaching. The success, however, was upon the whole such as to enable the gospel to take effectual root in this sinful world, and to provide the means of supplying preachers throughout all succeeding ages, and of spreading the gospel, within a moderate period, over a great part of the earth.

I have now finished the observations which I proposed to make concerning the personal preaching of Christ; and shall conclude this discourse with a few REMARKS, naturally flowing from the considerations suggested on this subject.

1. These considerations call up to our view, in an interesting manner, the glory and excellency of Christ as a teacher.

From the things which have been said in these Discourses, it is, if I mistake not, clearly manifest, that both the matter and manner of Christ's preaching were singularly important and excellent. The errand on which he came into the world was the greatest which ever entered into the conception of rational beings, or which was ever proposed in the providence of God. Of this vast and sublime purpose, the preaching of the gospel was a primary and indispensable part. To this part he appeared perfectly equal. The will of God the Father concerning the duty and salvation of men, he entirely understood; and, together with it, the character, the sins, errors, ignorance, and wants of those to whom he was sent; their hatred of truth, their opposition to their duty, and their reluctance to be saved. The same perfect acquaintance he also possessed with the nature and import of the preceding revelation: its types, prophecies, and precepts, the false glosses made on its various contents by the teachers who went before him, and the miserable prejudices imbibed by those whom he taught. These errors he detected and exposed; these sins he powerfully reproved; and the truth and duty opposed to them he enjoined with a force and evidence wholly irresistible. In this manner he taught the way of life with such clearness, that 'he who ran might read,' and that 'wayfaring men, though fools,' could 'not' necessarily 'err therein.'

At the same time, he adorned these instructions with a candour, frankness, gentleness, and sweetness of de-

meanour, with a sincerity, boldness, and energy of character, immensely honourable to himself, and supremely great and lovely in the view of every just and discerning mind. Over all, his daily example as a moral being, cast a glorious lustre, at once transcendently beautiful in itself, and illuminating in the strongest manner the nature and excellence of all that he said.

If Christ had not come into the world, if he had not preached the gospel, what would now have been the condition of mankind? The Mosaic system, of necessity confined almost entirely to the Jewish nation, had, before the advent of our Saviour, degenerated chiefly into a mere mass of externals. The moral part of this system was in a great measure neglected or forgotten; the ceremonial had almost wholly occupied its place.

Even this, also, had lost its proper designation and influence. The sacrifices, instead of being regarded as mere symbols of that real and great atonement 'which taketh away the sins of the world,' and to typify which they were originally instituted, seem to have been at this time considered as expiations in themselves. The ablutions, which were intended only to direct the eye to the cleansing of the soul by the blood of Christ, and the affusion of the Spirit of grace, appear to have lost their typical character, and to have been exalted by a gross imagination into means of washing away the stains of the soul, and making it pure in the sight of God. The oblation of incense was apparently supposed by the suppliant to ascend with his prayers to the heavens, and to accompany them with a sweet odour to the throne of God. To 'wear long clothing,' to 'make broad their phylacteries,' to 'pray in the corners of the streets,' to 'fast twice a week,' to 'bow down the head like a bulrush,' to 'sit in sackcloth and ashes,' and to 'tithe mint, annise, and cummin,' were considered as the price paid for heaven; the price with which salvation might assuredly be purchased. In the mean time, piety to God, 'justice, judgment, and mercy' towards men, and that government of our passions and appetites, without which neither can exist, were kept out of sight, and out of remembrance. Pride and avarice, cruelty and lust, reigned without control and without opposition. Scarce an effort seems to have been made, or even thought of, to check the tide of declension. The progress was rapid and unimpeded, till the measure of iniquity became full. About forty years after the crucifixion, the crimes of the Jewish nation, according to the testimony of Josephus, himself a Jew, rose to such a height, as to forbid the longer continuance of any civilized state or social union among this people. Furious animosity, unexampled pollution, civil war raging with singular violence, unparalleled treachery, and murder without bounds, then became the prominent and almost the only features of the Jewish character. The rest of the world was absolutely overspread with polytheism, and all the debasement and all the miseries to which it so frequently gives birth.

Had not Christ, then, come into the world, and preached the gospel to mankind, the Jews would, perhaps, have been, substantially, what, since the destruction of their nation, they have been in fact; reprobates, outcasts from God, possessing hearts 'harder than the nether millstone;' impervious to truth, impenetrable by argument, shorn from the side of virtue, vagabonds in the moral as well as in the natural world, roaming now in quest of gain or prey to satisfy immediate lust, now wandering in a benighted wilderness, through every bypath, to find eternal life, and mistaking the glimmerings of every *ignis fatuus* by which they are misled for the light of heaven.

We, in the mean time, together with all the present offspring of the Gentile world, should have been prostrating ourselves before calves and crocodiles, dogs and cats, an image of brass, or the stock of a tree. Instead of the churches which, on a thousand hills, now stand open for the worship of Jehovah, we should with the heathen of the old world, have consecrated to a multitude of brutal gods the dark groves, and still darker caves of our mountains, or erected, with immense expense and suffering, splendid temples to the honour of thieves, strumpets, and murderers, or for the habitation of blocks and statues. Instead of the hymns which here daily ascend to heaven, perfumed with the incense of redemption, our ears would have been stunned with the outcries of the priests of Baal, or the yells of the priestesses of Bacchus. Instead of the communion table, which now holds out the bread of life, and invites us to eat and live, altars would here have smoked with the offerings of pollution, or streamed with the blood of human victims. Instead of listening to the invitations to renounce iniquity, to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and to lay hold on a glorious immortality given by God himself, and announced weekly from this desk, the youths who are before me might, in some instances at least, have been trembling beneath the frown of a Druid, prepared to plunge his knife into their bosoms, as an offering to the gods of superstition: no uncommon fate of bright and promising young men in ancient times, throughout that island from which our ancestors emigrated to this country.

From all these evils, and from that perfect dissolution of the moral character of which they are either the cause or the substance, Christ has delivered those who receive and obey his instructions. The darkness, in which men 'groped, and stumbled, and fell,' in the pursuit of eternal life, he has scattered by the sunshine of the gospel. The objects of our faith and the rules of our duty he has written in living colours. To ignorant, sorrowful, and despairing man, despairing of future enjoyment and future being, he has proclaimed the 'glad tidings' of life eternal. To rebels and enemies he has 'published' everlasting 'peace.' To Zion he has announced that the God who reigns over heaven and earth is her God. 'How beautiful on the mountains are the feet' of this divine messenger, descending from the regions of immortality to proclaim 'grace, mercy, and peace,' to this ruined world!

2. Christ as a preacher is a perfect pattern to every minister of the gospel.

That he is such a pattern in the substance of his preaching is a truth, which can need no comment. Every minister, whatever may be his opinions in other respects, will admit, unconditionally, that what Christ has said is the guide and the substance of all which he is to say. Nor are many words necessary to show, that he is a pattern equally perfect, and equally obligatory, as to his manner. It is not here intended, that the characteristical manner of Christ, by which he was distinguished from every other preacher, is demanded of any minister of the gospel. In this respect, Christ cannot be copied by any man. The style in which the inhabitants of the East spoke their discourses, differs

materially from that which has been adopted in Europe and this country, and each is suited to the taste of the respective inhabitants. The characteristical style of each individual, also differs usually from that of other individuals, and that of each will ever be the best for himself, and that which he will most advantageously employ in discoursing with his fellow men. The manner of Christ, in this respect, is not here intentionally required of any preacher. It is wholly peculiar to him, and inimitable by others. At the same time, although every preacher may learn the best lessons from the plainness and simplicity with which the Redeemer taught, and is bound ever to keep him in view, as in this respect the proper object of a general imitation, yet it ought also to be observed, that no preacher is warranted to assume the authority with which Christ taught, enjoined, and reproved, or the peremptoriness with which he threatened and promised. These are characteristics peculiar to himself, which nothing but direct inspiration will authorize any man seriously to imitate, and which, accordingly, no Christian, except the apostles, has ventured to assume.

The spirit discovered by the Redeemer in his manner of instruction is the object which it is designed here to urge upon preachers of the gospel for their imitation; particularly the candour, patience, gentleness, and tenderness, displayed by him on every proper occasion. These are characteristics which cannot fail to adorn every discourse addressed by a preacher of the gospel to his fellow men. If a preacher has any sense of his own guilt, dangers, wants, hopes, or blessings, he cannot fail to feel, in a corresponding manner, those of others. If he have just views of the worth of his own soul, and the importance of his own salvation, he cannot but tenderly regard the souls and the salvation of others. If he comprehend at all his own infirmities, and the unceasing need which he has of tenderness and patience from his fellow men,—if he remember at all how persuasive and efficacious, candour and gentleness have heretofore been, in influencing his own mind, he cannot but discern the importance of exercising them towards his flock.

Nor is it less indispensable that the preacher should possess and exhibit the same openness, boldness, and integrity. The possession of these things is absolutely necessary, in order to the appearance of them in his discourses and in his life. All counterfeits will at the best be suspicious, and chiefly fail of their intended effect after a little period. But a full conviction of the preacher's unmingled integrity, which, if it exist, can scarcely fail of being distinctly perceived, will more powerfully persuade his hearers than all the arts of reasoning and eloquence attainable by the human mind. At the same time, this characteristic will aim at doing them good in ten thousand ways unthought of by the insincere preacher. Beyond this, it will accomplish the good, where all skill and contrivance will fail. To an honest, open, undaunted preacher, thoroughly believed to be such, all men will listen who will listen at all. By such a preacher all men will be moved, who, in the same circumstances, will be moved at all. His discourses will, of course, appear to be delivered in earnest; not, perhaps, with animation or eloquence, properly so called: with respect to these, his constitutional character may be unfavorable, and his habits, unhappy; but with seriousness, solemnity, and the appearance of a realizing conviction that he is uttering the message of God. Such a message, so uttered, can scarcely fail of making some useful impression on the mind. If not, it will be because the mind is not in a state fitted to receive useful impressions.

3. The preaching of Christ is a forcible reproof to ministers.

Ministers, if we may judge from the sermons which they publish, are, in some instances at least, guilty of sophistry. Every preacher, who indulges himself in this mode of reasoning, has failed to propose or to remember Christ as his pattern, and, whenever he solemnly reviews this part of his conduct, must feel himself powerfully reproved by the open, sincere, and exact argumentation of his Redeemer, his fair and candid statements of the opinions of his adversaries, and his solid answers to their cavils.

Ministers, at times, are petulant, angry, and contentious, not for truth, but for victory. Let him who indulges any part of this spirit look to the example of his Saviour, and be ashamed of his neglect to 'walk as Christ also walked.' Let him lay aside the spirit of a disputant and a champion, and assume that of a disciple of his glorious Lord.

Not a small number of preachers, in one country and another, affect a strongly impassioned, fervid, and enthusiastic manner of writing and uttering their discourses. Their language is always intended to be vehement, bold, and highly figurative, their tones loud and violent, and their gestures accordant with both. No part of this character can be found in the preaching of Christ. Not the most distant resemblance to enthusiasm can be found in any thing which he said, or in the manner in which it was said; not an attempt to appear impassioned, not an effort to display what is customarily called eloquence. When the subjects which he canvassed inspired warmth, prompted imagination, and led to the adoption of figurative language, he indulged them, just as mere nature led. But he never summoned them to his assistance as a part of his scheme; nor, what is more to the present purpose, did he ever form the scheme with an intention to give himself opportunity of calling in these auxiliaries to his discourse. A temperate manner, solemn indeed, and plainly earnest, far distant from that cold and uninterested mode sometimes seen in the desk, but still temperate on all ordinary occasions, and raised only on extraordinary ones, was the characteristical manner of the Redeemer. His voice was pre-eminently the 'still, small voice' of truth and piety, and he did 'not strive, nor lift up, nor cause it to be heard in the streets.'

How different this pattern from the efforts of separatical preachers, and indeed of many others, in our own times! There is no small reason to fear that by many men of modern days, Christ, if now on earth, would be thought a very imperfect example of the best mode of preaching.

Ministers, in some instances, employ their discourses, in minute, wire-drawn disquisitions. Such disquisitions can rarely be necessary in the desk, and wherever they are not necessary they are mischievous. No example of this nature can be found in the preaching of the Redeemer. The minds of hearers are lost in such disquisitions, their feelings blunted, and the truth and duty recommended are forgotten in the labour of following the ingenious discussion of the preacher.

The timidity of ministers is also forcibly reproved by that undaunted firmness which Christ displayed in the midst of his bitter enemies, men from whom he could expect nothing but hatred and violence. It is to be always remembered, that there are occasions on which some subjects cannot be urged with any hope of success, and only with a prospect of disadvantage. It will therefore not only be justifiable, but commendable, to withhold the communication of certain truths, and the injunction of certain duties, in peculiar seasons, because those who should hear 'cannot' (in the language of Christ) 'bear them now.' But the preacher is bound to withhold them only because he is fairly convinced, that the communication will do evil, and not good. Even here great caution is to be used, lest the preacher's own timidity, and not the performance of his duty, be the governing motive. In all cases where this duty does not forbid (and these instances are, of course, few,) he is bound to speak the truth boldly and plainly, whether 'they will hear, or whether they will forbear.' Let every timid preacher, who 'shuns to declare the whole counsel of God,' under the influence of his timidity, fix his eyes on the example of his Saviour, and he will see himself most affectingly reproved, and most solemnly reminded that the 'fear of man' only 'bringeth a snare.'

The love of applause may be said to be instinctive in the mind of man, and has, of course, a seat in that of preachers, as well as of other men. Against this seductive passion, always ready to operate, and operating almost of course with an unhappy influence, every preacher will find the strongest guard in the example of the Redeemer. No instance can be produced, in which this passion appeared in him. To teach truth, and enforce duty on his hearers, was plainly the whole end proposed by him in all his instructions. Such ought to be the only end aimed at in the discourses of every minister of the gospel.

Finally: All persons who assemble to hear the gospel are here taught the manner in which they are bound to receive the truth. They are bound to receive it in its purity and simplicity, just as it was taught by Christ. They are bound to hear it with a reverential, ready, and obedient mind, as the law of life, and the only means of salvation. The Jews, who would not thus receive it, perished. Those who at the present time will not receive it in this manner, will unless they assume a new character, perish also.

SERMON XLVIII.

CHRIST A PROPHET.—PREACHING OF THE APOSTLES.

And he saith unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel unto every creature. He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. And they went forth, and preached everywhere; the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen.
—Mark xvi. 15, 16, 20.

In a former Discourse I proposed to consider the prophetical character of Christ, as displayed in his personal preaching, and in his preaching by his apostles. The former of these subjects I have accordingly considered at large; the latter I shall now examine with some attention. In the text we are presented, among other things, with a commission given to his apostles, and others, to 'go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature;' and with an account of the fact, that under this commission 'they went forth, and preached everywhere.' Their preaching, therefore, was a business of mere delegation, and a mere performance of a duty enjoined by Christ. In other words, Christ preached the gospel by their instrumentality.

In the consideration of this subject, it will be proper to show,

I. *The fact, that the apostles actually preached the gospel of Christ; or were inspired.*

II. *The necessity of their preaching the gospel.*

III. *The things which they preached:* and,

IV. *The consequences of their preaching.*

I. *I shall endeavour to show, that the apostles actually preached the gospel of Christ; or were inspired.*

Many Unitarians, who have admitted that Christ himself was inspired, have nevertheless, both questioned and denied the inspiration of his apostles. As this is a subject of vast importance in the Christian scheme, it cannot but be necessary in a system of theology to settle, as far as may be, just opinions concerning this subject. I shall, therefore, consider it at some length. It will be remembered, here, that we are not at issue with infidels. The persons with whom we contend, however unfavourable to the Scriptures their opinions on this or any other subject may seem, are yet professed believers in divine revelation. We are, therefore, at full liberty to bring whatever arguments we please from the Scriptures themselves. Nay, the Scriptures are in the present case peculiarly proper sources of evidence, sources to which our antagonists can make no objection. When Dr Priestley denies what he calls the particular inspiration of the several books of the Bible, he alleges, as his warrant for this denial, that they do not pretend to any such inspiration. Whether this doctrine is true, I shall now proceed to examine.

1. The commission and the fact recorded in the text, prove that the apostles were inspired.

In the text, the apostles are commissioned to preach the gospel, or 'good news' of salvation. In other words they were commissioned to declare the terms on which God will forgive sin, and restore sinners to his favour and blessing. These terms it was impossible for them to know, except by means of immediate revelation to

themselves, or information from a person to whom they were revealed. The gospel, it is agreed by all who believe it, discloses the will of God concerning this subject. But this will cannot be known, except by direct communication from God. The knowledge of it, therefore, must terminate, of course, in ultimate revelation. If, then, it was not revealed immediately to the apostles, it was communicated to them verbally by Christ. But no power of human memory could enable them to retain such a mass of communications, for any length of time, much less for such a length of time as intervened between their reception of them, and the publication of those writings in which they were conveyed to the world. If we consider the numerous events in the life of Christ which they have recorded, and still more the numerous discourses which they have professed to recount, we must either admit, that these records are very imperfectly true, because necessarily not exact, or that the apostles had such supernatural assistance as to make them exact, and in this manner true. This assistance can be no other than inspiration. The gospel of St Matthew, was written according to the earliest calculation, eight years after the death of Christ; that of Mark, and that of Luke, about the year 64, more than twenty years after the death of Christ; and that of John, to say the least, at a much later period. Nothing can be more evident, than that these writers could not, for such a length of time, retain, by the mere natural force of memory, the things which they have recorded. Particularly is this impossibility manifest with respect to the numerous discourses recorded by St John, of which in so great a proportion his gospel consists; discourses, differing from all others ever known in the present world, strongly characteristical, and therefore fairly presumed to be genuine; discourses, raised up by events distinctly recorded, and perfectly suited to those events, composed of questions and answers, arguments and objections, so minutely specified as to wear the appearance of having been taken down on the spot and at the moment with uncommon skill and felicity. He who believes that St John could have remembered these things in his old age, by the mere natural force of memory, certainly can find no difficulty in admitting any proposition because it asserts something miraculous; for no miracle involves a more absolute counteraction of the known laws of nature than that which is involved in this supposition. Instead of being thus tenaciously retained at the end of so many years, it is scarcely credible that they could have been remembered in the same manner for one day.

But if the evangelist when professedly recording these discourses did not record them exactly, they did not record them truly. If Christ did not say the very things which they have asserted, their assertions are so far false, and they cannot sustain even the character which Dr Priestley concedes to them, of deserving the confidence of mankind as witnesses, for their testimony plainly cannot be true.

Beyond this, we know beforehand, that it is untrue; for, according to this scheme, it is not possible that it should be true. The utmost that can be said of it, according to this scheme, is, that it may be a well meant, but must be a loose, general, and unsatisfactory account in many, and those often important, particulars. Necessarily untrue, and every where, unless in some few prominent particulars, necessarily uncertain.

But can it be supposed, that Christ directed the apostles to preach the gospel in this manner? Can he be supposed to have directed them to preach it at all, if they were necessitated to preach it in this manner only? Can he, who came to publish the will of God to mankind concerning this immensely important subject, have left it to be chiefly published, under his authority, by the mere force of human memory, and mixed with human frailties and human opinions; and thus, necessarily, to have become a mass of truth and falsehood, so blended, that those who read their writings or heard their discourses could never be able to separate the falsehood from the truth? Does any human legislature suffer its own laws to be published in such a manner? Was Christ possessed of less wisdom, or less integrity, or less benevolence, than human legislators? Did God give him a commission thus to act? Or did he fail to discharge the duties of the commission which he really received?

Farther; the evangelists have left all their declarations, in the form of unqualified peremptory assertions. If, then, the assertions are not true, the authors of them are false witnesses concerning Christ. They have boldly and roundly declared that to have been said and done, which they did not know to have been said or done. This is no other than direct dishonesty, such as nothing can justify or palliate. He who directly asserts that for truth, which he does not know or believe himself to know to be true, is a liar. The apostles, therefore, instead of deserving credit as witnesses, must in this case be branded as liars, even with regard to the facts, in relating which, Dr Priestley assures us, they are wholly to be trusted. To deserve credit in this, and to discharge the duties even of common honesty they ought to have told us, originally, that the facts and conversations which they were about to relate, were recorded by them in as faithful, and exact a manner as was in their power; but that, as they wrote from mere memory, they could give only qualified assertions, of which, although as correct as they could make them, they could not, however, be certain. In this case they would have discharged their duty, and deserved credit. Their writings would have then claimed the title of a revelation just as much as any other piece of honest biography, and no more. But the writers would have acted the part of honest men.

2. This doctrine is evident from a part of the same commission recorded by St John.

'Then said Jesus unto them, Peace be unto you. As my Father had sent me, even so send I you. And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.' John xx. 21—23. In this passage of Scripture, Christ tells his disciples, that he gives them generally the same mission which the Father had given him; so that they were now to stand in his place, as ambassadors from God to this sinful world. That they might be qualified to discharge the duties of this mission, he gave, or, as I conceive it ought to be understood, he promised, them the Holy Ghost; even as he had been 'anointed with the Holy Ghost, and with power,' to qualify him for the duties of the same mission.

That the reception of the Holy Ghost was indispensable to their entrance on their mission is evident from

Luke xxiv. 49, where Christ, referring to this mission, says, 'Behold I send the promise of my Father upon you. But tarry ye in Jerusalem, until you be endued with power from on high.' And, again, from Acts i. 4, where St Luke informs us, that 'being assembled together with them, he commanded them, that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me.' That the Holy Ghost was 'the promise of the Father,' or the object here promised, will not, I suppose, be questioned. If it should be, the point is unanswerably proved by the fact, that the apostles waited in Jerusalem, with scrupulous obedience to this command, and did not begin to preach the gospel at all, till on the day of Pentecost, they actually received the Holy Ghost in the wonderful manner described at the beginning of the following chapter. On this occasion they became in the strict sense inspired; as I shall have opportunity to evince in the sequel.

In the last verse of this quotation, Christ declares to them, 'Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted to them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained;' that is, Ye shall prescribe and publish the terms on which the sins of the whole human race shall be remitted or retained. Now let me ask any sober man, whether he can possibly believe that God placed this stupendous and amazing power in the hands of these men, and left them to exercise it merely according to the dictates of their own discretion, and the strength of their own memory? Was their understanding, or the understanding of any created being, sufficient to enable them to prescribe and publish the terms, obedience to which should be followed by the forgiveness of sin, and disobedience to which should prevent sin from being forgiven? Our Saviour declares, expressly, in this passage, that whose soever sins they remitted God would remit; and whose soever sins they retained, God would retain. In other words, the very terms which they should prescribe, as the proper foundations for the remission or retention of sin, would be the terms according to which God would remit or retain them. That this was intended in the most absolute, unqualified sense to be fulfilled, is rendered certain by the second verse of the text. 'He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.' Here our Saviour declares, that he who cordially believes the gospel preached by the apostles, shall have eternal life; and that he who does not thus believe this gospel, shall not have eternal life. It will be remembered, that the apostles alone published the gospel to mankind. The gospel, as published by them, therefore, is that which is the object of belief here referred to by Christ; for by this gospel only do we become acquainted with the character, mission, doctrines, precepts, or even the existence of a Saviour. Of course, the only belief of which Christ can be supposed to speak in this passage, is the belief of the Gospel which they have published.

On the belief of this gospel, then, Christ has made the salvation of the whole human race absolutely to depend; that is, so far as it should be published to them. Can it be supposed, that the infinitely wise and just God, who is perfectly acquainted with the weakness of the human mind, who perfectly knows that many, very many, errors exist of course in the best and wisest men, who perfectly knew that very many errors must in this very case be published by these men, if left to themselves, and that any number, even one, of those errors would prove fatal, not to one only, but to hundreds and thousands, and millions, nay, to the whole body of the human race, unless he himself should ultimately forgive sin on terms not his own; and not accordant with the dictates of his own wisdom and righteousness—can it be supposed that the infinitely wise and just God committed to these frail and erring beings the incomprehensibly important business of publishing from their own judgment and memory, the terms on which the sins of that and every succeeding age should be forgiven or retained? Can he have said, that after they had published such terms as to themselves appeared the proper ones, 'he who believed them should be saved, and he who believed them not should be damned?'

To this conclusion, however, the scheme of those with whom I am contending irresistibly conducts us; for the only alternative is, that Christ has here uttered an untruth. If those who believe the apostles in this case, will not be saved, and those who believe not, will not be damned; if the sins which they remit, in the gospel published by them, will not be remitted by God, and the sins which they retain, will not be retained by him; then Christ has here declared an absolute falsehood, in the most solemn and important of all cases. Of course, he may be fairly presumed to deceive in every other case, and cannot deserve the confidence of mankind in any thing. This conclusion, together with the doctrine on which it is founded, is, I suppose, too horrid to be admitted by any man who does not regard the Scriptures with absolute contempt.

3. The same truth is evident from the promise given to the apostles by our Saviour in his last discourses, of the descent of the Holy Ghost upon them.

The several parts of this promise, so far as they refer particularly to the point in question, are contained in the following passages:—

'But the Comforter, who is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.' John xiv. 26.

'But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, who proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me. And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning.' John xv. 26, 27.

'Howbeit, when he, the Spirit of truth is come, he shall guide you into all *the* truth; and he shall show you things to come. He shall glorify me; for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you.' John xvi. 13, 14.

In this promise are included the following things:

(1.) That the Spirit would certainly come to the apostles after the ascension of Christ.

(2.) That he would testify to them concerning Christ: 'He shall testify of me.'

(3.) That this testimony would be accompanied by the coincident testimony of the apostles: 'And ye also shall bear witness,' &c.

(4.) That the Spirit of truth should receive from Christ that which was *his*; viz. his truth, pleasure, or gospel, and should declare it to the apostles: 'He shall receive of mine, (of the things which are mine, Greek,) 'and shall declare it unto you.'

(5.) That he should glorify Christ in this communication.

(6.) That he should 'show' to the apostles 'things to come,' or future things, or, in other words, should endue them with the gift of prophecy.

(7.) That he should 'guide the *apostles* into all' (*the*, Greek) 'truth;' that is, into all evangelical truth, *the truth*, by way of eminence.

(8.) That he should teach them all things; that is, all things which they needed to be taught originally, or which Christ had not already taught them: 'He shall teach you all things.'

(9.) That he should bring up to the full view of their memory the things which Christ had taught them: 'And shall bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.'

It will be evident to the slightest attention, that the things here promised, contain whatever is involved in the plenary inspiration of the apostles. The testimony given by them, was a testimony concerning Christ. It glorified Christ in the highest manner conceivable. All the parts of it were exhibited by them, as parts of Christ's own gospel; and, united together, they are declared by them often to be the gospel of Christ.

This testimony contains, also, a wonderful exhibition of their remembrance of the things which Christ said, and did; such as must plainly be impossible, unless they had been divinely assisted. Farther, it contains all the truth: that is, all evangelical truth, or the whole will of God concerning the salvation of men. Finally, it contains many wonderful predictions concerning future things, of which many have been already fulfilled in a marvellous manner.

Concerning all these things, except one, there cannot be even a debate; and that one is, that the apostles were guided by the Holy Spirit into all evangelical truth. On this I shall have occasion to say more hereafter. At present I shall confine my remarks to the promise itself. Concerning this I observe, that it either was fulfilled, or it was not fulfilled. If it was fulfilled, then the apostles wrote and preached the gospel under the plenary inspiration of the Holy Ghost; because the promise assures them of such inspiration in the amplest terms conceivable. If it was not fulfilled, then Christ was a false prophet; because he promised that which he did not fulfill.

4. The same truth is evident from the testimony of the apostles themselves.

Dr Priestley, in his Letters to the Philosophers and Politicians of France, makes the following observation: 'That the books of Scripture were written by particular divine inspiration, is a thing to which the writers themselves make no pretensions.' I have often been astonished at this declaration, especially as coming from a minister of the gospel. Whether there be any foundation for it or not, will farther appear.

(1.) They testify, that the Holy Ghost descended on them, in the same manner and with the same effects which Christ had promised.

This testimony is thus summarily given: On the day of Pentecost, while the apostles and their companions were together, waiting for the promise of the Father, or the descent of the Holy Ghost, 'a sound came from heaven, as of a rushing, mighty wind; and it filled the room where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues, as of fire, and sat upon each of them; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.' The things which they spoke are testified by those who heard them, in these words: 'We do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God.' In this story we have a direct account of the descent of the Holy Ghost upon the apostles and their companions, exactly according to the promise of Christ. We are informed, that the Holy Ghost became to them the Spirit of inspiration, endowing them with the supernatural power of 'speaking with tongues,' or languages which they had never learned, and of 'speaking' in those languages 'the wonderful works of God.' Accordingly, we find St Peter, on this very occasion, addressing the assembly, whom this wonderful miracle had called together, 'with a new spirit,' with views of the mission of Christ altogether new, and with an equally extraordinary knowledge of the Jewish Scriptures. Nothing was more unlike his former character in all respects, except that he was before, as well as now, a good man. Before, he had spoken and acted 'as a child:' he had now become 'a man, and put away childish things.'

Besides, we find him and the other apostles immediately afterward employed, not only in preaching in the same manner, but also in performing wonderful miracles, to prove that what they preached was the truth of God.

(2.) They testify directly, that the gospel which they preached was revealed to them by God.

A few proofs of this nature, out of a great multitude which can be directly alleged from the New Testament, are all which the time will allow me to recite. 'In the gospel,' says St Paul, 'the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith.' 'The gospel is the power of God to salvation,' Rom. i. 16, 17. Can either of these things be possibly said with truth concerning mere uninspired opinions? 'We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory. Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit. Now we have received, not the spirit which is of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things which are freely given us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual.' Or, as the last phrase is rendered by Dr Macknight, *explaining spiritual things in spiritual words*. In this passage, the things contained in the gospel are directly asserted to be revealed to the apostles by the Spirit of God; to be 'the wisdom, even the hidden wisdom,' of God; and to be 'freely given unto them of God.' It is also asserted, that they had received the Spirit of God for this very end, viz. that they might 'know these things.' Finally, it is declared, that Paul and his companions spoke these things to others, not in the words devised by human wisdom, but in words directly taught by the Holy Ghost: and that they thus explained spiritual things in words which were also spiritual; or, if the common translation be preferred, 'comparing the spiritual things' thus revealed, with other 'spiritual' things revealed in the Old Testament.

Again; 'Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God,'

1 Cor. iii. 1. 'Ministers of Christ,' here denote those commissioned by Christ to preach the gospel of Christ; 'stewards of the mysteries of God,' those who are intrusted by God with his own will revealed by him, and otherwise hidden from mankind.

Again: 'I certify to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me was not after man' (that is, devised by human reason:' 'For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ. It pleased God to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen,' or Gentiles, Gal. i. 11, 12, 15, 16.

Once more: 'If any man think himself to be spiritual' (that is, a spiritual man, possessing the miraculous power of discerning spirits or doctrines,) 'or a prophet, let him acknowledge that the things which I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord.' One would think, that such as now stand in the place of these spiritual men in the church, viz. ministers of the gospel, would feel themselves bound to make the same acknowledgment.

These may serve instead of near two hundred different passages, in which, in one manner and another, St Paul asserts explicitly, the inspiration of himself and his companions in the gospel; for these decide the point, if any declarations can.

I intended to have recited declarations to the same purpose from the other writers of the New Testament; but, as the time is so far elapsed, I shall omit them.

(3.) They declared the same thing by styling the gospel which they preached, the gospel of God, and of Christ.

Quotations, to prove this fact, cannot be necessary for such as read the New Testament. I shall therefore only observe, it proves directly, that this gospel was revealed by God: otherwise, any other human production on the same subject might be called the gospel of God.

(4.) The importance attached by them to the gospel, is a full declaration that it was revealed to them.

They declare that it is 'the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth;' 'a savour of life unto life;' 'able to make men wise to salvation;' 'quick (or living,) and powerful,' &c.; 'piercing,' &c.; 'a discerner,' &c.

They declare, that Christ 'will punish with an everlasting destruction, them that obey not this gospel.'

St Paul says, 'Woe is me, if I preach not the gospel.'

He farther says, 'If any man, or if any angel, preach another gospel' (that is, another than this which he preached to mankind,) 'let him be accursed.'

He also says, 'God shall judge the secrets of men,' at the final day, 'according to this gospel.'

He says also, 'that God shall send' upon a portion of mankind 'strong delusion, that they should believe a lie, that they might all be damned, because they believe not the truth,' (that is, this very gospel), 'but had pleasure in unrighteousness.'

St Peter, also, styles it the 'word of God,' 'incorruptible seed;' pronounces it the means of regeneration, and eternal life; declares, that it 'lives and endures for ever;' and asserts, that the angels stooping down, 'desire to look into it.'

Let me now ask, whether all or any one of these things can possibly be said concerning the mere opinions of men?

(5.) The apostles wrought innumerable miracles to prove the truth of the gospel.

God only can work a miracle, and therefore he wrought these miracles. If the gospel was not revealed to the apostles, then it is a mere collection of human testimonies and opinions, and of course, to a considerable extent at least, is false. According to this supposition, then, God wrought miracles to prove a mixture of false and true human opinions, incapable of being separated by man, to be true. The supposition, that God wrought miracles to prove the truth of even just human opinions, is absurd. The supposition, that he wrought miracles to support any falsehood, is blasphemy.

To this evidence the apostles appeal with full confidence. The third verse of the text is such an appeal; 'And they went forth, and preached everywhere; the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen.' In the same manner St Paul, Heb. ii. 3, 4, says, 'How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by those that heard him? God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will.' In these two passages, the sacred writers plainly consider the miracles wrought by the apostles as the testimony of the Father and the Son to the fact, that the gospel preached by them was dictated by God, and communicated by inspiration.

(6.) The apostles spent their lives for the gospel.

It is not here my intention to dwell on what the apostles either did or suffered. It is sufficient to observe, that they gave up voluntarily all earthly comforts and hopes, and underwent cheerfully all the evils which can betide human life, for the sake of the gospel. All these things they encountered, solely from confidence in Christ, his promises, doctrines, and precepts, as the source and the means of eternal life. All these things they terminated, also, by quietly yielding their lives to a violent and untimely death; a death, which, together with their other sufferings, was foretold to them by their Master. Thus they 'esteemed all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ; for whom they suffered the loss of all things:' 'Accounting not even their lives dear to them, so that they might finish their course with joy, and the ministry which they had received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.'

Now the apostles knew whether Christ was what he professed himself to be, so far as his character was an object of human observation. Particularly, they knew whether his promises to them concerning their life, their supernatural endowments, their inspiration, and the power of working miracles, were fulfilled, or not. If they were not fulfilled, they could not but know that Christ was an impostor; and could not have failed to give up a cause from which nothing but evil had sprung, or could ever spring. Their perseverance is therefore complete proof, that these promises were all fulfilled; that the Holy Ghost descended on them, 'guided them into all the truth;' 'taught them all things,' pertaining to this subject; or, in the language of St Peter, 'pertaining to life and godliness;' 'brought to their remembrance all things whatsoever Christ had said unto them; and showed them things to come.'

They have, therefore, in this manner proved that they were inspired; so inspired as to become authoritative teachers of the will of God concerning our salvation; and as to assure us, that whatever they have taught is true, and even in so momentous a case is to be believed and obeyed with final safety to our well-being.

SERMON XLIX.

CHRIST A PROPHET.—PREACHING OF THE APOSTLES.

And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel unto every creature. He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. And they went forth, and preached everywhere; the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen. —Mark xvi. 15, 16, 20.

In the preceding Discourse, I proposed from these words to consider the following subjects:—

I. *The fact, that the apostles actually preached the gospel of Christ, or were inspired:*

II. *The necessity of their preaching the gospel:*

III. *The things which they preached:* and,

IV. *The consequences of their preaching.*

The first of these heads I examined largely in that Discourse. I shall now proceed to the consideration of the three last.

On the second, viz. *The necessity of their preaching the gospel*, I make the following observations:—

Christ, in his Discourse to the apostles, recorded John xvi. says, 'But when the Comforter is come, he shall testify of me. And ye also shall bear witness.' This testimony they accordingly gave to the Messiahship, and universal character of their Master, in their oral preaching, their writings, their miracles, and their lives. All these they uniformly attributed to him. Their doctrines and precepts they declared to be derived from his instructions and the inspiration of his Spirit, their miracles from his power, and their holiness from his grace, all communicated by the same divine agent. In his name, and under the authority of a commission given by him, they preached, wrote, and acted, as the propagators of the gospel and the builders of the church. Thus every thing which they said or did was a testimony borne to Christ.

That this testimony should be thus borne by the apostles, was necessary in the divine economy of redemption.

1. Because the apostles had been with Christ from the beginning.

It has doubtless been observed by those who hear me, that I have all along mentioned the apostles as if alone concerned in this business. It is hardly necessary to remark, that under this name I mean here to include their inspired coadjutors also.

The reason which I have now alleged is given by Christ himself, and is recited in his own words, John xvi. 27, 'And ye shall bear witness also, because ye have been with me from the beginning.

The importance of this reason will be manifest, if we consider the nature of a great part of the testimony which the apostles have given concerning the Redeemer. This is composed partly of facts, and partly of discourses, at both of which they were present, and to which they were, of course, eye and ear witnesses. The only decisive human evidence concerning facts is the evidence of our senses, customarily called experience. This, wherever it exists in its perfection, is universally acknowledged to be decisive. In it all other human evidence concerning facts is supposed to terminate, and, whenever it is valid, actually terminates. If, then, human testimony were to be given to the mission, character, and doctrines of Christ, it must be indispensable that it should rest on this kind of evidence. No other persons could be valid witnesses of the life and miracles of Christ, but those who saw them, nor of his discourses, but those who heard them. Accordingly, St Paul, though an incontrovertible witness to the divine origin of the gospel in many respects, was not employed to write a history of the Redeemer; while Luke and Mark, though not apostles, were made his historians by the Spirit of God, because, as St Luke says of himself, 'they had perfect understanding of all things from the very first.'

It is true that God could, if it had pleased him, have disclosed every one of the things recorded in his gospels to any other person, by an original revelation. It is not, however, the way established in the divine proceedings to furnish miraculous communications where they are not plainly necessary, or miraculous evidence, where evidence derived from other sources is sufficient. Besides, there would have been a serious imperfection attending any such revelation, if the facts revealed had been unattested by those in whose presence they took place. The mind would instinctively have asked, why none of those who were present had testified their existence? and why no record, no valid trace of them, had been conveyed down from the beginning? It must, I think, have been impossible, or at least very difficult, to answer these questions in such a manner as to satisfy the mind by which they were proposed.

The importance of this evidence in the case before us cannot but be manifest to every one accustomed to investigations of this nature, and peculiarly to such as have been conversant with debates concerning the divine origin of the gospel. Every such person knows that among the arguments on this subject, that which is derived from the impossibility of the apostles being deceived with respect to the great facts which are the basis of the gospel, as having been eye and ear witnesses, and witnesses competent and unexceptionable,

has ever holden a primary place. Every man versed in this subject knows it to be an argument which infidels have never been able to obviate, and which, after the efforts of two centuries, as well as all those made in ancient times, remains immovable, and beaten in vain by the billows of opposition.

2. Because the apostles survived the ascension of Christ.

From this circumstance many advantages were derived of very great importance. Had Christ written the whole gospel, that is, all which he can be supposed to have written, and written it at the only time when he can reasonably be imagined to have written it, not a small, nor unimportant, part of the things pertaining to his own history and discourses, as we now find them in the Gospels, properly so called, must have been lost to the world. The account, must, I think, have been closed antecedently to the institution of the Lord's Supper; for, from the commencement of the celebration of the passover preceding it, he does not appear to have had any opportunity of writing at all. Of course, the celebration of this passover, the institution of the eucharist, his washing the disciples' feet, and his instructions on that occasion, his consolatory discourses, his intercessory prayer, his agony in the garden, the treachery of Judas, his trial, condemnation, death, and burial, his resurrection, his subsequent appearance to his disciples, and his final ascension to the heavens, together with all the things connected with them, could have found no place in the gospel. But these constitute a large part of the objects of our faith, the means of our instruction, and the rules of our duty. I need not observe, that these also are objects of the utmost consequence to every man who reads the gospel, essential parts of the dispensation, without which the system would be broken and lame, without which the most important inquiries of the mind could never be satisfied, and without which the chief wants of the probationer for eternal life could never be supplied.

Farther: Christ uttered a number of predictions, which were not fulfilled during his life, nor intended to be; but which, according to the nature of his declarations, were to be fulfilled soon after his ascension. Among these, were his prophecies concerning the descent of the Holy Ghost at the day of Pentecost, the success of the apostles in preaching the gospel, the miracles which they were to accomplish, the sufferings which they were to undergo, and the extensive establishment of the church by their preaching among the nations of men. All these prophecies are of such a nature, that the mind of every reader would unavoidably demand an account of their fulfillment. Had no such account been given (as, if the gospel had been finished by Christ, must have been the fact), the omission would have been perceived by every reader to be an unhappy chasm in the history of the church, which nothing could successfully fill up, and about which there would have arisen many doubts, perplexities, and distresses.

The Christian sabbath was adopted as a commemoration of the resurrection of Christ from the dead. The only hint concerning it which we find given by Christ, is contained in his answer to the Pharisees, when they asked him, why his disciples did not fast, as did their own disciples, and those of John the Baptist; 'The children of the bride-chamber cannot fast while the bridegroom is with them: but the days come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away; then shall they fast.' Christ was taken away on the evening preceding the seventh day, or Jewish sabbath, and during the whole of that day lay buried in the tomb. On this day, then, he declares they should fast; and in this declaration indicates that the Jewish sabbath should then come to an end, so far as the day was concerned on which it was celebrated. The sabbath is a festival, not a fast; a day of joy only, and not of sorrow. When, therefore, Christ declared that the seventh day should be a day of fasting to his immediate disciples, he may fairly be considered as indicating that this day should no longer be a sabbath to them.

In conformity to this indication, the apostles introduced the first day to Christians for their future observance as the sabbath by their own adoption of it in their religious practice. In this manner, principally, is it announced to us in their writings, as the proper sabbath for all the followers of the Redeemer. On the wisdom displayed in this manner of introducing the Christian sabbath, I design to discourse more particularly hereafter. It is sufficient to observe at the present time, that, had Christ completed the gospel, it is not easy to see how this manner of introducing the sabbath could have taken place, and it is evident that this account of it could not have been given.

Finally: The whole history of the church, contained in the Acts of the Apostles, would, in this case, have been lost to the Christian world. No part of the word of God is, in many respects, more filled with instruction or consolation than this book. The doctrines which it contains are of the highest importance for their wisdom, the precepts for their plainness and excellence, the examples for their number, their variety, and their adaptation to the different circumstances and characters of Christians. The history of this book, also, is of the greatest value for its edifying and instructive nature, for the satisfaction which it furnishes concerning the state of the church at that interesting period, for the life, sufferings, and deliverances, the preaching and success of the apostles, the opposition which they met, and the causes which produced it; the sufferings, patience, and perseverance, the errors and faults of the first converts; the progress of Christianity, and the extension of the church; together with a multitude of other things interwoven with these. How useful, how necessary these things are, to instruct, edify, and comfort every Christian, particularly every minister, I need not explain; nor need I observe, that in a gospel written by our Saviour they could have had no place.

3. Because it was necessary, that the immediate followers of Christ in the propagation of Christianity should be clearly seen to be commissioned of God.

It will be readily acknowledged, that a body of men, so small, so uneducated, so humble, so unfriended as the apostles and their companions were, must have wholly failed of spreading the gospel through the world by any efforts which they could have made, independently of peculiar assistance from heaven. Let us inquire then, what was the assistance, which they needed? Was it the gift of speaking with tongues? What purpose would this have answered, if their minds had been ignorant concerning what they were to speak, or whether that which they were about to speak was the will of God, and justly demanded the faith and obedience of

their hearers. Was it the power of working miracles? For what purpose were their miracles to be wrought? For what purpose could they be wrought? Plainly for no other, but to prove that that which was spoken by those who wrought them was true. But if they were not inspired, that which they uttered was, and could at the best be, no other than the opinions and the remembrance of honest men. Of course, it must necessarily be partially false. Their miracles, therefore, would be wrought to prove the truth of falsehood; and God, if they actually wrought miracles, would set his seal to this falsehood, and employ his power to deceive their hearers. To refute this blasphemous opinion certainly cannot be necessary.

It is plain, then, that no assistance could be given to them, short of inspiration, which would at all qualify them for the diffusion of the gospel, and the erection of Christ's kingdom in the world. The sole end of all other miraculous powers, so far as their commission and their employment were concerned, was evidently to prove them inspired with a knowledge of the divine will concerning the salvation of men, and sent to declare it to their fellow men. Independently of this great purpose, their supernatural powers were of no other use, except to amuse and astonish mankind.

In exact accordance with this scheme, St Paul, in 1 Cor. xii. asserts directly the inspiration of himself and his companions in the ministry; and in the fourteenth chapter declares the superiority of it to all other supernatural endowments for the edification of the church. 'To one,' he says, 'is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another, the word of knowledge, by the same Spirit. To another, faith; to another, gifts of healing; to another, the working of miracles; to another, the discerning of spirits,' or doctrines. In the 31st verse he directs them to 'covet earnestly the best gifts.' In the 39th verse of the xivth chapter, he says, 'Wherefore, brethren, covet to prophecy,' that is, to declare the will of God by inspiration, and forbid not to speak with tongues. Greater,' he says, 'is he that prophesieth, than he that speaketh with tongues.' And again, 'Now, brethren, if I come unto you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you, except I shall speak to you either by revelation, or by knowledge, or by prophesying, or by doctrine? All these are only different words to express that inspiration by which they either originally received, or unerringly understood, proposed, explained, or enforced, divine truth. Without this, he declares expressly, that he should not profit the church in its spiritual concerns at all. Accordingly, after having directed them to 'covet earnestly the best gifts,' he farther directs them to 'covet the gift of prophesying, and not forbid speaking with tongues,' as much as to say, covet to receive from God, by revelation, divine truth, and the gifts of unerringly explaining, declaring, and enforcing it to others, as being things of supreme importance and usefulness; at the same time, forbid not to speak with tongues, as being an endowment really, though very subordinately, useful.

From these passages I think it unanswerably evident, that a revelation, such as Dr Priestley, without meaning, calls particular, existed in a standing manner in the minds of the apostles and their companions; in the latter, to direct them in their preaching; in the former, for the same purpose, and the still more important one of committing the word of God to writing, for the instruction of all succeeding generations. So extensive and common was this revelation, as to be made the proper subject of a system of directions from St Paul to the Corinthian church; a thing wholly inexplicable, if this fact had not existed.

From these observations it is plain, that without inspiration all the other supernatural endowments of the apostles must, if given, have been given to no valuable end; that, on the contrary, they would only have served to establish falsehood and delusion; and that, unless they were inspired, it may certainly be concluded that they were in no other respect supernaturally endowed. Their inspiration, therefore, was absolutely necessary to prove their commission to be from God.

If it had not been made evident that the apostles were commissioned from God, this fact must, I think, have been fatal to the cause of Christianity. In this case, although we might have acknowledged Christ to be a divine missionary; yet we should naturally and unanswerably have said, What authority did these men possess to transmit his instructions and precepts to us? What proof have we that they understood them, remembered them, or expressed them with correctness and certainty? Why are we bound to regard what they have said, any more than the numerous Gospels written by others? Christ wrote nothing. Had he intended to require our faith and obedience to his precepts, he would undoubtedly have taken effectual care that we should receive them in such a manner, and from such persons, as would assure us that they were his, and only his.

To us, it ought to be observed, the inspiration of the apostles furnishes a proof that they were commissioned from God, which is additional to the proofs given to those who heard them preach. In their writings they have left on record a number of important prophecies. Several of those have been remarkably fulfilled, and others are daily receiving their fulfilment. In the fulfilment of these prophecies we have a direct proof of their inspiration, and consequently of their divine commission, which is immovable, and which could not, in the same degree, be discerned by their contemporaries.

4. Because many preachers were necessary for such an extensive establishment of the church as that which actually took place, the great body of whom needed, for a time, to sustain the same character.

On this subject it will not be necessary to dwell. If the preceding arguments be allowed to prove the point for which they were alleged, it will undoubtedly be also conceded, that inspiration was as necessary for some, at least, of those who preached in one place, as for any who preached in another. It may, perhaps, be objected, that this is proving too much and alleging inspiration in a wider extent than has hitherto been pretended.

To prevent any misconceptions on this point, I will state my own views of this subject a little more particularly than I have hitherto done. The inspiration of the apostles, I suppose to have consisted in the following things:—

(1.) That they received immediately from God every part of the Christian dispensation which they did not know by other means.

(2.) That in the same manner they were furnished with a foreknowledge of future events.

(3.) That in things which they did otherwise know

partially, the deficiencies of their knowledge were in the same manner supplied.

(4.) That those things which they had once known, and which were parts of the Christian dispensation, were by divine power brought distinctly and fully to their remembrance.

(5.) That they were directed by the Holy Spirit to the selection of just such things, and such only, and to precisely such a manner of exhibiting them, as should be true, just, most useful to mankind, and most agreeable to the divine wisdom.

(6.) That each one was left so far to his own manner of writing or speaking, as that the style was strictly his own; and yet that the phraseology used by him in this very style was so directed and controlled by the Holy Spirit, as to lead him to the most exact and useful exhibition of divine truth; his own words being, in this important sense, words not devised by human wisdom, but taught by the Holy Ghost; and,

(7.) That each inspired man was, as to his preaching or his writing, absolutely preserved from error.

All these particulars cannot be applied in the same degree, and some of them cannot be applied at all, to all the inspired preachers. But, in my own view, every such preacher enjoyed the benefits of inspiration so far as he needed them to enable him to preach the gospel truly and usefully to mankind; so far as to preserve him from false narratives, erroneous doctrines, and unsound or useless precepts. That this was equally necessary for every preacher before the written canon furnished mankind with an unerring standard, with which they might compare the things which were preached to them, so as to determine their soundness or unsoundness, will, I suppose, be granted by all those who acknowledge the necessity of inspiration to any preacher.

5. Because it was necessary that Christ should appear to act and to control the affairs of his church after his ascension.

The apostles preached, wrought miracles, spoke with tongues, and executed all the parts of their ministry under the authority, in the name, and by the power of Christ. 'In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, I command thee to arise and walk.' 'Æneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole.' 'Christ, having received the promise of the Father, hath shed forth this, which ye see and hear.' 'If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.' 'I can do all things through Christ strengthening me.' 'Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ.' This is the language which, in substance, the apostles use on every occasion when the subject comes into view. At the same time, they inform us, that their commission was given them by Christ; and that in his name, and by his mission, and in no sense of themselves, they went forth to preach the gospel, and to evince its divine origin by miracles. The power by which they acted in all their wonderful works, the wisdom which they preached, and the grace by which they were sanctified and sustained, they ascribe wholly to him. Beyond this, they declare, that while he resided in this world he promised them all these things, and that he continually and exactly fulfilled this promise. His presence with them on various occasions, whenever it was demanded by their circumstances, and his interference on their behalf, whenever it was necessary, they testify in the amplest and most decisive manner. Thus, in every thing which they taught or did, he is the fountain whence every stream proceeded. He, according to their own declarations, is the agent, and they are merely instruments in his hand.

But this agency of Christ on earth after he had ascended to the heavens, is a most important, indispensable, and glorious part of his character; important and indispensable to mankind, and glorious to himself. Evidence is furnished by it to prove, that he is in all places, and beholds all things; that he is faithful to perform every thing which he has promised, and able to do every thing which Christians need; which no Unitarian, hitherto has had sufficient ingenuity to answer, or avoid. We see him actually exemplifying in his conduct all these things to his early followers, and are therefore certainly assured that, so far as our necessities require, he will substantially exhibit them to us. Christians in all ages succeeding that of the apostles, are here furnished with the strongest proofs, that he possesses all those attributes on which their hope may most securely repose, and the most lively incitements to centre in him their evangelical confidence.

6. Because the gospel, in its present form, is far more useful to mankind than if it had been written by one person, on one occasion, and in one manner.

By the gospel, here, I mean the whole New Testament. Christ, I acknowledge, could have written it, if he had pleased, in the very form, nay, in the very words, in which it is now written. But it would have been a plain and gross absurdity for Christ to have written a history, such as the Acts of the Apostles, or such as that of the events immediately preceding and succeeding his own death, concerning facts which had not yet happened; or epistles to churches not yet in being, concerning business, duties, and dangers of which no vestige had hitherto appeared to have existed. It is not, therefore, irreverent or improper to say, that Christ could not, so far as we can conceive, have written the New Testament in its present form, without palpable improprieties interwoven in the very nature of the work.

In its present form, the gospel is far more useful, than it would have been, if written in the manner which I have supposed, in many respects. It is in a much greater degree composed of facts; unless, indeed, the same facts had been communicated in predictions. In the historical form in which they now appear, they are much more easily and strongly realized, more readily believed, more capable of being substantiated by evidence, and more powerfully felt, than if they had been only predicted. The Epistles are also, in a great proportion of instances, written on subjects of real business, and for that reason are more easily proved to be genuine, are far more interesting and far more instructive than would otherwise have been possible. Their different dates continue the indubitable history of the church through a considerable period, and furnish us with a number of very important facts which we could not otherwise obtain. Their direction to churches in different countries presents to us, also, with the extension and state of the church in different parts of the world at that time. The business concerning which they were written, occasions a display of the difficulties, doubts, errors, temptations, controversies, and backslidings—the faith, comforts, hopes, repentance, brotherly love, piety, and general excellence of the Christians to whom they were addressed. These are the peculiarly interesting circumstances of all other Christians. The instructions,

therefore, the exhortations, commands, reproofs, encouragements, and consolations addressed to these churches, are to all other Christians, as to them, the very best means of reformation, improvement, and comfort.

The examples of the apostles, which in a gospel completed by Christ could not have been recorded, are among the most edifying as well as most interesting parts of the sacred canon.

The variety of form and manner now introduced into the New Testament, is attended with peculiar advantages. It renders the Scriptures far more pleasing. A greater number of persons will read them. All who read them will read them oftener, and will more deeply feel their contents. It renders them far more instructive. In consequence of the various application of the doctrines and precepts to so many different concerns of mankind, clearer views are given of their extent and comprehensiveness. By a comparison, also, of the different passages thus written with each other, as they are thus written with a various reference and application, new truths are obviously as well as certainly inferred from them, almost without any limitation of their number. The truths also which are thus inferred are always important, and frequently of very great importance. By this variety of manner, application, and inference, the Scriptures are always new, improving, and delightful, and exhibit incontrovertible evidence of divine wisdom in the manner in which God has directed them to be written, as well as in the wonderful and glorious things which they contain.

I have now finished this interesting head of my Discourse, and shall proceed to the consideration of the two remaining ones, which, respecting subjects generally understood, will demand our attention but a few moments.

The third subject proposed was the things which the apostles preached.

On this I observe,

1. The apostles have written the whole New Testament, both the things which were said and done by Christ, and the things which were said and done by themselves.

2. They have either originally communicated, or materially explained, many doctrines and precepts which were either omitted or partially communicated by Christ.

Among these I select the following:—

The connexion which runs through the whole system of redemption; the Patriarchal, Mosaic, and Christian dispensations; their mutual dependence; the absolute dependance of all on Christ; and the sameness of the manner and principles of salvation in all; the extent of the curse, and the unhappy efficacy of the apostasy of our first parents; the parallelism between the first and second Adam, and between the ruin and recovery of mankind; the imperfection of the Sinaitic covenant; the superior glory and blessings of the covenant of grace; the priesthood of Christ, formed after the order of Melchisedek; his government of the world for the benefit of the church; his intercession in behalf of his followers before the throne of God; the preaching of the gospel to Abraham and to the Israelites; justification by the grace of God through faith in the righteousness of Christ, founded on that righteousness as its meritorious cause; the sameness of Abraham's justification with that of all other saints, both before and after the coming of Christ; the sameness of the religion of the Old and New Testament; the extension of the mediation of Christ, not only to the Jews but to all mankind; the nature of evangelical faith; the nature of evangelical love; the progressive sanctification of Christians by the Holy Ghost; the difficulties of the Christian warfare, and the struggle between sin and holiness in the sanctified mind; the nature and circumstances of the resurrection; the process of the final judgment; the conflagration of the earth and visible heavens; the worship rendered to Christ in the heavenly world; and his peculiar agency in administering to his followers the happiness of a glorious immortality. These, together with a train of important prophecies concerning the affairs of the church throughout every age of the Christian dispensation, the apostles have added to the other contents of the Scriptures, or more perfectly explained them to mankind.

IV. *The consequences of their preaching.*

1. The apostles and their converts were furiously persecuted soon after they had begun to preach the gospel, particularly among the Jews, and not long after by the Gentiles also.

This subject is too well known to need a discussion from me. It is extensively recorded in the New Testament, and largely insisted on in ecclesiastical history.

2. The apostles preached the gospel with wonderful success.

Beside the many thousand converts whom they made among the Jews, they spread the gospel from Hindostan to Gaul, and planted churches throughout a great part of the Roman empire, in Persia, Hindostan, and several other countries. The number of their disciples in these extensive regions was immensely great, and this vast wilderness was made to blossom as the garden of God.

Exclusively of the residence of Christ in the world, nothing has ever taken place among mankind so wonderful and glorious as this event; nothing more unlike the ordinary progress of things, nothing more declarative of the presence and agency of God, nothing more evincive of the reality of revelation. Whether we consider the religion to which mankind were converted, the difficulty of producing a real reformation in the human heart, the original character of the converts, the bigotry of the Jews, the ignorance and wickedness of the Gentiles, the vastness, uniformity, and enduring nature of the change, or the seeming insignificance of the instruments by which it was wrought; fishermen, publicans, and tent-makers, few, feeble, friendless, despised, persecuted, and, in many instances put to a violent death, we are astonished and lost. A thorough discussion of the importance of this fact, the success of the gospel, might easily and usefully fill a volume, but cannot be pursued at the present time. It has been a theme of exultation and joy to all succeeding ages of the church, and, as we have the best reason to conclude, of peculiar wonder and transport in the world above.

The evidence which it furnishes to the divine origin of the gospel is immovable, and has accordingly been always insisted on by Christians with superiority and triumph. Infidels have laboured to diminish and obscure it with extreme earnestness and assiduity, but they have laboured in vain. Gibbon, particularly, with much art, a malignant hostility to the Christian cause, and

the most strenuous exertion of his talents, has struggled hard to account for this event, by assigning it to other causes than the true one. The real effect of his labours has, however, been to leave the evidence of the inspiration of the apostles more clear, more convincing, and more unexceptionable, than it was before.

SERMON L.

THE PRIESTHOOD OF CHRIST.—ORIGIN, OFFICE, AND CHARACTER OF THE PRIESTHOOD.—PROOFS OF THE PRIESTHOOD OF CHRIST.

The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent; Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedek.—Psal. cx. 4.

In a series of Discourses, I have considered the prophetical character of Christ. I shall now proceed, according to the plan originally proposed for the investigation of his office as mediator between God and man, to consider his priesthood.

In order to a proper examination of this subject, it will be useful to examine summarily,

I. *The origin,*

II. *The office,*

III. *The character of a priest;* and,

IV. *Inquire in what manner the office and character of a priest may be said to belong to Christ.*

I. The office of a priest undoubtedly had its origin in the first ages of the world. The earliest mention made of this subject in form, is found in Gen. xiv. 18, 'And Melchisedek, king of Salem, brought forth bread and wine; and he was the priest of the most high God.' The office was, however, in being long before this period. Cain and Abel performed the public duties of it for themselves; and there is no reason to doubt that it was regularly continued from their time, through every succeeding period, to the coming of Christ.

So soon as mankind became distributed into families, it appears highly probably, that the father of the family exercised this office in all instances, in behalf of himself and his household. Several instances, of this nature are recorded: Noah was plainly the priest of his own family, and Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Job, of theirs. It is probable that heads of families generally held the office in the same manner.

When mankind became settled in tribes and nations, the prince, or chief ruler, and at times some other ruler of great distinction, became the priest of the nation. Thus Melchisedek was at the same time the king and priest of the people of Salem; and thus, as we know from profane history, many other princes held the same office among the people over whom they presided.

Under the Mosaic economy the office was, by divine institution, appropriated to a particular class of men. All these, except one, were originally ordinary priests, over whom that one presided, in the character of high-priest. To this officer peculiar duties and privileges were attached. His weight and influence were almost invariably second only to those of the prince, and not unfrequently paramount even to them. Similar establishments were early made among the Gentiles. In the time of Joseph, we find the priests a separate class of men in the land Egypt. An institution, essentially of the same nature, appears to have existed in many other nations at a very early date, and a priesthood, in one form or another, has been found in almost all the nations of men in every age of the world. This fact proves, unanswerably, that the priesthood had its origin either in a divine appointment, handed down by universal tradition, or in such a sense felt by the human mind of its utility and importance, as to persuade all nations, for this reason, not only to institute, but to maintain it with great expense and self-denial. As we find the office commencing with the very first age of the world, we are furnished by this fact with a strong presumptive argument, to prove that it was derived originally from a divine institution. This argument receives no small strength from the consideration that the office, however corrupted and mutilated, was in substance everywhere the same and was professedly directed to the same objects.

II. *The office of a priest involved the following things.*

1. Intercession.

This is so universally acknowledged to have been always a part of the duties of a priest, as to need neither proof nor explanation. In conformity to it, Aaron and his sons were commanded to bless the children of Israel, by praying for them in this remarkable language: 'Jehovah bless thee and keep thee. Jehovah make his face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee. Jehovah lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.' In the same manner also, in the days of the prophet Joel, 'the priests, the ministers of the Lord,' were commanded to 'weep between the porch and the altar, and to say, Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thine heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them. Wherefore should they say among the people, Where is their God?'

Among the Gentiles also priests customarily prayed for the people.

2. Another branch of the priest's office was the offering of sacrifices and other oblations.

'Every high-priest, taken from among men,' says St Paul, 'is ordained for men in things pertained to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sin.' Intercession seems to be a duty of natural religion, and may be easily supposed to be a service properly performed by beings who have not fallen from their obedience. But, in such a state, the offering of sacrifices could evidently have no propriety nor foundation. Sacrifices are, in my view, beyond all doubt, of divine appointment, and have their foundation in the apostasy of

man. Of this the proof seems to me complete, both from reason and revelation. It cannot be supposed, as it cannot be proper, that on this occasion I should enter upon a detailed account of this proof. It will be sufficient to observe, that sacrifices existed among all the ancient nations, and that therefore they are derived from one common source; that no nation beside the Jews can give any account of the origin of this rite, or any reason for which it was founded; nor show, unless loosely and unsatisfactorily, any purpose which it could rationally be expected to answer; that all nations still hoped by means of their sacrifices to become acceptable, though they could not tell how or why, to their gods, and accordingly made the offering of sacrifices the principal rite of their respective religions; that, to a great extent, they offered the same sacrifices, and those chiefly such as are styled *clean*, in the Scriptures. These sacrifices were also esteemed, in some sense or other, though none of the heathen could explain that sense, expiations for sin. At the same time it ought to be observed, that there is, to the eye of reason, no perceptible connexion between sacrifices and religion; and that there is nothing in this rite, particularly, which can lead the understanding to suppose it in any sense expiatory. The true dictate of reason on this subject is, that the causeless destruction of the life of an animal must be in itself an evil, an act of inhumanity, a provocation to God, only increasing the list of crimes in the suppliant; while, on the contrary, the supposition that God can be appeased or reconciled by the death of an animal burnt upon an altar, is an obvious and monstrous absurdity. Well might Balak doubt, when he asked so anxiously, under the strong influence of traditionary custom, 'Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?' The only 'sacrifices of God,' that is, the only sacrifices which God will accept, if he will accept any from man, are, in the eye of common sense, as well as in that of David, 'a broken spirit and a contrite heart;' a disposition, as specified by Balaam in his answer to Balak, 'to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with our God.' From these observations, taken in their connexion, it is, I think, fairly evident, that sacrifices were not, and cannot have been devised by mankind.

In the Scriptures the same doctrine is, I apprehend, rendered unquestionably certain. Abel offered a sacrifice to God, and was accepted. By St Paul we are informed that he offered this sacrifice in faith. While it is incredible, that he should have devised this rite as an act of religion, it is anti-scriptural, and therefore incredible, that he should have been accepted in any act beside an act of obedience to God. But such an act his sacrifice could not have been, unless it had been commanded of God. Nor is it possible to conceive in what manner his faith could have been exerted, or to what object it could have been directed, unless it was directed to some divine promise. But no divine promise is, in the Scriptures, exhibited as made to mankind, except through the Redeemer. Abel, therefore, must have believed in the future existence and efficacious interference of that 'seed of the woman,' which was one day 'to bruise the head of the serpent.' With the eye of faith he saw that, through this glorious person, there was 'forgiveness with God,' and therefore 'feared,' or reverenced him. He 'hoped' in the divine promise, that through him 'there was plenteous redemption' for the children of men; and in the exercise of this hope he performed such acts of worship as God had enjoined. Had he, on the contrary, like Nadab and Abihu, brought an offering which the Lord had not commanded, we are warranted from analogy to conclude that he would have been rejected, as they were.

After the deluge, Noah, as we are told, builded an altar unto the Lord; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar.' On this occasion, also, the offering was accepted. To this fact the same reason is applicable with the same force. But it is farther evident from this story, that both fowls and beasts were at that time known and designated as clean, and unclean. That this designation existed in the time of Noah, and was customary language, known to him and others at that time, is certain from the fact, that he selected only such as were clean; and is still farther illustrated by the fact, that God directed him 'to take of every clean beast, and every clean fowl, by sevens, into the ark;' and that Noah exactly obeyed this command, and therefore perfectly knew what it imported. Beasts and fowls were, of course, distinguished as clean and unclean; or, in other words, as those which might, and those which might not, be offered to God. But beasts, in themselves, are all equally clean and equally unclean; nor can common sense discern a reason why one should be offered rather than another, any more than why any of them should be offered at all. The distinction of clean and unclean, or acceptable and unacceptable, cannot have been founded in any thing but the divine appointment. But this distinction we find thus early made; and, as Abel offered clean beasts also, and the firstlings of his flock, the very sacrifice commanded afterward to the Israelites, there is ample reason to conclude that the same distinction was made from the beginning.

The sacrifices of the Scriptures involve a plain, and at the same time, a most important meaning. All of them were typical merely, and declared in the most striking manner the faith of the worshipper in the great propitiatory sacrifice of the Redeemer, and in the blessings promised by God through his mediation. Considered in this light, sacrifices are highly significant acts of worship, worthy of being divinely instituted, deeply affecting the heart of the suppliant, naturally and strongly edifying him in faith, hope, and obedience, and well deserving a place among the most important religious rites of all who lived before the oblation of the great sacrifice made for mankind.

From this view of the subject it is, I think, clearly evident, that sacrifices were divinely instituted; and that this institution was founded in the future propitiatory sacrifice for sin made by the Redeemer. It is, of course, evident also that this part of the priest's office is derived from the apostasy of mankind, and can have a place only among beings who need an expiation.

3. Another part of the priest's office was to deliver the oracles, or answers of God to the people.

This was done, partly by the now inexplicable mode of Urim and Thummim, and partly by declarations made in the common manner.

The heathen priesthood, in imitation of that which was instituted by God, gave the pretended answers of their oracular divinities to such as came to consult them.

4. Another part of the priest's office was deciding the legal controversies of individuals, or judging between man and man.

For the institution of this duty of the priests, see Deut. xvii. 9, 10. Accordingly, several of the priests are mentioned in succeeding ages, as judges of the people.

5. Another part of the priest's office was to instruct the people in the knowledge of the divine law.

'The priest's lips,' says Malachi, 'should keep knowledge; and they should seek the law at his mouth; for he is the messenger of the Lord of Hosts.'

Of all the parts of this office the offering of sacrifices and other oblations, is undoubtedly the most prominent and important. It was originally enjoined in the authoritative separation of Aaron and his sons to the priesthood. It is everywhere more insisted on as the great business of the priests, throughout the law of Moses, and throughout the whole history of the Jewish economy. It is accordingly mentioned alone by St Paul, in his Epistle to the Hebrews, chap. v. ver. 1, as the sum of the duty of the high-priest. 'Every high-priest—is ordained—that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins.' This, then, is the peculiar office or duty of the priesthood, while the others are only appendages.

In the performance of this duty, the priest was everywhere considered in the law of Moses as making an atonement for the sins of the person or persons by whom the offerings were presented; sometimes for individuals, sometimes for the whole nation. This great object, the only rational means of explaining the institution of sacrifices, is abundantly inculcated in the formal institution itself, and in all the precepts by which the duties of it are regulated, so abundantly, that I know not how it can be misconstrued. Accordingly, the Scriptures have been understood in this manner only by the great body of Christians from the beginning.

But nothing is more evident, than that 'it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.' These sacrifices, therefore, were never designed to purify those by whom they were offered. They were plainly and certainly mere types, holding forth to the suppliant the great and real sacrifice, by which the author of it 'hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.' 'In burnt-offerings and sacrifices for sin,' God said by David, Psal. xl. 'he had no pleasure.' They were not, therefore, ordained for their own sake, but to point the eyes of the worshippers to the Son of God, who 'came to do his will; for whom a body was prepared;' and who, 'having offered,' in that body, 'one sacrifice for sins, sat down for ever at the right hand of God.'

The scheme of atonement, then, appears evidently to have been a part, and a chief part of the divine economy in the present world in all ages, or from the beginning.

Accordingly, when Christ had performed this great duty of his own priesthood, the priesthood of men ceased. The Jewish priesthood was terminated within a few years after his ascension. The office, except as holden by Christ, has no place in the Christian church, and, unless in a figurative sense, cannot be applied to Christian ministers without a solecism.

III. *The character of a priest, as disclosed in the Scriptures, consisted principally of the following things:*

1. A priest must be called of God.

'No man,' says St Paul, 'taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron. So also Christ glorified not himself to be made a high-priest, but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.' Nothing is more plain, than that he who ministers to God in divine things, ought to be approved of God: and it is clearly evident that he, who is not called, cannot expect to be approved. To thrust one's self into an office of this nature must be the result of mere impudence and impiety; a spirit which cannot meet the divine acceptance.

2. A priest must be holy.

Aaron and his sons were originally sanctified, externally, by a series of most solemn offerings and ceremonies. The garments of the high-priest were also pronounced holy, and styled holy garments. The oil with which he was anointed was styled holy, and was forbidden to all other persons, on a severe and dreadful penalty. 'HOLINESS TO THE LORD' was engraved on a plate which he was directed to wear upon his mitre.

'Such a high-priest,' says St Paul, 'became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners.'

No absurdity can be more obvious or more gross than an unholy, polluted character, in a man whose professional business it is to minister to God. The very heathen were so sensible of this, that their priests claimed generally, and laboured to preserve, that character which they esteemed sanctity.

3. A priest must be learned in the Scriptures.

As the priests were to 'teach,' so they were to 'keep knowledge.' Ezra, accordingly, is declared to have been 'a ready scribe in the law of Moses,' and to have 'prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments.' Artaxerxes, also, in his decree testifies, that the 'wisdom of God was in the hand of Ezra.' Every priest was implicitly required to possess these three great characteristics of the priesthood.

I have discussed the preceding subjects, viz. The origin, the office, and the character of the priesthood, that the various observations which I shall have occasion to make in the farther examination of the priesthood of Christ may be the more distinctly understood.

IV. *I shall now inquire in what manner the office and character of a priest may with propriety be said to belong to him.*

In the text, God the Father is exhibited as having sworn with a solemn and unchangeable decree to the Son, 'Thou art a priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedek.' As the person to whom this oath was addressed is expressly declared, both by Christ and St Paul, to be Christ, there can be no debate concerning this part of the subject.

Farther: As Christ is here declared by God the Father to be a priest, it cannot be questioned that he sustained this office. It may, however, be proper to remind those who hear me, and who wish to examine the scriptural account of this subject, that the establishment and explanation of the priesthood of Christ occupies a great part of the Epistle to the Hebrews.

But although this fact cannot be questioned, it cannot easily fail to be a useful employment in a Christian assembly to show, that Christ actually sustained the whole character, and performed all the duties, of a priest of God. This purpose I shall endeavour to accomplish in the remainder of the present Discourse.

1. Christ sustained the whole character of a priest of God.

(1.) He was called of God to this office. Of this the proof is complete in the passage already quoted, from Heb. v. 4, 5, 'No man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron. So also Christ glorified not himself, to be made a high-priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, to-day have I begotten thee.' In the following verse the apostle, with unanswerable force, alleges the text as complete proof of the same point. 'As he saith also in another place, Thou art a priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedek.' In the 9th and 10th verses, also, he renews the declaration in a different form, from the same words. 'And, being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him; called of God a high-priest after the order of Melchisedek.' In consequence of this divine call to the priesthood, he was anointed to this office, not with the holy anointing oil employed in the solemn consecration of the Aaronic priesthood, but with the antitype of that oil, the Spirit of grace, poured upon him 'without measure' by the hand of God.

(2.) He was holy. 'Such a high-priest,' says St Paul, 'became us, who was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners.' 'Who did no sin,' says St Peter, 'neither was guile found in his mouth.' 'The prince of this world cometh,' says our Saviour, 'and has nothing in me;' that is, nothing on which he can found an accusation against me.

(3.) He was perfectly acquainted with the law of God. This is abundantly declared by Christ himself in many forms; particularly, when he says, 'For the Father loveth the Son, and showeth him all things, whatsoever he doeth.' And again: 'No one knoweth the Father but the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.' * And again: 'I am the light of the world.'† And again: 'Thy law is within my heart.'‡ Of this acquaintance with the divine law he gave the most abundant proofs while he resided in this world, in his discourses generally. But in his sermon on the mount he gave a more clear, minute, and comprehensive explanation of its nature and extent, than was ever furnished elsewhere to the children of men.

2. He performed all the duties of a priest of God, except one; to wit, determining judicially the controversies between men; a thing irreconcilable to his office as a priest.

(1.) He taught the law, or will of God to his people, and ultimately to mankind, in a manner far more extensive, perspicuous, forcible, and every way perfect, than all the priests and all the prophets who preceded him had been able to do. On this subject I have dwelt, while considering his character as a prophet, with so much minuteness, as to preclude all necessity of farther discussion.

In this instruction he has included 'all things pertaining to life and godliness,' necessary to be known by man; and, therefore, has involved in them every oracular answer, or answer of God, to the inquiries of mankind after their interest and duty, which they can ever need on this side of the grave.

(2.) He has performed, and still performs, for this sinful world the great office of an intercessor.

'But this man,' says St Paul, 'because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore he is able, also, to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him; seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.' 'If any man sin,' says St John, 'we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.' Of this intercession, his prayer in the xviith chapter of John has been considered as an example.

Finally: He performed the great duty of offering sacrifice. 'Who needeth not daily, as those high-priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's; for this he did once, when he offered up himself.' And again: 'Now, once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin, by the sacrifice of himself. And, as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment; so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many.' It will be unnecessary farther to multiply proofs of this point.

It may, however, be useful to obviate a difficulty which may, not very unnaturally, arise in the mind when contemplating this subject. It is this: How can Christ be said to have offered himself, when he was apprehended, condemned, and crucified, by others? This difficulty will be easily removed, if we remember the following things:—

[1.] That Christ could not, without incurring the guilt of suicide, have put himself to death; and, therefore, could not be virtuously offered, on his own part, unless put to death by the hand of others.

[2.] That he voluntarily came into the world to die for sinners.

[3.] That he predicted his own death, and therefore certainly foreknew it; and,

[4.] That he could, with perfect ease, have resisted and overcome his enemies; as he proved unanswerably by his miracles, and particularly by compelling, through the awe of his presence, those very enemies to fall backward to the ground, at the time when they first attempted to take him. From these things it is evident, beyond a debate, that he himself 'made his soul an offering for sin;' and of himself 'laid down his life, and took it up again, when none could take it out of his hand.'

From these considerations it is evident, that Christ was, in the most proper sense, a priest of God; and that he sustained all the characteristics, and performed all the duties belonging to the priesthood; particularly, that he was called of God, consecrated, and anointed to this office; and that he performed the great duty of offering sacrifice, for which the office was especially instituted.

Let me now ask, whether these things, so strongly and abundantly declared in the Scriptures, can be made, in any sense, to accord with the Unitarian doctrine, that Christ died merely as a witness to the truth of his declarations. Every Christian martyr, as his name sufficiently indicates, yielded his life as a testimony to the truth. But was every Christian martyr, therefore, a priest of God? Did every martyr offer sacrifice? Was St Paul a priest? or St Peter? They were both witnesses to the truth, and voluntarily gave up their lives as a testimony to the truth. But did they, therefore, offer sacrifice? Were they, therefore, priests? Did any man ever think of applying to them language of this nature?

* Matt xi. 28. † John ix. 5. ‡ Psal. xl. 8.

But, farther; Christ is expressly and often declared to have offered himself a sacrifice for sins.

For whose sins did he offer this sacrifice? Not for his own; for 'he did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth.' For the sins of others, then, was this offering made. According to the declaration of St Peter, 'He bore our sins in his own body on the tree.' His sacrifice of himself was, therefore, an atonement, an expiation of the sins of mankind.

Thus, from the nature, origin, and institution of the priest's office, it is evident that Christ, the great high-priest of our profession, became, by the execution of his official duties (if I may call them such,) 'a propitiation for the sins of the world.' So far is the Unitarian doctrine on this subject from being countenanced by the scriptural representations, that it is a direct contradiction of every thing said in the Scriptures concerning the priesthood, and particularly that of Christ.

On this subject I propose to insist more at large hereafter; but I thought it useful to show, at the introduction of it into a System of Theology, that it was essential to the very nature of the priest's office. Nor can I fail to wonder how any man, reading the accounts given of it in the Bible, should adopt any other opinion concerning this part of the mediation of the Redeemer.

SERMON LI.

THE PRIESTHOOD OF CHRIST—HIS HOLINESS OF CHARACTER.

For such an high-priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens.—HEB. vii. 26

IN the preceding Discourse, I considered the origin, office, and character, of the priesthood; and showed, that this office, in the strictest sense, belonged to Christ; and that the end of its establishment in the world was no other than to hold out to the view of the ancients the priesthood of the Redeemer.

Among the characteristics of a priest, I mentioned it as an indispensable one, that he should be holy. This characteristic of the Redeemer I shall now make the subject of consideration; and in discussing it shall,

I. *Mention several particulars in which this attribute was exemplified.*

II. *Explain its importance.*

I. *I shall mention several particulars in which this attribute of Christ was exemplified.*

In the text the apostle declares, that Christ was 'holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners.' The word 'holy,' in this passage, naturally denotes the positive excellence of Christ's character; the word 'harmless,' an absolute freedom from the guilt of injuring and corrupting others; the word 'undefiled,' his freedom from all personal corruption; and the phrase 'separate (or separated) from sinners,' the entire distinction between him and all beings who are, in any sense or degree, the subjects of sin. The character here given of Christ by the apostle includes, therefore, all the perfection of which, as an intelligent being, the Saviour was capable. It ought to be remarked, that this character is given of him as a priest; and, of course, belongs especially to him, as exercising this part of his mediatorial office.

It will be obvious to a person examining this subject with a very moderate degree of attention, that Christ, in order to sustain this character, must have fulfilled all the duties enjoined on him by the positive precepts of the divine law, and have abstained from every transgression of the negative ones; that in thought, word, and action alike he must have been uniformly obedient to the commands of God; that his obedience must have been rendered in that exact and perfect degree in which it was required by those commands; and that it must have included, in the same perfect manner, all the duties which he owed immediately to God, to mankind, and to himself: in other words, that his virtue, or moral excellence, must have been consummate.

That such was in fact the character of Christ, we have the most abundant testimony.

The Scriptures declare every part of this character. St Peter asserts directly 'that he did no sin;' that 'guile was not found in his mouth;' and styles him 'a Lamb without blemish, and without spot.' He calls him 'the Holy One and the Just;' and declares that 'he went about doing good.' St Paul declares, that 'he knew no sin.' St John declares, that 'in him was no sin.' David styles him 'the Holy One of God.' Isaiah, or rather God speaking by Isaiah, calls him his own 'righteous servant;' 'his elect;' 'his beloved, in whom his soul delighted.' Jeremiah styles him, 'the Lord our righteousness.' Christ himself declares, in his intercessory prayer to the Father, 'I have glorified thee on earth, I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do;' and asserts, that 'the Father' and himself 'are one;' and that he, 'who hath seen him, hath seen the Father.' He also says, 'The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me.' At his baptism also, and during his transfiguration, God the Father himself declared his character in those memorable words, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.' A similar testimony was given by the Spirit of truth, when he 'descended' upon Christ 'in a bodily shape, like a dove.'

To these and the like declarations, which might be easily multiplied to a great extent, various other kinds of testimony are added in the Scriptures.

The Jews who lived on the borders of the sea of Galilee, when assembled to behold the cure of the deaf man who had an impediment in his speech, exclaimed, amid their astonishment at the miracle, 'He hath done all things well.' During his life his enemies laboured hard to fix some imputation upon his character, but

their efforts terminated in the groundless and senseless calumnies, 'that he cast out devils by Beelzebub, the prince of devils;' and that he was 'a man gluttonous, and a winebibber; a friend of publicans and sinners:' calumnies, daily and completely refuted by the testimony of those among whom he continually spent his time, and even by the demons which he cast out, and the maniacs whom they possessed. Even these felt themselves constrained to say, 'I know thee, who thou art, the Holy One of God.'

In his trial before the Sanhedrim, and afterward before Pilate, every art which cunning could devise, fraud sanction, or malice execute, was practised, in order to fasten upon him at least some species of criminality. But, in spite of all the subornation and perjury to which they had recourse, they were unable to prove him guilty of a single fault. Pilate's repeated examinations of him terminated with this public declaration, 'I find no fault in this man.'

Judas, after he was called as a disciple, lived with him through all his public ministry, and was a witness of his most private conduct, a companion of his most retired hours, a partner in his most undisguised conversation. At these seasons, if ever, the man is brought out to view. At these seasons hypocrisy and imposture feel the burden of concealment too strongly, not to throw off the mask, uncover themselves to obtain a necessary relief from the pressure of constraint, and cease awhile to force nature, that they may be refreshed for new imposition.

But Judas never saw a single act, and never heard a single word which, even in his own biased judgment, left the smallest stain upon the character of his Master. This he directly declared to the chief priests in that remarkable assertion, 'I have sinned, in that I have betrayed innocent blood.' Far beyond this, when the least fault in the conduct of Christ, could he have recollected it, would have relieved the agonies of his conscience, and justified, or at least palliated, his treason, he put an end to his own life, because he could not endure the misery springing from a sense of his guilt. In this gross and dreadful act he gave, therefore, the strongest testimony which is possible to the perfect innocence of the Redeemer.

Correspondent with this testimony is that of all antiquity. Neither the Mishna nor the Talmud, which contain the whole substance of the Jewish testimony on this subject; neither Celsus, Porphyry, nor Julian, who may be fairly considered as having given us the whole of heathen testimony, have fixed upon Christ the minutest charge of either sin or folly. To the time of Origen, we have his declaration (which is evidence of the most satisfactory nature,) that within the vast compass of his information nothing of this nature had ever appeared. In modern times, the enemies of Christianity have laboured with great industry and ingenuity to fasten upon him some species of accusation: but they have laboured in vain. Unlike in this respect, that glorious orb, to which he is compared in the Scriptures, nothing has ever eclipsed his splendour, no spot has ever been found on his aspect.

That we may form just and affecting views of this part of our Saviour's character, it will be useful, without dwelling any longer on a general survey of his holiness, to proceed to the consideration of those particulars in which it was especially exemplified.

1. The piety of Christ was uniform and complete.

His supreme love to God was divinely manifested in the cheerfulness with which he undertook the most arduous, and at the same time the most benevolent of all employments, and of course that which was most pleasing to him, and most honourable to his name. His faith was equally conspicuous in the unshaken constancy with which he encountered the innumerable difficulties in his progress; his patience, in the quietness of spirit with which he bore every affliction; and his submission, in his ready acquiescence in his Father's will, while requiring him to pass through the deepest humiliation, pain, and sorrow. However humbling, however distressing his allotments were, even in his agony in the garden, and in the succeeding agonies of the cross, he never uttered a complaint. But, though afflicted beyond example, he exhibited a more perfect submission than is manifested by the most pious men under small and ordinary trials. No inhabitant of this world ever showed such an entire reverence for God, on any occasion, as he discovered on all occasions. He gave his Father at all times the glory of his mission, his doctrines, and his miracles: seized every proper opportunity to set forth, in terms pre-eminently pure and sublime, the excellence of the divine character; and spoke uniformly in the most reverential manner of the word, the law, and the ordinances of God.

At the same time, he was constant and fervent in the worship of God; in prayer, in praise, and in cheerful compliance with all the requisitions of the Mosaic system, civil, ceremonial, and moral; celebrated the fasts, feasts, and sacrifices of his nation, and thus, according to his own language, 'fulfilled' in this respect 'all righteousness.' Such, in a word, was his whole life; so unspotted, so uniform, so exalted, that all persons who have succeeded him, both inspired and uninspired, have found themselves obliged, whenever they wished to exhibit a perfect pattern of piety, to appeal to the example of Christ.

2. His performance of the duties which he owed to mankind was equally perfect.

This part of our Saviour's character cannot be properly understood without descending to particulars. I observe, therefore,

(1.) That his filial piety was of this remarkable nature.

Notwithstanding he was so magnificently introduced into the world by a long train of types and predictions, and by illustrious instances of the immediate ministration of angels, he was entirely obedient throughout almost all his life to the commands of his parents. No person was ever so ushered into life, or marked out by Providence for so extraordinary purposes. No person so early engrossed the attention and admiration of the great and wise by his mental endowments. Whatever could awaken in his mind the loftiest views of ambition, enkindle a strong sense of personal superiority, or produce feelings of absolute independence, he could recount among the incidents which either attended him at his birth, or followed him in his childhood.

Still no child, no youth, no man of riper years, was ever so respectful and dutiful to his parents. 'To them,' in the language of St Luke, 'he was subject,' evidently till he 'began to be about thirty years of age.' To this period he lived contentedly an humble, retired, and unobserved life; following quietly the occupation of his

father with such industry and regularity, as to be known familiarly by the appellation of the carpenter.

Civilized men have united with a single voice to applaud and extol Peter the Great, emperor of Russia, for his moderation and condescension, displayed in labouring at the employment of a ship-carpenter, in the Saardam. Unquestionably, this conduct was the result of sound wisdom and unusual self-government on the part of this great man, and fairly claimed the admiration which it received. What, then, shall be said,—when we behold him whose title was the Son of God, whose birth angels proclaimed, predicted, and sung, to whom angels ministered at his pleasure; who commanded winds, and waves, and life, and death; who triumphed over the grave, and ascended to heaven—working at an employment equally humble, not a few days only, but the principal part of his life; and all this not to subserve the purposes of ambition, but from a sense of duty, and in the exercise of filial piety!

The same character was gloriously manifested by Christ during his public ministry. Particularly while he hung upon the cross, suffered the agonies of that excruciating death, and 'bore the sins of mankind in his body on the accursed tree,' when he saw his unhappy mother pierced with anguish by his side, he forgot his own woes, commended her to the care of his beloved disciple John, as his future mother, and that disciple to her as her future son, and thus made provision for her maintenance and comfort through life. Thus he began, and thus he ended.

(2.) Of the same perfect nature were his candour and liberality.

The spirit which is denoted by these two names is substantially the same, and differs chiefly by being exercised towards different objects. That this spirit should exist at all in Christ will naturally seem strange, when we remember that he was born of an humble family, in the most bigoted nation in the world, and in the most bigoted age of that nation, and was educated in that humble manner which naturally leads the mind to imbibe with reverence the bigoted sentiments of the great, and to add to them the numerous and peculiar prejudices springing from ignorance. But from all this influence he escaped without the least contamination. There is not an instance recorded in his life in which he was more attached to any person or thing, or more opposed to either, than truth and wisdom must entirely justify. There is no instance, in which he ever censured or commended those of his own nation, or of any other, either more or less than plain justice demanded. On the contrary, he commended every thing approved by wisdom and piety, and reproved every thing bigoted, partial, prejudiced, and faulty in man.

A great part of the people of his nation were his enemies, and among the most bitter of these were the Pharisees. Yet he said to his disciples, 'The Scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: all, therefore, that they say unto you, do. But do ye not after their works; for they say, and do not.' No commendation of the precepts of these men could easily have been conveyed in more expressive language than this. By directing his disciples to follow their precepts, he declared them in forcible terms to be true and right, that is, with such exceptions as he has elsewhere made, and as the same exact regard to truth demanded.

The same disposition he manifested in the case of the Syrophenician woman; and in that of the Roman centurion. The Jews considered all the heathen nations as deserving nothing but contempt and detestation, and called them dogs. But Christ preferred the faith of the centurion, although a Roman, to that of all other persons with whom he conversed, even to that of his own apostles.

In the same generous manner he treated the publicans, regarded by their countrymen as the vilest of sinners. In the same manner also he treated the Samaritans, against whom the Jews exercised the most furious hatred, and with whom they refused to have any 'dealings,' even those of the most indifferent and necessary kind.

The same disposition he showed with respect to doctrines, opinions, and customs. No specimen can be produced from the history of his life of bigoted attachment to his own doctrines, or those of his nation, or those of his friends; of prejudice against those of strangers or enemies; of favouritism or party Spirit, of contracted regard to any custom because sanctioned by public usage or general respect; of reluctance to conform to any innocent practice, by whomsoever adopted, or of any narrowness of mind whatever.

When invited to a marriage, he cheerfully went; when bidden to a feast, he readily consented to become a guest. Nor did it make any difference, because the host was on the one hand, Matthew, or Zaccheus, a publican; or, on the other, Simon, a Pharisee. In a word, he adopted and commended nothing except what was true and right, and neither refused nor condemned any thing except that which was false and evil. Nor did it make the least difference with him, whether that which was approved or censured was adopted by friends or enemies.

(3.) His prudence was consummate on all occasions.

Particularly was it manifested in avoiding the wiles and open assaults of the Jews. Notwithstanding the invincible firmness of mind universally displayed by our Saviour, notwithstanding he lost no opportunity of doing good, yet he never wantonly exposed himself to any suffering; discovering clearly, on every occasion, a total opposition to that vain and idle fool-hardiness which rushes into danger, merely to gain the reputation of being courageous.

The same prudence is strongly evinced in teaching his disciples and others, as their minds were able to receive his instructions; giving 'milk to babes' and 'strong meat to men;' opening new doctrines and duties by degrees, and never 'pouring new wine into old bottles.' At the same time, he commended his precepts both to the heart and the understanding by their form. At one time he communicated them in short aphorisms, easily understood, deeply felt, long remembered, and readily applied to practice. At another, he conveyed them in parables, simple, beautiful, natural, and affecting, catching the imagination and feelings, as well as convincing the understanding. At another, he entered into plain, but profound, curious, and unanswerable reasonings, showing both from the works and the word of God, that his precepts were just, and his doctrines true. Thus he charmed by variety and novelty, as well as proved by argument and evidence; and 'became,' innocently, 'all things to all men, that' at least he 'might gain some.'

The same character he discovered in a manner not

less remarkable, in answering the questions and resolving the cases proposed to him by the Pharisees and Sadducees. In every instance of this nature he refuted their arguments, exploded their opinions, defeated their crafty designs against him, and publicly put them to shame and to silence. Thus he beautifully illustrated the truth of that memorable declaration which he had anciently made concerning himself, 'I, Wisdom, dwell with prudence.'

The same truth he still more strikingly illustrated by the uniform tenor of his life. This was such as to defeat all the malicious accusations of his numerous and bitter enemies, and to place his character beyond a doubt of its innocence and uprightness. To this end it was not sufficient that he was really innocent and upright. It was additionally necessary that he should be consummately prudent. In proportion to their want of prudence, all men are endangered in this respect, and most become sufferers. But Christ was regularly considered as an innocent man by all persons even of moderate candour, had a high reputation for worth in the eyes of the public, and, when tried on the accusation of enemies and villains, before a malignant and unprincipled tribunal, was pronounced clear of every imputation. Equal proof of prudence as well as innocence was never furnished in the present world.

(4.) His integrity was equally perfect.

This dignified characteristic is strongly visible in several of the things already recited as proofs of his candour; candour itself being no other than a particular mode of exercising integrity. Of this nature are his impartial censures and commendations of his friends and his enemies. The same spirit is conspicuous in his reproofs which, on the one hand, were bold, open, and sincere, and, on the other, were perfectly free from selfishness and ill-nature. It is also strikingly evident in the perfect simplicity of his instructions and conversation.

In them all there cannot be found a single instance of flattery, sarcasm, ambiguity, affectation, vanity, arrogance, or ill-will. Nay, nothing is enhanced beyond the strictest bounds of propriety. Nothing is so coloured as to deceive, nothing left so defective as to mislead. The strongest specimen ever given of integrity in the manner of communication is found in the instructions of Christ.

Many persons have been distinguished for their integrity, and so distinguished as to leave behind them in their history little or no stain upon their reputation in this respect. But Christ differs, evidently, from them all in the degree in which he manifested this attribute; and so differs from them, as that simplicity and openness of communication forms a remarkable characteristic of the style in which he spoke; and constitutes, eminently, what may be called his own original manner. As this runs through all his discourses, as recited by the several evangelists, it is evident from this fact, that it was his own manner and not theirs.

The same illustrious attribute was, in the same manner, evinced in all his conduct. By applause he was never allured; by obloquy he was never driven. Popular favour he never coveted; popular odium he never dreaded. To friends and enemies, to the populace and the Sanhedrim, he declared truth, and proclaimed their duty, without favour or fear. When he stood before the Sanhedrim, and was on trial for his life, being adjured by the high-priest to declare whether he was the Son of God, he boldly said, though he knew that death would be the consequence, 'I am.' And, to place the declaration beyond all reasonable doubt, subjoined, 'And ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.' In a word, he treated all men while he was teaching, exhorting, and reproving them, as merely rational and immortal beings, and not as friends or enemies, nor as members of any sect, party, or nation. In this mannner he left a noble example to every succeeding teacher of mankind.

(5.) His benevolence also was without an example.

Many of the observations already made strongly illustrate this glorious attribute of the Redeemer. It will, however, be useful to mention other things more particularly, as exemplifications of this disposition. Among the numerous miracles wrought by Christ, there is not one which was not performed for the direct purpose of lessening distress or danger, or producing safety, comfort, and happiness to mankind. Many of these miracles, also, were wrought for those whom he knew to be his enemies, with the full conviction on his part that they would continue to be his enemies. While his life was filled up with that peculiarly bitter provocation which arises from ingratitude daily repeated, never wearied, and even increased by the very kindness which should have melted the heart, even this provocation never slackened his hand, nor moved his resentment. When he came in sight of that ungrateful city, Jerusalem, where so many prophets had been killed, where so many of his benevolent offices, and so many of his wonderful miracles, had been performed in vain; notwithstanding all the injuries which he had received from the inhabitants, notwithstanding they were now employed in devising means to take away his life, 'he wept over' the guilty, abandoned spot, and cried with inexpressible tenderness, 'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem! that killest the prophets, and stonest them who are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not.' On the cross he forgave, and prayed, and secured eternal life for murderers, while they were imbruing their hands in his blood, and rendering a most bitter death still more bitter by adding insult to agony. At the same time, he communicated faith, and peace, and hope, the forgiveness of sin, and an earnest of immortal glory, to the miserable malefactor who, by his side, hung over the burnings of devouring fire.

(6.) Equally wonderful was his disinterestedness.

This attribute, though often considered as the same with benevolence, is really a qualification of benevolence; as is evident from the mere phraseology, so customarily adopted, of disinterested benevolence. But it is the crown, the glory, the finishing of his character.

There is not an instance in which Christ appears to have proposed his own private, separate good, as the end either of his actions or sufferings. He came to live and die for others, and those enemies and sinners. From them he needed, and could receive nothing. From him they needed every thing, and from him alone could they receive that which they needed. For such beings all his labours, instructions, and sorrows, were planned and completed. The objects which he had in view were the most disinterested, public, and honourable which the universe has ever known; the deliverance of mankind from sin and misery, their elevation to vir-

tue and happiness, and the supreme glory of God in this divine and most wonderful work. These objects he accomplished with extreme difficulty and self-denial, and with immense expense on his own part. This arduous work he began with a fixed purpose, pursued with unshaken constancy, and triumphantly completed, in spite of every discouragement, difficulty, and danger. On all his progress heaven looked with wonder and gratulation, and, at his return to that happy world, the ransomed of the Lord exclaimed, and will for ever exclaim, 'Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing!'

SERMON LII.

THE PRIESTHOOD OF CHRIST.—HIS HOLINESS OF CHARACTER.—HIS SELF-GOVERNMENT.

For such an high-priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens.—Heb. vii. 26.

In the preceding Discourse, I considered the holiness of Christ as one great branch of his priestly character. In the course of this consideration I stated, summarily, my views concerning the manner in which Christ performed the duties, owed by him immediately to God, and to mankind. I shall now make a few observations concerning those which he owed more immediately to himself. The two former classes are generally denoted by the names piety and benevolence; the latter is usually denominated temperance or self-government.

It ought here to be observed, that our Saviour's life was regulated by the rules of perfect virtue in all those ordinary and less delicate cases, in which mankind so commonly transgress, and in which we usually look for the proofs of a gross and guilty character. The truth is, imputations of the kind here referred to are not made on the Redeemer even by the worst of men, and have ceased, notwithstanding the groundless and brutal calumnies of his contemporary enemies, who accused him as 'a man gluttonous and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners,' to have any place in the belief, or even the obloquy of mankind. To say, that our Saviour was chaste and temperate, is so far from seeming like a commendation of his character, that it rather wears the aspect of that cold approbation which is considered as grudged, and is yielded merely because it cannot with decency be refused. Nay, it may, with strict propriety, be said, that the very approach to this subject savours, in a degree, rather of impropriety and indelicacy, and wears more the appearance of an anxious and sedulous disposition to shield a doubtful reputation, by watchful efforts to say every thing which can be said in its favour, than of a sober determination to utter the sincere approbation of the understanding, and the just applause of the heart.

With these observations premised, I observe,

1. That the industry of Christ was wonderful.

St Peter describes the character of the Redeemer in these memorable words, 'who went about doing good,' Acts x. 38. This emphatical description exhibits the active part or side of his life just as it really was; and, though extremely summary, it is complete. Doing good was his only proper, professional employment; in this employment he did not, like other beneficent persons, stay at home, where he might meet with solitary and casual objects of his kindness, but went unceasingly from place to place to find the greatest number, and those on whom his kindness might be most advantageously employed.

The whole life of Christ was a perfect comment on this text. He himself has often told us his own views concerning the great duty of industry in the service of God. When his mother gently reproved him for the anxiety which he had occasioned to his parents, when, at twelve years of age, he stayed behind at Jerusalem, while they went forward three days' journey towards Nazareth; he replied, 'How is it that ye have sought me? Wist ye not, that I must be about my Father's business?' This honourable scheme of life, so early adopted, and so forcibly expressed, was the uniform rule of his conduct at every succeeding period, and is often mentioned by him, as such, during the progress of his public ministry. Thus, in his reply to the disciples, asking him a question concerning 'the man, who was born blind,' he said, 'I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day. The night cometh, when no man can work,' John ix. 4. Thus, when the Pharisees informed him, that 'Herod would kill him,' and urged him, therefore, to 'get him out, and depart thence,' he said unto them, 'Go ye, and tell that fox, Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures, to-day and to-morrow; and the third day I shall be perfected. Nevertheless, I must work to-day, and to-morrow, and the day following.' Thus also, he declared universally, the character of his life in those memorable words, 'The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister.' Who could claim, with so much propriety, to be ministered unto as Christ? From whom ought not ministering to be expected, rather than from him? Finally, when he was conversing with the woman of Sychar, and his disciples solicited him to eat, he answered, 'My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.'

In exact accordance with the spirit of these declarations, we find him, immediately after his baptism, going into the wilderness to suffer and to overcome in his temptation. As soon as this was ended, he journeyed unceasingly throughout Judea, Galilee, and Peræa, and occasionally in the neighbouring countries, instructing, healing, comforting, and befriending all

whom he found willing to hear his words, or fitted to receive his assistance. His early life was a life of industrious labour, literally so called. His public life was also an uninterrupted course of laborious exertions, made in a different manner, a period filled up with duty and usefulness. With an unwearied hand he scattered blessings wherever he went. The manner in which, and the objects to whom, the good was to be done, were to him things indifferent, if it was really done. Whether they were friends or enemies, Jews or heathens, disciples or strangers; whether they were to be taught, healed, or restored to sight, hearing, or life; he was always prepared to bestow the blessing, wherever there was necessity to demand, or faith to receive it. So wonderfully numerous were the labours of Christ, as to furnish a solid foundation of propriety for that hyperbolical and singular declaration of St John, with which he concludes his Gospel: 'and there are also many other things, which Jesus did; the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen.'

A stronger instance of this disposition can hardly be given, than one of those to which I have already alluded. Hungry, weary, and faint, in his journey through the country of Samaria, he came to the neighbourhood of the city Sychar, and seated himself 'on Jacob's well.' A woman, a miserable inhabitant of that city, came out to draw water, and presented him with an object to whom good might be done, and who infinitely needed it. Forgetting all his own sufferings, our Saviour applied himself with the utmost diligence to accomplish the conversion of this sinful woman, and that of her countrymen. After he had conversed a considerable time with her, she left him to call the people of the city. His disciples 'then prayed him, saying, Master, eat. But he said unto them, I have meat to eat, that ye know not of. Therefore said the disciples one to another, Hath any man brought him aught to eat? Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.' The sentiments here expressed, and on this occasion gloriously exemplified, in the diligence with which he devoted himself to the business of converting this poor woman and her neighbours, were the rules by which he governed his whole life.

As he drew near to the close of his ministry he appears to have been even more industrious, if possible; and to have taught and done more than during any former period of the same length, as if he thought the remaining time valuable in proportion to its shortness.

Thus he was able to say with perfect confidence and exact truth, after he had ended his ministry, 'Father, I have glorified thee on earth; I have finished the work, which thou gavest me to do.'

2. His fortitude was not less remarkable.

This characteristic of Christ is every where discovered, and with the highest advantage. To form just views of it, we ought to remember that he was alone, poor, and friendless; that he was more opposed than any other person ever was; and that he was opposed by the government and nation of the Jews, especially by the learned, wise, and great. We ought to remember that, wherever he was he found enemies, enemies to his person and to his mission, subtile, watchful, persevering, base, and malignant. All his strength, in the mean time, was, under God, in himself, in his mind, in his wisdom and virtue. Yet he met every danger with unshaken firmness, and immovable constancy. He bore, not only without despondency, without shrinking, and without a murmur, but with serenity and triumph, all the evils of life, and, except the hiding of his Father's face, and the manifestations of his anger against sin, all the evils of death. At the same time, all this was done by him while these evils were suffered by continual anticipation.

They were, in a sense, always in his view. He foretold them daily, and yet encountered them with invincible constancy. Other men, however boldly and firmly they encounter actual calamities, are yet prone to sink under such as are expected. The distresses of a foreboding heart who can bear?

When, during his agony in the garden, the 'sweat' flowed from him in the form 'of great drops of blood,' he coolly met the guard which approached to seize him, reproved Peter for his violence, healed the wounded ear of Malchus, secured the escape of his disciples, and delivered himself up to those very soldiers whom his presence had awed into statues.

With the same invincible spirit he endured the miseries and injuries of the crucifixion. All the insults which were mingled with his agonies on the cross were insufficient to remove his self-possession, or disturb his serenity for a moment. Amidst them all he was able to forget himself, to pity and admonish the daughters of Jerusalem, to provide for the future comfort of his mother, and to pray for the forgiveness and salvation of his murderers.

3. Not less wonderful was his meekness.

Meekness is a voluntary and serene quietness of mind under provocations perceived and felt, but of choice unresented.

No person was ever so abused or provoked as Christ, nor in circumstances which so greatly aggravated the provocation. He came from heaven, lived, and died only to do good to his enemies, and received all his abuses while occupied in this divine employment. Ingratitude, therefore, and that of the blackest kind, was mingled with every injury, and added keenness to its edge. At the same time, every abuse was causeless and wanton, without even an imaginary wrong done by him to excite ill-will in his persecutors.

But no person ever bore any provocation with such meekness as he exhibited in every instance of this nature. Neither revenge nor wrath, as this word is usually understood, ever found a place in his breast. His character was maligned; his actions were perverted by the worst misconstruction; himself was insulted often and alway; and all the amiableness and worth of his most benevolent conduct insolently denied; yet 'when reviled, he reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.' In his trial particularly, and at his crucifixion, he was mocked and insulted beyond example. Yet though beaten, buffeted, pierced with thorns, spit upon, derided with mock-worship, and wounded with every other insult which the ingenuity of his enemies could devise, he quietly submitted to them all.

The nature of all these also he perfectly understood, and the sting which each conveyed he deeply felt. The tenderness of Christ's affections, the exquisiteness of

his sensibility, are strongly evident, not only in the history of his life, but also in those remarkable predictions contained in Psalms xxii. xl. lxix. and lxxxviii. Here, in prophetical language, Christ utters the very feelings which he experienced both while he lived, and when he died. No picture of sorrow is drawn in stronger colours, or formed of more vivid images, or can more forcibly exhibit exquisite tenderness and sensibility. In this picture the injuries and insults which Christ received while on earth, hold a distinguished place, particularly those which surrounded him at his trial and crucifixion.

The manner in which he felt them all, he himself has explained to us in these Psalms, and has taught us to consider them as filling his heart with anguish and agony. Still, he quietly yielded himself to them all without a momentary resentment, without a single reproachful or unkind observation. No cloud of passion appears to have arisen in his breast, or obscured for a moment the steady sunshine of his soul. Calm, and clear, and bright, amid the rage of the tempest beneath, he pursued his celestial course with an undisturbed progress, with a divine serenity.

4. Equally extraordinary was his humility.

No person ever had the same reason to entertain a high opinion of himself, or would have been so naturally justified, or so far excusable in indulging lofty thoughts of his own character, and in wearing a deportment of superiority to his fellow men. No person was ever so ushered into the world. Think, for a moment, what it is for a person to be prophesied of during four thousand years before he was born; to be announced to the world repeatedly in the songs and predictions of angels; to be the antitype of a long train of august institutions, and a glorious succession of the most distinguished personages numbered among mankind. No person ever did so great and wonderful things. Think what a splendour of character is displayed in healing the sick, cleansing the leper, restoring soundness to the lame, hearing to the deaf, sight to the blind, and speech to the dumb, in calling the dead from the grave, silencing the winds and the waves, and casting out demons from the possession of man; and all this by a command. Think what it is to receive the homage and obedience of angels, to be proclaimed by a voice from heaven, 'the beloved Son of God,' to have the Spirit of God descend upon him in a visible form, and to see all nature, animated and unanimated, obey his voice and execute his pleasure, and thus to stand alone among the race of Adam, exempted from the common character of men by marks the most clear, certain, and glorious.

His situation, at the same time, was such as most to excite vain glory, and flatter ambition. To these wonderful things he rose from the most humble condition of life, a condition heightening by contrast the splendour of all the great things which he did and received. Persons rising from such a condition into the admiration of mankind, are usually much more strongly affected than those who have lived always in superior circumstances, and been from the beginning objects of distinguished applause.

Christ also possessed far more wisdom than any other person ever possessed; wisdom, respecting the most noble and sublime subjects, such as the character of God, the invisible world, divine providence, and the nature, duties, and everlasting concerns of man. On all these subjects the wisdom contained in his instructions totally excels all the wisdom of the greatest and wisest men of every age. This wisdom, also, he possessed without the aid of education. His precepts and doctrines were his own, and underived from any preceding instruction. But nothing more inflates the pride of wise men than to be indebted for their wisdom to themselves alone, to native genius, to original thought, invention, and research, and thus to have become the authors of discoveries which have eluded the ingenuity and escaped the invention of all who went before them.

These things his countrymen saw, heard, and acknowledged, and that in a manner experienced by no other inhabitant of this world. They saw him often engaged in disputes with the greatest men of his age and country, concerning subjects of the highest importance. They saw him uniformly and completely victorious, and them always put to silence and to flight. His triumph they not only beheld, but frequently enjoyed; and, on account of it, publicly gave glory to God. They declared him to be a prophet, the peculiar prophet promised by Moses, and the Messiah; rang his praises throughout Judea, and the surrounding countries; attempted to make him their king; and, spreading their garments where he was to pass, sung hosannas before him, to glorify his character.

But, fitted as these motives were to kindle every latent spark of pride in the human heart, and to blow up a flame of ambition which should reach to heaven, he was superior to them all, and that from the beginning. At twelve years of age he astonished the wise and great among his countrymen with his wisdom; yet he obeyed the first call of his parents, and returned with them from the scene of applause to their humble cottage. When his countrymen sought him that they might place him on a throne, he retired into a desert. When greeted with hosannas by the enraptured multitude, he changed neither his demeanour nor his daily employments; but forgot the splendour, the applause, and himself, to weep over Jerusalem, and deplore the approaching ruin of that ungrateful city.

He chose the humblest life, the humblest associates, the humblest food, the humblest dress, and the humblest manners, and voluntarily yielded himself to the most humiliating death. Nor was his character more distinguished by greatness, wisdom, and moral dignity, than by his humility of mind and life. He himself has alleged it, as one proof of his Messiahship, that 'the poor had the gospel preached to them' by his mouth.

REMARKS.

I have now finished the observations which I proposed to make under the first general head, mentioned in the preceding discourse; and have given an account, so far as I thought necessary, of several things in which the holiness of the Redeemer was exemplified. The second, viz. the importance of this attribute to his priesthood, I shall reserve for future discussion; and shall proceed to make two or three remarks, naturally arising from what has been already said.

1. We have here seen ample proof, that Christ was what he declared himself to be.

The precepts of Christ required mankind to be absolutely holy, or perfect, and allowed no defect of obedience, as well as no degree of transgression; declaring this character to be the only one which, for its own

sake, could be accepted of God. In what has been said, we have the fullest proof that he was exactly what he taught others to be, a complete example of the character which he required. Of all the things attempted by man on this side of the grave, none is more difficult, or more transcends human efforts, than the attainment of this perfection. The world has never seen a second specimen of this character. How remote then must it be, when the best of mankind have fallen so far short of it, from the possible attainment of hypocrites, impostors, and pretenders? How distant from every counterfeit? How absolutely unattainable, hitherto, by the least blemished integrity, and the most exalted piety which has been merely human? A single act, or a few actions, may to the eye of spectators seem great, spotless, and exalted. A retired life, little seen and scarcely observed, may not disclose its defects. But a life spent in the midst of mankind, and daily exposed to the view of multitudes, and filled up with actions of every kind, cannot fail to discover, even in the best of men, continual and numerous imperfections. Perfect rectitude of heart, therefore, can alone have produced perfect rectitude of life in our Saviour. Of course, he was what he declared himself, and what he is everywhere declared to be, in the Scriptures. Of course, he was the Messiah, the Son of God, the Saviour of mankind. His doctrines and precepts were from God, and require, with divine authority, the faith and obedience of all men. His 'life' was given as 'a ransom for many,' and his 'flesh for the life of the world.' He did not, therefore, die to bear witness to the truth of his doctrines; but as 'a propitiation for sin,' and 'a ransom for sinners.' As such, therefore, we are required to believe on him, if we wish to be saved.

A strong additional proof of the truth now under consideration, is furnished by the circumstances in which Christ was born, and lived. He was born, and educated, as has been observed before, in the humblest circumstances, and continued in them throughout his life. With plain and ignorant men only, did he spend almost the whole of his days; men whom he instructed, but from whom he could never receive instruction. At the same time, the learned men of his age and country had wandered in their doctrines far from truth and righteousness. Their opinions, grounded partly on a perverted revelation, and partly on a wretched and debasing collection of traditions, were to a great extent false, foolish, and stupid beyond all easy conception. Their worship was a vain and miserable round of external rites. Their morals, also, were licentious, and polluted by all the dictates of lust, pride, and avarice; and their whole character was a gross and dreadful mixture of bigotry, hypocrisy, oppression, violence, and impurity.

In such an age, in such circumstances, among such men, and in the midst of such errors and sins, Christ was born and educated, lived and died. Let every honest, every sober man now say, whence it arose that he was an exception to the character of all his countrymen, and to that of mankind; that his wisdom transcended that of all other men, and that his life left that of every child of Adam out of comparison, and out of sight; a 'sun of righteousness,' at whose presence every star disappears from the firmament.

2. These observations strongly evince the inspiration of the apostles.

This perfect character of Christ they have left on record. It is perfectly delineated, not by general description, or loose unmeaning panegyric, but by filling up a plain, simple, natural history with characteristical actions and discourses, and tracing features distinct in themselves, and yet harmonious, blending into one complete whole, totally distinguished from every other character hitherto drawn by man; as unlike, nay, much more unlike, any other person ever seen or heard of in this world, than that of Hamlet, Lear, Achilles, or Hector.

Attempts to form such a character as should be acknowledged to be perfect, have been often made, but they have invariably failed of success. The efforts of the heathen philosophers and poets to paint their wise and perfect men are well known to be miserably imperfect. The Æneas of Virgil is a picture of this kind, but, notwithstanding the genius of the writer, is so far from perfection, as not to be even amiable, but gross, vicious, and hateful. The wise man of philosophy is little better; for he is impious, proud, impure, false, and unfeeling. Infidels have succeeded no better; and even Christians have been compelled to derive all that is good and commendable in the characters drawn by them from the very record left by the apostles, the life, precepts, and doctrines of Christ.

Whence, then, were these men able to perform a task too hard for all the rest of their fellow men? Plainly, not from learning, for they had none; not from genius, for in this most of them were evidently excelled by many others; not from the examples furnished to them in their own Scriptures; Abraham, the most perfect example of this nature exhibited at length, is wonderfully inferior to the character of Christ, although wonderfully superior to the best men of heathen antiquity. All the saints of the Old Testament could not, were their excellencies united, supply the most ingenious mind with materials out of which the life of Christ could be formed, even by such a mind. Nor could all the doctrines contained in that invaluable book enable such a mind to originate, by its own powers, the instructions of Christ. The character is not only superior but singular. The wisdom is not only greater, more various, and more satisfactory, but it is wrought into forms, communicated in discourses, and started by incidents, all of which are too particular, too natural, and too appropriate to admit, not the belief merely, but the possibility of their having been compiled. The character is perfectly new and original, like nothing which preceded and nothing which has succeeded it. At the same time it is all of a piece, every part being suited exactly to every other part, and all the parts to the whole. As this character could not have been formed, by the apostles, without an actual example, it was equally impossible that it should have been formed at the time when they wrote, with the aid of such an example. The Gospel of St Matthew was, according to the earliest computation, written, as I formerly observed, eight years after the death of Christ. How plainly impossible was it that he should have remembered Christ's Sermon on the Mount, his Parabolical Sermons, or his Discourses concerning the destruction of Jerusalem and the final judgment? How evidently impossible is it, that he should have made them? Who could make them now? Compare them with the noblest efforts of Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and Cicero. Who

now, what peasant, what beggar, what child twelve years of age, would take their discourses as his creed, as the directory of his conscience, as the law of his life? But the discourses of Christ were the creed, the wisdom, the boast, the glory of Bacon, Locke, Newton, Butler, Boyle, Berkeley, Addison, and Johnson. Can it be imagined that the Jewish publican possessed a mind sufficiently sublime and capacious, sufficiently discerning and pure, to command the admiration, belief, and obedience, of these great men? Can it be believed that, with all the wisdom of the world before them, and their own superior understanding to direct their choice, they, and ten thousand other enlightened men, should bow with a single heart and voice to precepts and instructions devised by the mere native abilities of this uneducated inhabitant of Judea?

But if Matthew could not have devised nor remembered the life and discourses of Christ, what shall be said of John? His Gospel was written about fifty years after the death of the Saviour, and contains more, and more wonderful discourses of this glorious Person. All these also are exhibited as springing out of appropriate occasions minutely specified, and are exactly fitted to each occasion. The writer, it is to be remembered, was a fisherman on the lake Gennesaret, and followed this business some time after he arrived at manhood. A mere fisherman, therefore, wrote the Gospel of St John. Suppose the experiment were now to be made. Suppose an American fisherman, who had read the Bible from his childhood, were to be employed to form a new Gospel, and to delineate anew, as particularly as John has done, the life and discourses of such a person as Christ, both of them to be drawn wholly from the stores of his own mind. What must we, what must all men be obliged to believe would be the result of his efforts? Undoubtedly, the same narrow-minded, gross, and contemptible compound which we now and then behold in a pamphlet, written by an ignorant man, which scarcely any person reads through, unless for the sake of seeing what such a man can write; a production devoid of understanding, wisdom, incident, character, entertainment, and thought; a trial of patience, a provocative of contempt and pity. Such, all analogy compels us to believe, must have been the Gospel of St John, had it been devised by the mere force of his own mind.

That he could have remembered the incidents and discourses contained in it, after the lapse of fifty years, I need not attempt to disprove; since it was never believed, and will never be believed by any man.

But the Gospel of John was written by a fisherman: the writer himself declares it, and the declaration is confirmed by the testimony of all antiquity. Read this book, consider the sublime and glorious wisdom which it contains, and the wonderful life which it records, and then tell me whether the supposition, that it was revealed, or that it was written without revelation, involves the greater miracle.

SERMON LIII.

THE PRIESTHOOD OF CHRIST.—HOLINESS OF HIS CHARACTER—IMPORTANCE OF THIS ATTRIBUTE TO THE DISTINCTION OF HIS CHARACTER, &c.

For such an high-priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens.—Heb. vii. 26.

In the two preceding Discourses I have considered the personal holiness of Christ, in its three great divisions of piety, benevolence, and self-government. I shall now proceed to a discussion of the second head of discourse, originally proposed concerning this subject, and endeavour to

Explain the importance of this attribute to Christ, as the high-priest of mankind.

I wish it to be distinctly remembered, that I am not inquiring why personal holiness, or inherent moral excellence, was necessary to Christ. Personal holiness is indispensable to every rational being in order to his acceptance with God, being no other than the performance of his duty in whatever situation he is placed. My inquiries respect solely the necessity of Christ's manifesting to the world his holiness of character in a life of perfect obedience, such as he actually exhibited. Christ might have become incarnate, and died immediately, and yet have been a perfectly holy being. I ask here why it was necessary for him, as the high-priest of men, to exhibit such a life as he actually lived.

The pre-eminent holiness of Christ was, in this character, necessary to him.

1. To give him that distinction which was indispensable.

We are so accustomed to consider Christ as an extraordinary person, as hardly to ask for any reason why this peculiarity of character was necessary to him, or what influence it had, or was intended to have, on his priesthood. I shall not be able to do justice to this subject, yet I will suggest a few considerations which have occurred to me at the present time.

It will be readily believed by all persons who admit the priesthood of Christ, that this office was the most important ever assumed in the present world. He who has expiated the sins of mankind, and opened the way for their reconciliation to God, their restoration to holiness, and their introduction to heaven, has undoubtedly sustained the most important character, and performed the most important acts which have been ever known to the human race. That a person of whom these things can be truly said, must be rationally sup-

posed to be separated from the rest of mankind, by many marks both of personal and official distinction, is an assertion which needs no proof. All men are, by the very nature of the case, prepared to admit before hand, that he who is destined to so extraordinary an office, must also possess an extraordinary character.

The Jews, led by the several predictions given in their Scriptures concerning the Messiah, and perhaps in some degree, also, by the nature of the case, formed, concerning him, apprehensions generally of this nature. They mistook, indeed, the things by which his personal character was to be distinguished, but were perfectly correct in their belief, that his character was to be singular as well as his office. His life, in their view, was to find its peculiar distinction in external splendour, conquest, and dominion over all nations, who were to be subjugated by his arm. He was to reign with a glory utterly obscuring that of every preceding conqueror, and was to divide among them, his favourite people, the pomp, wealth, and power of this lower world. To them, as 'the people of the saints of the Most High,' was, in a literal sense, to be 'given the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven.' To a people, conquered as they were, impatient of their yoke, panting for liberty and independence, proud of their pre-eminence as the chosen people of God, gross in their conceptions of divine truth, and confining, with an animal relish, all real good to the gratifications of sense, it can scarcely seem strange, that this should appear a rational interpretation of the prophecies concerning the Redeemer, particularly of some, which are couched in terms highly figurative. From such a people, in such a state, we could hardly expect just apprehensions concerning those sublimer glories of the Messiah, which lay in excellence of mind, and excellence of life, obtained the unmingled complacency of the Father, and called forth the admiration, love, and homage of all the virtuous among mankind. Still even the expectations of the Jews accord with the general truth, that he who sustains such an office, must also possess a character suited to that office.

The necessity of this character, to give distinction to Christ as the high-priest of mankind, appears in a striking manner from several considerations. Particularly, it was indispensable to the accomplishment of the end of his priesthood; and, therefore, of his whole mediatorial office, that he should engage, to a great extent, the attention of mankind. On this, in a great measure, depended the importance and success of his public ministry, both among his contemporaries, and among men of all succeeding ages. Had he not been an object of public curiosity and inquiry in his own time, his instructions, if uttered at all, must have been uttered to the rocks and the winds; and his character, unregarded in that age, would have been forgotten in the next. Or, if we suppose a record to have been made of his instructions, they would have been the instructions of an individual, obscure, not only on account of his parentage, and the humble circumstances of his life, but on account of every thing else. Whatever they were, however wise, pure, and unexceptionable, they would have failed to arrest the attention, and command the regard of future times, because they were not enforced by a distinguished character in their author. For extraordinary sentiments the mind instinctively looks to an extraordinary man. If Christ had not been separated from the rest of the children of Adam by singular characteristics, it would have been boldly questioned whether these instructions ever came from him; and the record which asserted them to be his, could scarcely have been furnished with such proofs of authenticity as to place the question beyond rational doubt. If this point had been admitted, new and equally perplexing inquiries would have arisen concerning the authority of the teacher: concerning the strangeness of the fact, that God had destined such a man to the office of giving such precepts to the world; and concerning the irreconcilableness of so insignificant an appearance with a character distinguished by such wonderful wisdom. Strong objections are even now made by infidels to the humble character in which Christ appeared. What would they not have objected, if he had been marked by nothing extraordinary?

These observations respect Christ in all his offices. Had he not possessed this distinction in some clear, acknowledged manner, and in a degree unquestioned, he would never, in any sense, have become the object of any peculiar regard; and would, of course, have failed of the end of his mission. The arguments already alleged are, therefore, applicable to every part of his character as Mediator. But they are, in some respects, peculiarly applicable to his priesthood. A great part of the truths which he taught respected himself, as the High-Priest of the human race. These were truths indispensable to the salvation of mankind. The atonement made by him in this office for the sins of men, is the only foundation even for the hope of eternal life. The belief of men in this great fact is the basis of all our confidence in Christ as our Saviour; and this confidence is the only mean of our justification. But in this fact few men, to say the most, can be supposed to have believed, had not Christ been distinguished from other persons by peculiar and very honourable characteristics. There is something so repugnant to all our most rational and satisfactory thoughts, in the supposition that a person, ranking in all things with such beings as we are, should sustain this glorious office, and accomplish this marvellous end, that it can hardly be imagined to have gained admission into the mind of any sober man.

Should it be answered, that a distinction of some kind or other, in the degree specified, was indeed necessary to the character of Christ, in order to render him the object of the confidence or even the attention of mankind, but that this distinction was sufficiently established by his power of working miracles, so often and so illustriously exemplified while he was in the world; I answer, that this power distinguished Christ from other inhabitants of the earth very honourably, but could not distinguish him sufficiently for the purpose in view. For, to say nothing of the fact, that in this respect he was not sufficiently unlike Moses and Elijah, who also wrought many and great miracles, or his apostles, who 'did greater works than' his own; to say nothing of the contrariety to all rational thinking in the supposition that a man, invested with no other proofs of an extraordinary character, should work such stupendous miracles, or any miracles at all, it is perfectly evident, that he could never be the object of any moral regard, unless in his moral character he had appeared sufficiently important to claim it, much less of that supreme moral re-

gard, evangelical faith. In the exercise of this faith, the soul surrenders itself absolutely into the hands of Christ. But such a surrender cannot be made, unless to a being of such consequence as to make the act rational and warrantable in the view of the understanding. But the understanding can never be persuaded that a person undistinguished by pre-eminent holiness, however superior might be his natural or supernatural endowments, could be regarded by God as an acceptable propitiation for its sins. Nor could it by any means of which I am able to conceive, feel itself warranted to exercise this confidence towards any being unpossessed of that consummate rectitude, particularly of that sincerity and good-will upon which it is ultimately founded. If Christ had not in this respect been superior to other men, the faith placed in him would, I think, have been the same with that which is placed in other men, and have differed from that neither in kind nor degree.

Holiness is the supreme distinction of moral beings, and the supreme object of moral regard, especially, in all cases, where the approbation and acceptance of God, or the confidence of intelligent creatures, are concerned. Is this the object on which our thoughts ultimately rest, in comparison with which all others are of little importance?

II. *To enable him to magnify the law of God, and make it honourable.*

Christ performed this important office, an office predicted by the prophet Isaiah, and also by himself, many ages before his incarnation, in a manner absolutely perfect. The following particulars will, if I mistake not, illustrate this subject with advantage.

1. Christ in his own obedience showed that the law was capable of being perfectly obeyed by mankind.

By this I mean, that beings possessing exactly such natural powers as we possess are, if properly disposed, proved by the obedience of Christ to be capable of perfectly obeying the law of God.

There is no reason to believe that Christ possessed any other natural powers than those which are possessed by mankind generally. The difference between him and them lay, radically, in the disposition; his being that of a dutiful child, and theirs being froward and rebellious. With these powers Christ perfectly obeyed the law of God, and thus proved that it might be perfectly obeyed by any other person possessing the same powers. No difference of intellect can be pleaded here; because Christ thus obeyed in every stage of his life; with the intelligence of an infant, of a child, of a youth, and of a man The least degree of intelligence which he possessed after he became a moral agent is, therefore, sufficient to enable any other moral agent thus to obey. The difficulty of obeying experienced by us does not, therefore, lie in the want of understanding.

The importance of this article will be easily realized if we call to mind how prone we are to justify ourselves in sin, and to feel secure from the danger of punishment, from the consideration, that we have not, naturally, sufficient power to obey; and if, at the same time, we remember that, even to the present day, not only ordinary men and plain Christians, but even philosophers and divines, hold this doctrine, and insist on it as a part of their customary instruction. The proof here furnished, that the doctrine is wholly erroneous, is complete; for it can never be said, that the mind of Christ at its entrance upon moral agency possessed more intelligence, and more natural ability to obey, than that of a mature man. Christ obeyed throughout his infancy and childhood. Bacon, Newton, and Locke, were sinful beings. The reason why they were sinful beings was not a defect of intelligence. The difference between them as moral beings, and Christ while an infant or a child, was a moral difference, involved moral turpitude on their part, and rendered them deserving of blame and punishment.

In this manner Christ proved the practicability of obedience, and the reasonableness of the law. If he with the same natural powers which we possess, could obey the law, obedience is naturally and certainly practicable to us. If Christ obeyed while an infant, or little child, the requisitions of the law cannot be unreasonable. The importance of his glorifying the law, in this respect, needs no illustration.

2. Christ in obeying, furnished mankind with an extensive and most useful comment on the law of God.

A moment's recollection will show us, if we need to be shown, that the nature of all precepts is more perfectly seen in those actions which are conformed to them, than it can be in the abstract contemplation of the precepts themselves. The life of Christ was exactly conformed to the precepts of the divine law, and was, therefore, a more perfect exhibition of their true nature than any other of which they were capable. It was, particularly, a perfect exhibition of the nature and extent of every requirement, so far as it was applicable to him. In seeing what he did, we learn exactly what we are required to do; more exactly than we could possibly learn from the precept itself.

It exhibited, also, the beauty and excellency of obedience. This is discerned very imperfectly in the mere contemplation of the precept, by which it is required. That application of the precept, through which alone its proper influence can be discerned by mere contemplation, is made so imperfectly and seen so obscurely by the mind, that the proper efficacy of the precept cannot, in this way, be ever realized. In example, in actions, on the contrary, the true nature, the beauty, the desirableness of the wise and good precepts by which such actions are governed, are distinctly perceived and comprehended. The example of Christ is, beyond debate, far the most amiable and glorious of all the moral objects ever exhibited to mankind. At the same time, it is an exact display of the nature and influence of the precepts of the divine law, as being no other than a course of mere obedience to them.

Thus Christ has taught us what it is to obey the law of God; what conduct is obedience, in every situation in which he was placed; in what respects, within what limits, and to what degree, obedience is to be exhibited; what words we are to use, what actions to perform, what affections to indulge, and to discover; and when, or how far, we are to withhold, or restrain, and to deny them all. These several things, also, he has taught us with a distinctness and perfection of which all other instruction is incapable. At the same time, he has shown us the beauty and loveliness of obedience in the strongest colours, divinely fair, divinely amiable; beheld by God the Father with infinite complacency, and admired, loved, and adored with supreme regard by angels and good men.

3. Christ in his obedience has made the law honour-

able, because it was the obedience of a person possessed of infinite dignity.

I have formerly, and, as I flatter myself, with success, attempted to show, that Christ was God as well as man. In these united natures he was one person; and all his actions were the result, not only of human views and affections, but of a divine approbation and choice; of a created mind voluntarily devoted to perfect rectitude and to perfect truth, and thus coinciding in the most exact manner with the will of God; and of the divine wisdom, complacently regarding all the dictates and conduct of this mind, and concurring with it in every affection and effort. The obedience of Christ is the obedience of this glorious person.

As Christ is a person of infinite knowledge, it is impossible that he should not discern with entire exactness, the propriety or impropriety of becoming a subject to the law of God, in the character of Mediator. In conformity to this perfect discernment he became such a subject. In this character he discerned with the same exactness the propriety or impropriety of all the conduct presented, by the circumstances in which he was placed, to his view; and of course the propriety or impropriety of his absolute obedience to the divine law. But in this manner he actually obeyed.

The infinite rectitude of Christ prompted him to that conduct, and that only which in all respects was right. But, under the influence of this rectitude, he became subject to the law; and, when he had become a subject, conformed his whole life, in every minute as well as every important particular, to the precepts of that law. In this manner he showed with the most decisive evidence, the evidence of life and conduct, that infinite knowledge and rectitude dictated to him to assume the office of Mediator, to become a subject of the divine law, and in that character to yield to its precepts a universal and perfect obedience.

Christ is a person of infinite dignity. By this I mean, not only the splendour of moral and intellectual greatness with which his character is invested, but the dignity also which is conferred by omnipotence, eternity, and immutability, and by supremacy of station and dominion. With this transcendent exaltation over all things in heaven and in earth, he still chose to become subject to the divine law; and as a subject to obey every one of its precepts which at any time respected either his character or his conduct. Thus he taught, in a manner which cannot be questioned, and with a decisiveness allowing of no doubt, that infinite knowledge and rectitude regarded the divine law as possessing such infinite excellence and glory, that it was not unbecoming a divine person to conform his own actions to its dictates, even in the minutest particulars; that it was not unsuitable to a divine person to become subject to its control, and in this state of subjection to obey its precepts in an absolute mannner.

These considerations exhibit my own views of that active obedience or righteousness of Christ, by which we are said in the Scriptures to be justified. Christ, as a mere man, was of necessity subject to the law of God equally with all other moral creatures. His obedience in this character, therefore, was necessary to his own justification, and could not be the means of ours. As a divine person, he was subject to no law, and needed and could need no justification. By the union of his divine and human natures he became one person, as Mediator between God and man; in such a sense one, that all his actions and sufferings became the actions and sufferings of this one Mediator. The value which was inherent in his conduct as a divine person, was in consequence of this union extended to all the conduct of the Mediator, Jesus Christ. When, therefore, this glorious person voluntarily yielded himself as a subject of the divine law, the act was the result of infinite knowledge and rectitude, and was instamped with the worth necessarily belonging to all the determinations and conduct to which these perfections gave birth. The same moral excellence and glory are attached to all the acts of Christ's obedience, subsequent to his assumption of the character of a subject. Every one of them is an act of the Mediator; and derives its true worth and importance from the greatness and excellency of his personal character.

As Christ assumed the office of a Mediator and the condition of a subject voluntarily, as he was originally subject to no law, and could be required to yield no act of obedience, he could, if he pleased, become with propriety a substitute for others, and perform in their behalf vicarious services which, if possessing a nature and value suited to the case, might be reckoned to their benefit, and accepted in their stead. Had these services been due on his own account, and necessary to his own justification, as all the services of intelligent creatures are, throughout every moment of their existence, they could never have assumed a vicarious character, nor have availed to the benefit of any person, at his final trial, besides himself. Now, the services of the real Mediator were all gratuitous; demanded by no law, and in no sense necessary to the justification of himself. All therefore, that could in this case be required, to render them the means of justification to others, must be these two things only; that they should be of such a kind as to suit the nature of the case, and that they should be of sufficient value.

That the actual services of the Mediator were suited to the real nature of the case, we know; because they were prescribed and accepted by the Father. We may also be satisfied of this truth by the manner in which the subject is exhibited by the Scriptures. The law of God is there declared, as it is also by the nature of the fact itself, to be dishonoured by the transgressions of men. This dishonour, as is evident from both these sources of information, is equally done to the character and government of the lawgiver. To pardon the transgressors in this case, would be to consent to the dishonour, and to acknowledge practically that the law which they had transgressed, the character of the lawgiver who prescribed it, and the government founded on it, were unreasonable and unjust. It would be to declare, and that in the most solemn manner, that such obedience as was enjoined by the law could not be demanded nor expected by a righteous and benevolent lawgiver. But this declaration would be false; and could therefore never be made on the part of God.

But, when Christ offered himself as the substitute for sinners, he 'restored,' to use his own language, 'that which he took not away.' He restored that honour to the divine law, character, and government, which men had refused to render; and removed the dishonour done them all by their disobedience. Nay, he did much more. In obeying the precepts of the law, he testified that they were such as infinite perfection was

pleased to obey; that the government founded on them, and the character of him who published them to the universe, as the rule by which he intended to govern it for ever, were of the same glorious and perfect nature. This testimony none but Christ could give. A testimony of equal weight the universe could not furnish. Thus, in a manner which nothing else could rival, 'he magnified the law, and made it honourable,' according to the prediction of God by the prophet Isaiah, in the sight of angels and men.

The influence of this conduct of Christ upon the future obedience of virtuous beings could not fail to be supreme. What creature, however exalted, can refuse to be subject to that law to which the Son of God voluntarily became subject? Who can deny those precepts to be reasonable, all of which he exactly and cheerfully obeyed? Who can hesitate to believe that law to be 'holy, just, and good;' who can doubt that it is infinitely honourable to its Author, and supremely beneficial to the universe, when he knows and remembers that a person of infinite knowledge, rectitude, and dignity, of his own accord submitted both his affections and his conduct to its absolute control? So far as I can see, higher glory was reflected on this great rule of righteousness by the obedience of Christ, than could have resulted from the united obedience of the whole intelligent creation.

It is hardly necessary to observe, that the obedience of Christ and his holiness are convertible terms, and that all the importance of the things mentioned under these three heads, is no other than the importance of this attribute to his priestly character.

III. *To give the necessary efficacy to his sufferings for mankind.*

The sufferings of Christ were of no value as mere sufferings. There is no worth or excellence in the mere endurance of evil. The real merit of the sufferings of Christ, as of all other meritorious sufferings, lay in these two things; that they were undergone for a valuable end, and that they were born by a good mind, with the spirit of benevolence and piety. The end for which Christ endured the cross, and all the other evils of his humiliation, was the best of all ends, the glory of God, and the salvation of men. The mind of Christ is the best of all minds; and the spirit with which he encountered and sustained his sufferings, was that of supreme benevolence and supreme piety.

In undertaking the office of a Mediator between God and man, he gave the most solemn and glorious testimony to the equity of the divine law in all its precepts and in all its penalties. In enduring the sufferings which he underwent as the substitute for sinners, he completed this testimony, by cheerfully consenting in this character to obey and to suffer. If he had not been perfectly holy, he would, instead of becoming a substitute for others, have needed a substitute for himself, to expiate his sins. No supposition can be more absurd than that Christ should make an atonement for the sins of others, when he needed an atonement for his own sins; or that God should accept him as a Mediator for sinners, when he himself was a sinner; or that he should become the means of delivering mankind from the penalty of the law, when he himself deserved to suffer that penalty.

Thus it is evident, that without consummate holiness Christ would not only have utterly failed to execute to the divine acceptance the office of a priest, but that he could not have entered upon that office.

IV. *To qualify him for executing the office of intercessor.*

Absolute holiness seems entirely necessary to render the prayers of any being, even when offered up for himself, if offered in his own name, acceptable to God. The same holiness seems even more indispensable to render intercession for others accepted, and especially for a world of sinners. Such intercession, also, appears plainly to demand, as a previous and essential qualification on the part of the intercessor, that he should acknowledge in the amplest manner the perfect rectitude of the divine government in condemning sinners to that punishment, for their deliverance from which his intercession is undertaken. It cannot, I think, be supposed even for a moment, that God would accept of any person in this office who denied, doubted, or did not, in the most open and complete manner, acknowledge the equity and propriety of his administrations. It seems farther necessary, that he who made this acknowledgment should be a competent judge of the nature of the divine government, so that the acknowledgment should be made with intelligence and certainty, and not be merely a profession of faith.

The holiness of Christ, manifested in his obedience both to the preceptive and penal parts of the divine law, was the most direct and complete acknowledgment of the rectitude of the divine law and the divine government which was possible; because it was voluntarily undertaken, and perfectly accomplished. It was, at the same time, the obedience of a person who was a finished judge of the nature of both, from the entire rectitude of his disposition, and the unlimited greatness of his understanding. It was also the acknowledgment of a person possessed of infinite dignity in the nature of his attributes, in the supremacy of his station, and in the eternal and immeasurable extent of his dominion.

As an intercessor, therefore, Christ comes before his Father both in the most amiable and the most exalted character; having confirmed, beyond all future debate, the rectitude of his law and government, and supremely glorified his name in the sight of the universe, and pleading with divine efficacy both his obedience and his sufferings on the behalf of those for whom he intercedes. What must not such an intercessor be able to obtain? From such an intercession what may not penitent sinners hope? How plain is it, that 'such an high-priest became us;' was fitted to expiate all our sins, and to secure to us 'an inheritance undefiled and unfailing,' in the everlasting love of God; an high-priest 'who was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens?'

SERMON LIV.

THE PRIESTHOOD OF CHRIST.—HOLINESS OF HIS CHARACTER.—IMPORTANCE OF THIS ATTRIBUTE.—HIS EXAMPLE.

He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk even as he walked.—1 John ii. 6.

In my last Discourse I considered the importance of the holiness of Christ in his character of high-priest, as being necessary to give him that distinction, without which the attention and confidence of men could not have been excited towards him; as necessary to enable him to magnify the law of God; and to become a propitiation and an intercessor for the children of Adam.

The subject which naturally offers itself next for our consideration is, the importance of this attribute to Christ, *as an example to mankind.*

That Christ was intended to be an example of righteousness to the human race, is completely evident from the passage of Scripture which I have chosen for the theme of this Discourse. 'He that saith he abideth in him;' that is, he who professes himself a Christian, 'ought himself also so to walk even as he walked.' Every Christian is here required to follow the example of Christ. But every man is bound to become a Christian; therefore every man is required to follow the same example. 'I have given you an example,' said our Saviour, when he washed his disciples' feet, 'that ye should do as I have done to you,' John xiii. 15. And again: 'If any man will serve me, let him follow me,' John xii. 26. 'Be ye followers of me,' says St Paul, 'even as I also am of Christ,' 1 Cor. xi. 1, 'Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,' says the same apostle, urging upon the Philippians the duty of humility, and arguing at length their obligation to be humble from our Saviour's example, Phil. ii. 5. &c. In the like manner he urges upon the Romans the character of benevolence, from the same source of argument, Rom. xv. 1, &c.; and the Hebrews to patience and fortitude in the Christian race, Heb. xi. 1, &c. It will be useless to multiply passages any farther to this purpose. Even these will probably be thought to have been unnecessarily alleged.

The example of Christ is formed of his holiness directed by his wisdom, or more properly by his understanding. Of all its parts, holiness is the substance and the soul. Without this attribute he would only have been a more sagacious sinner, and therefore a more malignant example, than other men. A proper exhibition of the example of Christ, in which its nature and usefulness are sufficiently displayed for the present purpose, will, of course, be a proper exhibition of the importance of this attribute to Christ in this character.

The excellence of Christ, as an example to mankind, I shall attempt to exhibit under the following heads:—

I. *He was an example of all virtue.*

By this I intend, that he was an example of piety, benevolence, and self-government, alike. This truth has been sufficiently illustrated in the two first sermons on this subject. To add any thing, therefore, to what has been so lately said must be unnecessary.

1. By the example of Christ, considered in this light, we are decisively taught that virtue is no partial character.

The apprehension, not unfrequently entertained, that a man may love God and not love his neighbour, and yet be a virtuous man, that is, in the evangelical sense; the contrary apprehension, much more frequently entertained, that a man may love his neighbour and not love God; and the opinion, still more generally adopted, that a man may love both God and his neighbour, and thus be virtuous, while he yet does not confine his passions and appetites within scriptural bounds, are completely done away by the example of Christ. 'He that saith he abideth in him,' is in the text required to 'walk as he walked:' and in Rom. viii. 9, St Paul declares, that 'if any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.' But if any man has the Spirit of Christ, it will dictate the same conduct which it dictated to Christ. If he is Christ's therefore, in other words, if he is a virtuous man, the subject of that holiness of which Christ was the subject, and beside which there is no virtue, he will 'walk as Christ also walked.' This is one of those commands of our Saviour which he himself has made the test of our discipleship, and of our love to him. If therefore we are his 'disciples indeed;' if we 'love him,' we shall 'keep' this command; and be as he was, pious, benevolent, and self-governed, alike.

2. Christ performed all the duties of life prompted by these three great divisions of virtue.

This conduct of our Saviour teaches us irresistibly, that he who does not carry the virtue which he professes into practice, or who does not perform those acts, or external duties, which are the proper allusions of such a spirit as that of Christ, is not a disciple of Christ. Christ habitually prayed to God. He who does not thus pray is, therefore, not a disciple of Christ. Christ praised God, blessed and gave thanks for his food, worshipped God in his house, and celebrated all the institutions of the sanctuary. He, therefore, who does not these things, since he walks not 'as Christ also walked,' has not 'the spirit of Christ,' and 'is none of his.' Christ also universally befriended, in all the ways of justice and charity, his fellow men, by furnishing that relief to their wants and distresses which they needed. In vain will that man pretend to be his disciple who is unjust in his treatment of others, or who does not readily open his heart and his hand to relieve his fellow creatures in their wants and distresses; or who does not, like the Redeemer also, administer to them advice, reproof, and consolation, as they need; and employ, with sincere and tender affection, all the proper means in his power to promote their salvation. Christ spoke the truth at all times with perfect exactness. No liar, no prevaricator, no sophist, can be his disciple. Christ abstained from every fraud, and from every hard bargain, from gaming, from reproaches, from obloquy, from obscenity, from jesting with sacred things, from loose and irreverent observations concerning God, his works, word, and institutions, from all 'idle words,'

and from wrath, bitterness, and revenge. He who indulges himself in these, or any of these, is not Christ's disciple.

At the same time, the example of Christ in this respect, teaches us in the most decisive manner, that he who performs one class of these external duties, and neglects the others, or who abstains from one class of sins, and commits another, is not a disciple of Christ. For example: a man may pay his debts, speak truth, and give alms to the poor; yet, if he does not pray to God in his closet, his family, and the church, he is not a disciple of Christ.

Generally: the example of Christ teaches us, beyond a debate, what may indeed be clearly proved from the nature of this subject, that virtue has not, and cannot have, a partial existence. No man can love God without loving his neighbour; or his neighbour, without loving God; or both, without restraining his passions and appetites. He who supposes himself to do one of these things when he does not the others, is guilty of a gross self-deception, and is employed in preventing his own attainment of eternal life.

II. *Christ was an example to all classes of men.*

It ought, I think, rationally to be expected, as plainly it ought to be most earnestly desired, that the person intended by God to be the great pattern of righteousness to mankind, should so appear, and live, and act in the world, as to become such a pattern to men of every description. Such a pattern Christ has in fact become; a fact derived, in a great measure, from the lowly circumstances in which he was born, lived, and died.

Had our Saviour appeared as the Jews expected him to appear, in the character of a prince and conqueror, reigning with unprecedented splendour, perpetual triumph, and universal dominion, he would, as an example, have been useful to but few of mankind, and to them in comparatively few respects. The great and splendid only would have been materially benefited, and even they in but a small part of the truly excellent human characteristics. In the seat of splendour and dominion certain exercises of virtue may be exhibited with peculiar advantage; such, for instance, as are attendant on the just and wise administrations of government, and the honourable distributions of princely favour. But these are chiefly such as few of mankind have it in their power to imitate. Men in exalted stations, princes, nobles, and statesmen may, indeed, learn wisdom, worth, and dignity of character from these attributes, when displayed in a superior manner by persons occupying places of superior distinction. How few persons derive moral advantages from reading the actions of kings and conquerors recorded in general history, compared with the multitudes who are seriously profited by a single instance of well conducted biography?

In the humble station which Christ actually occupied, all his excellencies were and are plainly seen to have been merely personal, springing from nothing accidental, blended with nothing adventitious, the inherent excellencies, and the natural emanations of his own goodness of character, neither enhanced nor obscured by the dazzling glare of office, nor liable to any misapprehensions of ours from that prejudiced awe, that imposing veneration, with which we are prone to regard the great. The virtues of Christ were, in the strictest sense, all his own; the excellencies of an intelligent being merely; of a man, unencumbered with office, place, or power, or any other of those gaudy trappings, in our attention to which, just views of the real character are apt to be perplexed or lost. These excellencies constitute an example for man as such; and are, therefore, fitted to instruct and improve every child of Adam.

To the great he became a glorious pattern of that condescension, meekness, and humility, which they ordinarily need, in a peculiar manner, to learn, and which, when learned, is their prime ornament and glory. When kings and nobles behold him, who was declared by a voice from heaven to be the beloved Son of God, and who on earth commanded the winds and the waves, and raised the dead to life, characterizing himself as 'meek and lowly of heart,' and retiring into a desert to avoid the offer of a throne, it is impossible that they should not feel, unless lost to rational sentiments, their own pride, haughtiness, and irritability, strongly reproved. If they have hearts open to rational conviction, and not dead to virtuous impressions, it is impossible for them not to feel that the meekness and lowliness of mind which in the Redeemer were so excellent and exalted, must, of course, constitute the highest amiableness and exaltation of their own characters.

To men of inferior classes, down to the peasant and the beggar, the slave, and the child, Christ is a universal example. In all the excellencies of which they are capable, or which are compatible with their circumstances, Christ has gone before them, as a glorious original, which they are required unceasingly to copy. The pattern is distinct; it can therefore be clearly seen. It is exactly suited to their circumstances; with a suitable disposition it can, therefore, be easily followed. It is faultless; and can, therefore, conduct them to no sin. It is sublime and lovely; and allures, therefore, irresistibly to virtue.

When we remember, that men of these classes constitute almost all the human race; when we remember, that among them are found almost all those who are willing to follow any virtuous example; when we remember, that Christ, by appearing and living in humble circumstances, has furnished a perfect pattern of righteousness to this part of mankind, and consulted in this efficacious manner their highest good; when we remember that he has, at the same time, with equal efficacy, pursued the best interests of the remaining class, those in exalted stations, by recommending to them the virtues which they most need to be taught: we shall see, in the clearest manner, the perfect wisdom of the Redeemer in condescending to appear in so humble a character. 'To the Jews' this was 'a stumbling-block,' to infidels it has been 'foolishness.' 'But the foolishness of God is,' in this as in all other respects, 'wiser than men.'

To ministers of the Gospel the example of Christ commends itself with peculiar energy. Christ himself was a minister of the gospel; sent by his Father in the same manner in which he has sent them. As a ruler in his church, as a preacher and pattern of righteousness, he is the great archetype, of which they are bound to be as exact copies as it shall be in their power to become. It ought here to be observed, that Christ, not improbably to render his example more useful to them, by adapting it more to their circumstances and their capacity of imitation, has in this respect acted almost only in the character of a mere man, and not as the

searcher of hearts, nor as the lawgiver of the church. Where he has acted otherwise, the distinction is so clearly and successfully made, that it may usually be understood without difficulty. His example in this, as in all his private conduct, is that of a mere, though perfect, man, and is, of course, easily transferred to the practical concerns of every minister, and is both understood and followed without perplexity. Ministers, therefore, are peculiarly without excuse if they are not followers of Christ.

I shall only add, on this part of the subject, that the example of Christ is to all men authoritative. It is not merely a bright and beautiful pattern which we are invited to copy, because this conduct will be pleasing, honourable, and useful to us; but it is a law also: requiring of us, with divine authority, to 'go, and do likewise.' Our obligation to obey is indispensable. Nor can any man be excused for a moment, who does not labour faithfully to resemble Christ in all the merely personal and moral parts of his character.

III. *The example of Christ was perfect.*

By this I intend, that in all cases he did exactly that, and that only, which was right. The truth of this observation I have sufficiently illustrated in a former Discourse. Nothing more, therefore, will be necessary on this subject at the present time, than to show its application and usefulness to the concerns of mankind. Regarded in this light, Christ is to us a finished standard of moral excellence, and as such has taught us,

1. What we ought to be.

In the progress of these Discourses, I have endeavoured to show the manner in which Christ walked, in which he glorified God, and did good to men. The two great commands of the moral law, which regulate, or should regulate, the conduct of all intelligent creatures, are, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart; and thy neighbour as thyself.'

In conformity with the first of these commands, God held the supreme place in his views and affections. He came into the world to accomplish a work which his Father had appointed him. This work, in all its parts, he steadily pursued while he was in the world; and when he left the world his work was done; so that he was able to say at the close of life, 'Father, I have glorified thee on earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.' But he did nothing else. When he left the world he left nothing unfinished, and nothing superadded. The end of all which he did, or said, or thought, was the glory of his Father. This end he accomplished, and in the pursuit left himself out of consideration; cheerfully subordinating to it his own convenience, pleasure, and comfort; and cheerfully undergoing every trouble, difficulty, and danger. The whole language of his heart, on which the whole language of his life was a glorious comment, was, 'Not my will, but thine be done!' This is the pattern which we should set always before us; this the piety, at which we should unceasingly aim.

To mankind, also, he yielded himself, to promote their comfort, relieve their distresses, and secure their salvation. God is always glorified when good is voluntarily done to mankind, and was in this manner singularly glorified by Christ. He taught men truth and righteousness. He taught them all the doctrines which they needed to know, and all the duties which they were required to perform, for the attainment of eternal life. At all times he prayed for them, even while he was agonizing on the cross; and wrought for them, with extreme self-denial, many wonderful and beneficent miracles. In a word, he lived in such a manner, that even his hard-hearted, unbelieving, and malignant countrymen, were compelled to say, 'He hath done all things well.'

In the meantime, he did nothing ill. He never omitted a duty, nor committed a sin. He was neither idle nor vain. He neither flattered nor slandered, neither deceived nor defrauded, neither corrupted nor neglected his fellow men. By their favour he was not enticed, by their resentment he was not awed. His mind indulged no wrath, his bosom harboured no revenge. Boldly and uniformly, without fear and without fondness, he told the truth, and did that which was kind, just, and right.

To friends he was never partial, to enemies he was never resentful. In his virtues he was not rigid, in his doctrines not severe, in his worship not superstitious; but in all was rational, gentle, meek, faithful, self-possessed, and sublimely excellent.

He was born in an age in which 'pure, undefiled religion' had wonderfully decayed, and given place to an almost absolute round of superstitious and vain externals. Whenever men rely on these observances for acceptance with God, they resign, of course, all ideas of internal purity. He who expects that washing his hands will give him a title to heaven, will never concern himself with cleansing his heart. In such a state of things, wickedness of every kind will triumph; all the doctrines of religion will be modelled to the views and feelings of those who practise it; and the whole system of faith will become a complication of folly, falsehood, authoritative dogmas, and implicit submissions of credulity. But in an age and country distinguished by these evils more than, perhaps, any other, Christ uniformly and victoriously resisted them all. He received no doctrine, he required his hearers to receive none, except when known and proved by unanswerable evidence to be from heaven. All his own instructions he proved in this manner. Not an instance can be produced, in which he used the argument from authority. In his conduct there is not an example of superstition, enthusiasm, or bigotry. Harmless enjoyments he never refused, sinful ones he never indulged. No man was the better or the worse treated by him, on account of the sect, party, or nation to which he belonged.

In his beneficence he was a glorious example to all men. His affections were literally universal, and his beneficence was an exact expression of his affections. As it was dictated by no idle dreams of philosophy, by no cobweb system of abstraction, but by plain, practical truth, it was real, useful, uniformly honourable to himself, and invariably profitable to mankind. He never spent his time in sending his thoughts abroad to distant countries, to inquire what errors, abuses, or sufferings existed there, which demanded correction, reformation, or relief. He did not sit down in the exercise of vain philanthropy, to employ life in unavailing sighs and tears for the sufferings of distant countries and ages, nor give himself up to the useless despair of doing any good to mankind, because he could not do all which their circumstances required. He did not satisfy himself with lamenting the distresses of his fellow men, and teaching others to relieve them. In a manner

directly opposed to this visionary, useless philosophy, he made his whole life a life of the most active beneficence. Instead of seeking for objects of charity in Persia, or at Rome, he found them in his own country, on the spot where he was, among the sufferers daily presented to his eyes. During his private life he contributed by his daily efforts to support and befriend the family of his father. Throughout his ministry he took an effectual and daily charge of his own family of disciples, and travelled unceasingly from one place to another, to find new objects on whom his kindness might be successfully employed. Thus he 'loved' mankind, 'not in word, neither in tongue, but in deed, and in truth.' The weight of his example is, in this respect, singular; because the great purposes of his mission were more extensive, more absolutely general, than any which ever entered into the human mind. Like his views, his benevolence also was, in the absolute sense, universal. Yet he spent his life in doing good within the sphere in which he lived, and to the objects within his reach. Thus he has taught us irresistibly that, instead of consuming our time in wishes to do good where we cannot, the true dictate of universal good-will is to do it where we can.

At the same time, he 'denied all ungodliness and worldly lusts.' No avaricious, ambitious, proud, or sensual desire found a place in his mind. Every selfish aim was excluded from his heart, every unworthy act from his life. Omniscience itself, looking into his soul with a perfect survey, saw nothing but pure excellence, supreme beauty, and divine loveliness; a sun without a spot; a splendour formed of mere diversities of light and glory.

The perfection of this wonderful example we cannot expect nor hope to attain; but a character of the same nature we may, and, if we would be interested in the favour of God, we must acquire. Like him, we must consecrate ourselves absolutely to the glorification of God. Like him, we must willingly and always do good. Like him, we must steadily resist temptation and overcome iniquity.

Obedience, and not pleasure, must be the commanding object of our purposes. The pleasure at which we supremely aim must be, not the pleasure of sense, but 'the peace which passeth all understanding;' 'the joy which no stranger meddles withal;' a self-approving mind, the consciousness of personal worth, the enjoyment of virtuous excellence, accompanied and cherished by a glorious hope of the final approbation of God, and an eternal residence in his house in the heavens.

2. The example of Christ teaches us how far the character of mankind is from what it ought to be.

We are often told very flattering things concerning the dignity and worth of man, the number and splendour of his virtues, and the high moral elevation to which he has attained. The errors into which we fall in forming this estimate of the human character are, together with many others respecting our own character, the consequence of referring the conduct of ourselves and our fellow men to a false standard of moral excellence. No man ever intends to rise above the standard which he prescribes for himself; all men expect to fall below it. If the standard, then, be too low, their character will be lower still. If it be imperfect, their life will be more imperfect. If it be erroneous, their conduct under its influence, will err still more extensively. The true aim of every man ought to be pointed at perfection. Of perfection he will indeed fall short; but his life will be more excellent than if he aimed at any inferior mark. For this reason probably, among others, the Scriptures have directed us to make the attainment of perfection our daily as well as ultimate aim.

The formation of a defective standard of excellence was one of the predominant errors and mischiefs of the ancient philosophy. The wise man of the Stoics, Platonists, and Peripatetics felt himself to be all that he ought to be, because he so grossly misconceived of what he ought to be. Proud, vain, impious to the gods, a liar, and adulterer, and even a sodomite, he still boasted of his morality and piety, just as the Stoic boasted of his happiness while writhing under the pangs of the colic, or the gout. The reason plainly was, he believed all these enormities to be consistent with the character of a wise man. Cicero thought war (that is, the butchery of mankind, and the devastation of human happiness), when undertaken for the love of glory, and sustained with peculiar cruelty, justifiable. Why? Because he had previously determined the love of glory to be virtue, or the real excellence of man, and therefore concluded that the means of indulging and gratifying this passion must be, at least, consistent with virtue. In the same manner, men of all descriptions, when they have formed to themselves a false standard of excellence, are satisfied, if they only embrace the errors and commit the sins which that standard allows; and will in fact embrace more errors, and commit more sins.

He who will compare himself with the perfect standard of virtue furnished by the life of Christ, will see at once, and without a doubt, how far his character falls below what God has required. The best man living will, in this case, cordially unite with Paul in exclaiming, 'O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' and with Job, humbled by the immediate presence of God, in the kindred exclamation, 'Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.' How different, will he say, is my life from that of the Redeemer! How different the heart from which it has been derived! 'To me belongeth shame and confusion of face, because I have sinned, and done this great wickedness.' But to thee, divine Saviour of men, be 'blessing, and honour, and glory, for ever and ever. Amen.'

If such be the state of the best, in the light of this comparison, what must be the state of others? What of men who feel themselves to be, not only decent, but in a good degree, virtuous and safe? What shall be said of him who neglects the worship of God in his family or closet, who attends in the sanctuary occasionally only, and is inattentive to the worship when present, who neglects the relief of the poor and distressed, who justifies lying in certain circumstances, who uses sophistry, who makes hard bargains, who preaches moral essays, effusions of genius, and metaphysical disquisitions, instead of the gospel, and himself, his resentments, or his flattery, instead of Christ; who wastes his time in light and fanciful reading, or devotes life to amusement, instead of duty? All these, and all other similar persons, are contrasts to the character of Christ; and not resemblances. They 'walk' not 'as Christ walked.' 'The same mind' is not in them 'which was in Christ.'

The meek and lowly virtues were peculiarly the virtues of the Redeemer. By this I mean, that he exhibited

them most frequently, urged them most extensively and forcibly, and described his own character as being formed of them in a peculiar degree. The proud, therefore, the vain, the insolent, the wrathful, and the revengeful, are irresistibly compelled, when they read his character, to know that they are 'none of his.'

IV. *The example of Christ was highly edifying.*

By this I intend, that it was of such a nature as strongly to induce and persuade mankind to follow him. On this part of the subject, interesting as it is, I can make but a few observations.

1. The example of Christ was singular. No other corresponding with it has ever appeared in the present world. The best of men are only faint and distant copies of his excellence. When exhibited by him it was a novelty, and has since been always new, as well as always delightful. In this view, it is formed to engage attention, and command a peculiar regard.

2. It was the example of an extraordinary person; who taught wonderful wisdom, lived a wonderful life, and wrought wonderful miracles. Such a person naturally compels, beyond any other, our admiration and respect; an admiration mightily enhanced by a consideration of the circumstances in which he was born and lived, the humble education which he received, the lowly condition and character of those with whom he consorted, the superiority of his precepts and life to those of all who went before him, and their total opposition to those of his own contemporaries. All these considerations lead us to a full and affecting conviction, that his wisdom was self-derived, and his life the mere result of his own unrivalled virtue. Accordingly, all these facts astonish those who lived around him, and have filled with wonder men of every succeeding age.

3. The example of Christ was an example of benevolence only. All his employments were directed to no other earthly end than the promotion of human happiness. His miracles were directed only to such objects as feeding the hungry, healing the sick, giving sight to the blind, and restoring life to the dead. His precepts and his life terminated in illuminating the soul, diminishing the power of sin, invigorating virtue, and securing the salvation of men.

4. It was the example also of a person struggling with suffering and sorrow, unceasing obloquy and bitter persecution. The heathen could say, 'The gods themselves behold not a nobler spectacle than a good man firmly enduring adversity.' Christ was supremely good, and encountered extreme adversity. The patience with which he submitted, and the firmness with which he endured, invest his character with a greatness to which there is no parallel. The fire of persecution, instead of consuming him, merely lent its gloomy lustre to show the splendour of the object which it surrounded.

5. It was the example of a person employed in accomplishing the greatest work, which was ever done, and introducing into the universe the most extensive good which it ever beheld. There is a moral grandeur, a divine sublimity in this employment of Christ, at which the mind gazes with wonder, and is lost; which angels behold with amazement and rapture, and which eternity itself will hardly be able to unfold to a created understanding.

6. It was the example of a person devoting all his labours, and undergoing all his sufferings, for the benefit of others, and proffering with an open hand the immense good, which he procured at an immense price, to strangers, sinners, apostates, enemies to himself, and children of perdition. Not for himself, but for guilty, ruined men, he was born, lived, laboured, suffered through life, and expired on the cross. To every one who is willing to be like him he shut the prison of woe, and opened the gates of heaven.

7. It is an example in itself pre-eminently beautiful and lovely. His meekness, gentleness, humility, compassion, and universal sweetness of disposition, are not less distinguished than his greatness and glory. Solomon, beholding his character in distant vision, exclaimed, 'He is the chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely!' David, in prophetic view of the excellence of his life, exclaimed, 'Thou art fairer than the sons of men.' God the Father, beholding him with infinite complacency, announced his character to the world with a voice from heaven, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.' To these divine declarations, all virtuous beings have subjoined their Amen.

Finally: It is an example in which divine wisdom and excellence united with the most perfect human mind, coinciding with all its designs, and guiding it to unmingled excellence. To the amiableness and beauty of the most finished created virtue, were superadded and united the authority and greatness of the Divinity, by which that mind was inhabited.

The combination, therefore, was a combination of all that is lovely with all that is awful, exalted, and divine. What mind that can be persuaded from sin must not this example persuade? What mind that can be allured to holiness must not this example allure?

SERMON LV.

THE PRIESTHOOD OF CHRIST.—HIS ATONEMENT.

Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God. To declare, I say, at this time, his righteousness; that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.—ROM. iii. 24—26.

IN a former Discourse I proposed to consider, as parts of the Priesthood of Christ, the holiness of his character;—the sacrifice which he offered for sin;—and, the intercession which he makes for sinners.

The first of these subjects has been examined at length. The present discourse shall be occupied by the second, viz.

The sacrifice of Christ for the sins of men.

In considering this subject I shall endeavour to show,

I. *The nature,*

II. *The necessity,*

III. *The existence of an atonement for sin,*

IV. *The manner in which it was performed,*

V. *Its extent.*

I. *I shall attempt to show the nature of an atonement.*

The word atonement, in its original sense, always denotes some amends or satisfaction for the neglect of some duty, or the commission of some fault; a satisfaction with which, when supposed to be complete, the person injured ought reasonably to be contented, and to demand of the offender nothing more on account of his transgression. This satisfaction may, in certain cases, be made by the offender himself. Whenever he has owed some piece of service, and this was all he has owed, he may, if he have failed to perform this duty, atone for the fault by a future service, which he did not owe, and which is equivalent to that which he neglected, and to the damage occasioned by his neglect. A servant, who owes an estimated day's work to his master every day, may, if he have neglected to work half a day, atone thus for his fault, by such future labour as shall be equivalent to the extent of his neglect, and to the injury occasioned by it to his master. In this case it will be seen, that the atonement respects only the fault which has been committed. The servant owed his master so much labour: the payment of so much labour would be a discharge therefore of the debt. But we do not say, that the debt in this case is atoned. The fault only which has been committed, in neglecting or refusing to pay in the proper season and manner, demands or admits of an atonement. In every other case where an atonement exists, it is in the same manner a satisfaction for an injury or fault.

In some cases, the party offending cannot atone for his offence, but the atonement, if made at all, must be made vicariously, that is, by the intervention of a third person between the offender and the offended. Of this nature is every case, in which the offender owes as absolutely every duty which he could afterward perform, as he owed that, the non-performance of which constituted his fault. In this case, all his future efforts are necessarily due for the time being, and can, therefore, never become a satisfaction for faults which are past. Amends for an injury can never be made by services which are due to the injured person on other grounds. and the refusal of which would constitute a new injury. In other words, they must be services rendered only on account of the injury already received. He, therefore, who owes to another all his services for himself, can never become the means of atoning to him for the faults of another. In all cases of vicarious atonement, the substitute must be under no personal obligation to render the services which are to be accepted as a satisfaction of the principal, or in other words the offender. Nothing is more plain, than that that which is due to himself, cannot be transferred to the account of another.

In every case of personal or vicarious atonement, the services rendered must be of such value as to become a reasonable and full satisfaction for the injury done; all that justice can fairly demand or render; such as will place the person injured in as good a situation as that which preceded the injury. Where the injury has been great, therefore, or multiplied, the services must also be proportionally great.

An atonement for a crime committed against a government of any kind, supposes the offender, if he is to receive the benefit of it, to be pardoned. In this case it must be such as to leave the government in as good a state, as firm, as honourable, as easy, and certainly efficacious in its future operations, after the offender is pardoned, as it would have been, if he had been punished with exact justice. In no other manner can it become a satisfaction for the injury. If all the services of the offender, in this case, were due to the government after his crime was committed, it would be impossible for the atonement to be made, unless by another person.

Sin is a crime committed against the government of God. All the services of sinners are owed to God for the time being. No future services of any sinner, therefore, can be any satisfaction for his past sins. If an atonement be made in this case, then it must be made by a substitute; and this substitute must be able to render services of sufficient value to repair the injury done. In the performance of these services he must leave the divine government as firm, as honourable, as efficacious in its operations, after the atonement is made, as it was before the crime was committed.

It will perhaps be objected here, that the divine government cannot become less firm or less honourable than it originally was, because it is supported in its full strength by infinite power and wisdom. To this objection I answer, that the government of God over his moral creatures, is a moral government; that is, a government of rules and motives; or of laws, rewards, and punishments. Such a government, even in the hand of omnipotence, may become weak and inefficacious, in the view of its subjects. A law which, after it has been violated, is not vindicated by publishing the violator, loses of course a part of its authority. A moral governor will cease to be regarded with veneration, if, when he is insulted by his subjects, he does not inflict on them the proper punishment. A government of mere power may be upheld in its full strength by the exercise of power only. But a moral government cannot be thus preserved, unless the motives to obedience are continued to the view of its subjects in their full force. An atonement for sin, therefore, that is, a complete atonement, must be such as to leave these motives wholly unimpaired. It must consist of such services as, whatever else may be their nature, will, after the sinners are pardoned, leave the government of God in no degree less venerable, less efficacious, or less likely to be punctually obeyed, than before the sins were committed. As these sins have been numerous, and very great, it is farther evident, that the services rendered as a satisfaction for them must be of great value.

II. *I shall endeavour to show the necessity of an atonement.*

In order to understand this part of the subject, and forewarn my hearers that it is a part of high importance to the subject itself, and to all just views of the Christian system, it will be necessary to bring up to view the state of man, as a transgressor of the divine law.

The language of this law, and its only language, was, 'He that doeth these things shall live by them.'—'This do, and thou shalt live.'—'Cursed is every one, that continueth not in all things written in the book of the

law to do them.' This law, God published, as the rule by which his own infinite wisdom and rectitude determined to govern the world. Of course it is a right and just rule. Of course, also, it is a rule which the same wisdom and rectitude are pledged to maintain in its full force. The very reasons for which it was enacted require, with their full strength, that it should be also maintained. If it was wise and right to enact it, it was equally wise and right to maintain it. If to enact it was the dictate of infinite wisdom and rectitude, to maintain it must equally be the dictate of the same attributes.

If these observations be admitted, and it is believed that they cannot be refused an admission, it follows of necessity, that no sinner can be forgiven, consistently with this law, or the honour of the lawgiver, unless on the ground of an atonement. In the law he had declared that 'the soul which sinneth shall die.' To pardon the sinner, without any change from that state of things which existed when the law was published, would be to declare, by declining to carry the sentence of the law into execution, that infinite wisdom and rectitude had formed new views concerning the sentence of the law, and the demerit of the sinner; views, contrary to those with which the law was published. When the law was published, God declared that the sinner should die. Now he must declare, by pardoning the sinner, that he should not die. Yet no change in the state of things had taken place, nor is any supposed to have taken place, to occasion this change in the divine conduct. No reason is even supposed why the conduct of God should be thus changed. The change itself must, of course, be wanton, causeless, and disgraceful to the divine character. If the law was originally just, it was now just. Justice, therefore, required the execution of its penalty upon every transgressor. In pardoning the transgressor, God would declare that the law was not just, in direct contradiction to the declaration which he made of its justice, when he published it, as the rule by which he intended to govern the world. If the law was originally wise, it must now be wise to execute it. But in pardoning the sinner, God must declare that the execution of the law was not consistent with wisdom. If the law was originally good, that is, formed by a benevolent mind, so as to promote benevolent purposes, it was now equally good. But in pardoning the sinner, God must declare that the execution of the law was inconsistent with the dictates of benevolence. The change, therefore, manifested in the divine character and conduct, by pardoning the sinner, where no change of circumstances existed to justify it, would, on the one hand, be great and essential; no less than God's denying himself; and, on the other, would be causeless, weak, and contemptible. Can such a change be attributed, even in thought, to the immutable and perfect Jehovah?

In the law, God had manifested an infinite love to holiness and an infinite hatred to sin; or, if the language should be preferred, a supreme love to the one, and a supreme hatred to the other. But, to pardon the sinner without any change in the state of things, would be to treat the sinner and the faithful subject exactly in the same manner, or to treat the sinner in the same manner as if he had faithfully obeyed. Declarations made by conduct are altogether the most solemn and efficacious of all declarations. In this conduct, therefore, God would, in the most solemn manner, declare that he regarded holiness and sin alike, because he treated the sinner and the saint alike; and that neither of them was an object of his serious regard. The views of a lawgiver are always expressed in the whole of his government, taken together, and from this cannot but be distinctly understood. If his laws are unwise, he will be pronounced to be unwise. If his administrations be unwise, he will be considered as sustaining the same character. If either of them be unjust, he will be pronounced to be unjust. If they be inconsistent, inconsistency will necessarily be attributed to his character. How perfect a violation would this conduct be of the attributes of justice, wisdom, and immutability!

At the same time, all subjects of the divine government would be encouraged to disobedience by these proofs of a changeable, weak, and inconsistent character. Angels, we know, can disobey. This is complete proof that all inferior creatures are capable of the same disobedience. Angels have disobeyed, when, at least they supposed the law to mean exactly what it threatens; and without the least hope, founded on any declaration of God, of any possible exemption from the penalty actually denounced. Man also disobeyed in the same circumstances. Both also revolted when, antecedently, they had been only and perfectly holy. In these facts we have complete evidence that no class of holy beings is secure from disobedience, even under a law which gives not a single encouragement of escape to those who disobey. Should such encouragement then be holden out by the actual forgiveness, much more by the universal forgiveness, of the penitent, without an atonement, who might not be expected to rebel? Who, when temptation powerfully assailed, and the wish to sin was strongly excited, would not feel assured of his own future repentance, and his consequent safety from future punishment.

Of such beings, as men now are, it ought to be observed, that they themselves furnish ample proof of what might be rationally expected under such a dispensation. This will appear, if we consider,

1. That the atonement of Christ has completely opened the door for the exemption of all penitents from the punishment threatened by the law; and yet, that the number of those who really repent is ordinarily very small, compared with the number of those who transgress.

2. That not even one of these becomes a penitent of his own accord, as the Scriptures abundantly assure us; but assumes this character only in consequence of the immediate influence of the Divine Spirit upon his heart.

3. That of this number, few, very few are ever awakened or convinced by the encouragements and promises of the gospel; but almost all by the denunciations of the law. The blessings of immortality, the glories of heaven, are usually, to say the least, preached with little efficacy to an assembly of sinners. I have been surprised to see how dull, inattentive, and sleepy, such an assembly has been, amidst the strongest representations of these divine subjects, combining the most vivid images with a vigorous style, and an impressive elocution.

4. That those persons who disbelieve a future punishment are distinguished by a licentiousness of character, even beyond other licentious men. Repentance and religion are certainly never seen by the common eye among infidels or universalists: and no revival of reli-

gion, no considerable prevalence of religion, has, so far as I know, been the consequence of preaching Unitarian doctrines.

All these are direct proofs, that men who now sin so extensively and perseveringly, would, if the denunciations of the law were proved to be false, by the extension of forgiveness to sinners without an atonement, sin with a harder heart, with a bolder hand, and throughout a more uniformly guilty life.

Restraint is a necessary part of every law and every government: 'Hitherto shalt thou come, but no farther,' being invariably the language of both. All restraint is a hinderance of inclination; a prohibition of the indulgence of desire. In itself, it is always regarded as an evil; and is really such, whenever it does not prevent some other evil, or accomplish some good. Adam, in a state of innocence, in the end considered the prohibition of the forbidden tree as an evil. We with sinful propensities only, should undoubtedly regard, and naturally do in fact regard, every restraint in the same manner. If, then, God were not to execute the sentence of the law upon us for our transgressions, but were to forgive the sinner without an atonement, we should undoubtedly sin, not only invariably, but with a boldness, constancy, and extent, not often seen even in this guilty world.

If any person should think this conclusion harsh and severe, let him remember how soon after the apostasy mankind, in the possession of long life and abundant enjoyments, forgot the loss of their immortality; and corrupted themselves to such a degree, that the infinitely benevolent author of their being thought it necessary to sweep away the whole human race, except one family, with the besom of destruction. Let him remember, how little reformation followed the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, or the terrible plagues of Egypt. Let him remember, that the Israelites worshipped a calf at the foot of Mount Sinai; and sank into all the abominations of the Canaanites, as soon as the generation which destroyed them had gone to the grave. Let him remember that, amid all the judgments and mercies which they received, they apostatized from God at the end of every little period, and were finally given up, as hopeless, to captivity and ruin. Let him remember, that their descendants crucified Christ; and that, after the sufferings of eighteen hundred years, and those extreme, they are still unbelieving, impenitent, and harder than the nether millstone. Let him remember, finally, how soon the Christian world itself degenerated into idolatry, impurity, persecution, forgetfulness of God, a general corruption of Christianity, and a general dissolution of morals. With these things in his view, it will be impossible for him to think the conclusion which I have drawn, either unwarrantable, or unkind.

But it may be said, that although all these evils might indeed take place, if God should pardon sinners without repentance; still the forgiveness of penitents involves no such consequence. To this allegation, which I believe to be made by almost every human heart, I answer,

1. The threatening of the law against transgression is absolute. 'The soul that sinneth shall die.' In this threatening there is no mention, and plainly no admission, of repentance, as the foundation of escape to the transgressor. If an exception was intended to be made in favour of the penitent, why was it not expressed, or at least hinted, by the law? There is not, that I know, a single intimation of this nature in any of the expressions which it contains. Should it be said, that, although the exception is not made in the words of the law itself, yet it is sufficiently declared in the comments on the law, given us by Moses and the succeeding prophets; I answer, that wherever these commentators speak of repentance, as connected with our escape from the curse of the law, they speak of it, either as connected with the atonement of Christ, or not. If they mention it as connected with this atonement, then the objector will be obliged to admit that the atonement itself is the foundation of the penitent's escape. If they do not speak of it as connected with the atonement, then it follows, that the penitent is pardoned, under the law, or legal dispensation. An act of pardon is an act of grace; and no act is more eminently gracious, or free. To this grace the gospel can add, and does in fact add, nothing material. 'Grace,' therefore, 'came,' according to this supposition, originally by Moses, and not by Christ; and the gospel is not the 'good news,' or the 'glad tidings of the grace of God,' as it is often styled by the writers of it; because the tidings which it professes to bring, were long before published by the law.

Farther: It will not be in this case true, that 'heaven and earth shall sooner pass away, than one jot or one tittle of the law shall pass, until all be fulfilled.' Not only one jot or one tittle, but the whole penal sentence of the law is, according to this scheme, left, and will for ever be left, unfulfilled; without any other reason to forbid its fulfilment, besides what existed, and was known to exist, at the time when it was published to the world.

2. The absolute threatening of the law was denounced by God in the exercise of his infinite perfections. When he denounced it, therefore, in this manner, that is, unconditionally, he acted wisely and justly. The denunciation he intended either to execute, or not. If he did not intend to execute it, he acted, so far as I am able to discern, insincerely; because in publishing it he declared, that he would do what he intended not to do. If he intended to execute it, he will certainly execute it: because no reason exists, in the case supposed, to forbid the execution, which did not exist, in this view, when he published the threatening. It will not be denied, that he foresaw every instance of repentance which would afterward be exhibited by mankind. As God is immutable, it must at the least be conceded, that he cannot be supposed to change his determinations in any case, especially a case of such importance, where no reason whatever exists for the change, beside those which existed when the determination was made.

3. The repentance of the sinner cannot be an atonement for his crime. Repentance consists in sorrow for sin, confession of it, an acknowledgment of the justice of God in punishing it, resolutions of future obedience, and actual reformation. These things undoubtedly, constitute an important change in the character of the sinner; but they alter not the nature or degree of the guilt which he has already incurred. For this he is condemned; and for this, even according to his own penitential views, he has merited punishment. In what manner does his present penitence affect his guilt? Certainly, in no such sense as to lessen its degree, or

desert of punishment. In what manner then can it prevent him from being punished? Plainly, in none, except that which will make amends for the evils which he has committed; the dishonour which he has done to the law and government of God. But what is there in his repentance which can make these amends? In what manner will it discover that the character of God, in threatening punishment to his sins, and declining, on account of a repentance, originally foreseen, to inflict that punishment, was the same character; or that God, when he threatened the punishment, and when he refused to execute it, regarded holiness and sin in one unchangeable manner? Will his sorrow for sin make it cease to be sin? Will the confession of his guilt make him cease to be guilty? Will his acknowledgment of the justice of the punishment which he has deserved, make it cease to be just? Will his resolutions of amendment, or his actual reformation, efface or lessen the guilt of his past life? None of these things will, I suppose, be pretended. How, then, can the repentance of a sinner become a proper ground for his forgiveness and acceptance? If he is actually forgiven on this ground, it cannot but be seen, and will with truth be said, that God in the formation and the administration of his law, has acted inconsistently; and that either the law was unjust and unreasonable, or that his failure to execute it was unwise and dishonourable to himself. For this evil, which, for aught that appears, may be great beyond any assignable limit, this scheme furnishes, so far as I can see, no remedy.

But it may be farther asked, Would it not be more honourable to God, or at least equally honourable, to forgive the penitent without an atonement? Whence is it, that suffering or punishment becomes necessary to the establishment of his glory in the government of the universe?

To these questions, I answer, that it ill becomes a creature of yesterday to employ himself in contriving a government for the universe; or a system of regulations by which the Author of the universe may direct his immense and eternal administration. Even to understand that state of things which really exists, is, in a few instances only, possible for us; and in almost all, utterly transcends the extent of our faculties. A little child would be very absurdly employed, in contriving a system of government for a kingdom, or in forming decisions concerning the wisdom or folly, the justice or injustice, by which it was governed. The universe is more disproportioned to the powers of a man, than a kingdom to those of a child; and the government of God as absolutely transcends the comprehension of an angel, as that of a prince exceeds the understanding of a child. An attempt to answer these questions, therefore, must be, and from the nature of the case be seen to be, lame, imperfect, and in many respects unsatisfactory. Nothing more can be expected on this subject by a sober man, than a removal or diminution of some of the most obvious doubts; and even this, perhaps, may be attempted in vain. Let it be remembered, however, that the difficulties attendant upon our inquiries in the present case arise, not from any perceptible absurdity of what we know, but from the mere inexplicableness of what we do not know, from the nature of the subject, in itself free from all absurdity, but incomprehensible by such minds as ours.

With these things premised, I will suggest, as a direct but partial answer to these inquiries, the following observations:—

1. We are prejudiced judges of this subject. Our own case, and that a case immensely interesting to us, is concerned. Where we have interests depending of very moderate importance, our judgments usually are partial. Here they must of course be extremely partial.

2. No government of the universe can become the character of the Creator, except a moral government. A government of force would be obviously destitute of any moral excellence, or any intellectual glory. The ruler, so far as he was obeyed, would be obeyed only from fear, and never from confidence or love. This is the obedience of a slave; as the government would be that of a tyrant. It is unnecessary to multiply words, to prove that in this case the ruler could never be reverenced or loved by his subjects; or that his subjects could never be virtuous and amiable in themselves, or loved and approved by him.

3. The law of God is, and must of necessity be, a rule of action for an immense multitude of beings, that is, for the whole intelligent universe, throughout eternity. The wise and perfect regulation of this vast kingdom cannot but require a course of administration, in many respects different from that by which a little part of this kingdom might, perhaps, be effectually governed. Regulations, also, which are to extend their influence through eternity, must of course, differ from those whose influence is confined to a little period of time. Particularly,

4. The motives to obedience must be great, uniform, always present, and always operative. We well know, by familiar appearance, that a little state can be kept in order by what is commonly called a very gentle administration: that is, the government may consist of mild laws, holding out motives to obedience of moderate efficacy, and an administration of those laws, presenting by its gentleness similar motives. Whereas a great empire, containing vast multitudes of people, can be successfully controlled only by what is called a more vigorous or energetic government; inducing obedience by more powerful motives, addressed unceasingly to every subject, both in the laws and in the administration. The degree, to which these motives need to be extended in the government of the universe, can be comprehended only by an unlimited understanding.

5. All motives to obedience are comprised in natural good and natural evil; that is, in enjoyment and suffering. As a moral government influences only by motives, and only in this way preserves the peace and insures the happiness of those who obey; it is plain, that these motives, found in enjoyment and suffering, must, in such a kingdom as this, possess, if its peace and happiness are to be secured, very great power; power sufficient to accomplish the end. How great the suffering or enjoyment proposed by the law, and produced by the administration, as motives to obedience and disobedience, must be, God only can determine.

6. A great part of all the motives to obedience, in such a government, is presented by the uniformity and exactness of the administration. No state in the present world is ever well-governed, is ever orderly, peaceful, and happy, under an administration inconsistent with itself; an administration at one time rigid, at another lax; at one time severe, at another indulgent. This is proverbially acknowledged. Such a government of the universe would, not improbably, within a lite

time throw its affairs into confusion, and involve its inhabitants in very extensive evil, if not in absolute ruin. If the law of God, then, were not to be executed, unless occasionally; if its penalties were not inflicted on penitents; this inconsistency would be seen in all its extent, and be productive of all its evil consequences. But this could not be honourable to God, nor, as it would seem, useful to his intelligent kingdom.

7. The law of God is formed in such a manner, as to insure, if obeyed, the supreme glory of his character, and the highest happiness of his subjects. Nothing can be so honourable to God as to sit at the head of an immense and an eternal kingdom, composed of subjects who 'love him with all the heart, and each other as themselves;' a kingdom, therefore, of perfect order, harmony, and rectitude. But these immense blessings are secured as well as generated by this law. A law of such importance can neither be given up, nor changed in any manner, consistently with the honour of God.

8. The advent of Christ is every where exhibited as fraught with peculiar blessings to mankind. It was published by the angel to the Bethlehem shepherds, as an event the news of which were 'good tidings of great joy.' It was sung by his heavenly companions as the foundation and source of 'glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, and good-will towards men.' But if Christ did not make an atonement for sin, it will be difficult, I presume it will be impossible, to point out or to conceive in what respect his advent was of such importance, either to the glory of God, or to the good of mankind. On this ground, he certainly was not the means of pardon to men; because they are pardoned without his interference. He was not the means even of publishing this pardon; for it had been published long before, and amply, by the prophets of the Old Testament. 'A broken heart, and a contrite spirit,' says David, 'thou wilt not despise.' 'Let the wicked forsake his way,' says Isaiah, 'and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him turn to the Lord, for he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.'

If Christ made an atonement for the sins of mankind, all the magnificent expressions concerning his mission and character, the declarations, that he is the only Saviour of mankind, and that, 'there is salvation in no other,' are easily understood; if not, I am unable to see how they can be explained. Particularly, I am unable to discern how God is so solemnly said to be peculiarly glorified by the mission of Christ; for, according to this scheme, he was sent for no purpose which had not been accomplished before; and which might not, for aught that appears, have been accomplished afterward, without his appearance in the world.

SERMON LVI.

THE PRIESTHOOD OF CHRIST.—HIS ATONEMENT.—ITS EXISTENCE: THE MANNER IN WHICH IT IS PERFORMED: ITS EXTENT.

Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God. To declare, I say, at this time, his righteousness; that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.—Rom. iii. 24—26.

In the last Sermon I proposed to discourse on the atonement of Christ, under the following heads:—

I. *The nature,*
II. *The necessity,*
III. *The existence of an atonement for sin,*
IV. *The manner in which it was performed,*
V. *Its extent.*

The two first of these I considered sufficiently in that Discourse. The three last I propose to examine at the present time; and shall proceed, without any preliminary remarks, to show,

III. *The existence of an atonement for sin.*

It is hardly necessary to observe here, that as all our knowledge of this subject is revealed, all proofs of the fact in question must be derived from Revelation. The proofs which I shall allege, I shall arrange under the following heads:

1. Those passages of Scripture which speak of Christ as a propitiation for sin.

These are the text; 1 John ii. 2; and 1 John iv. 10. Of these, the text first claims our consideration. In the text it is declared, that God hath set forth Christ 'to be a propitiation.'

The word here rendered propitiation, is ἱλαστηριον. This word is used only twice in the Greek Testament; viz. in the text, and Hebrews ix. 5. Its proper meaning is the propitiatory, or mercy-seat; as it is rendered in the latter passage. The mercy-seat in the tabernacle and temple, was the place where God manifested himself peculiarly by the Shechinah, or visible symbol of his presence; heard the prayers, and accepted the offerings of his people; and dispensed to them his mercy, in answer to their supplications. The mercy-seat, we are taught in the text, was a type, of which Christ, the true ἱλαστηριον, was the antitype. In him, God hears our prayers, and dispenses his own mercy to us. The mercy-seat, the place where God exhibited himself as thus propitious to mankind, was itself a mere shadow or symbol, denoting Christ; the means by which he is rendered propitious. Although the word differs, therefore, from that used in the other passages mentioned, the meaning is the same. It is accordingly rendered in the same manner by the translators.

A propitiation for sin is the means by which God is rendered merciful to sinners. Christ is here declared to be the propitiation. But the only possible sense, in

which Christ can have become the means of rendering God merciful to sinners, is by making an atonement for them. This atonement I have explained to consist in making sufficient amends for the faults which they have committed, and placing the law and government of God in such a situation, that when sinners are pardoned, both shall be equally honourable and efficacious, as before. The motives to obedience, also, must in no degree be lessened. Farther: the character of God, when pardoning sinners, must appear perfectly consistent with itself, and exactly expressed by the law. Finally: God must be seen to be no less opposed to sin, and no less delighted with holiness, than when the law was formed.

The doctrine is completely established by the text. God is here said to have set forth Christ 'to declare his righteousness,' or, as it is better rendered by Macknight, 'for a proof of his own righteousness in passing by the sins which were before committed, through the forbearance of God; for a proof, also, of his righteousness at the present time, in order that he may be just, when justifying him who believeth in Jesus.' In this passage, the end for which Christ was set forth to be a propitiation, is asserted to be, that Christ might declare, or be a proof of the righteousness of God, in passing by, or remitting sins which were past; and of his righteousness, also, at the present time, when justifying believers. In these assertions we are taught in the most unambiguous manner, that unless Christ had been set forth as a propitiation, the righteousness of God, in remitting past and present sins, would not have been manifested. It is also declared in the same decisive manner, that if Christ had not been set forth as a propitiation, God would not have been just, when justifying believers. Christ, therefore, in the character of a propitiation, and only in this character, has made the pardoning, or justification of sinners, consistent with the justice of God. To pardon sinners, therefore, without a propitiation, would have been inconsistent with divine justice, and of course impossible.

The same doctrine is farther confirmed by St John, who, in his first epistle, ii. 2, and iv. 10, declares, that Christ 'is a propitiation for our sins.' The word used in both these passages, is ἱλασμος; the proper English of which is 'a propitiation,' a propitiatory sacrifice or sin-offering. The word is often used by the Seventy; and appropriately signifies, in their usage of it, a sacrifice of atonement. Thus κριος ἱλασμου * is a 'ram for a sin-offering;' and προσφερειν ἱλασμον † is 'to offer a sin-offering.' The same signification it has, and can only have, as used by St John.

2. Those passages of Scripture, which speak of Christ as a ransom for mankind. These are Matt. xx. 28; the corresponding passage in Mark, x. 45; and 1st of Tim. ii. 6. The passage in Matthew is, 'Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.' That in Mark is a repetition of this. That in Timothy is, 'Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.' The word translated *ransom* in the two first of these passages, is λυτρον; which signifies the price paid for the deliverance of a captive from the slavery or death to which, among the ancients, a captive was or might be regularly condemned. The word in Timothy is αντιλυτρον; which, according to Estius, denoted the ransom paid for the life of a captive, by giving up the life of another person. The λυτρον might be a sum of money. But the signification in all these passages is unquestionably the same in substance; because exactly the same thing is referred to in them all. This, in the passage from Timothy, is declared to be 'giving up his own life for the life of sinners;' or, in other words, 'dying, that sinners might live.' I know not how the fact, that Christ made an atonement, could have been declared in more explicit, or more forcible language.

Of the same nature are all those passages, which declare, that we are redeemed by Christ. The Greek word, which signifies to redeem, is λυτροω; as that which signifies redemption is απολυτρωσις: both derivatives from λυτρον, *ransom*. Every one, who has read his Bible, knows, that Christ is there appropriately styled our Redeemer; and that we are often said to be 'redeemed,' and to 'have redemption,' by him. For example, Eph. i. 7, 'In whom we have redemption through his blood.' Rev. v. 9, 'Thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood.' Gal. iii. 13, 'Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.' In all these, and various other passages of the New Testament, it is declared, that 'Christ redeemed us:' that is, he brought us out from the bondage and condemnation of sin 'by his blood,' and by 'being made a curse for us,' in that he died upon the accursed tree. It will be unnecessary to multiply words to show, that exactly the same thing is here taught, as in those passages, where Christ is declared to have 'given himself as a ransom.'

3. Those passages, in which Christ is spoken of as a substitute for mankind.

These are very numerous, and of many forms. A few of them only can be recited at the present time. 'Surely,' says Isaiah, 'he has borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows.' 'But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.' 'The Lord has laid upon him the iniquity of us all. For the transgression of my people was he stricken.' 'By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many.' 'When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin.' 'For he shall bear their iniquities.' 'And he bare the sin of many.' ‡ These passages can need no explanation. Language cannot more clearly or more strongly assert, that Christ was a substitute for sinners; that he bore their sins, and suffered for their iniquities; or, in other words, that he became an atonement for them.

Daniel, in his ninth chapter, recites, from the mouth of Gabriel, the following words: 'Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people;—to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness,—and to anoint the Most Holy.' In the following verse he farther informs us, that at the end of the 'seventy weeks,' the 'Messiah should be cut off, but not for himself.' Accordingly, at the end of seventy weeks, or four hundred and ninety years, 'from the going forth of the commandment to rebuild Jerusalem,' published by Artaxerxes Longimanus, the 'Messiah *was* cut off, but not for himself;' that is, within four years after he had been anointed by the Holy Ghost, accord-

* Lev. vi. 6, 7;—Num. v. 8.
† Eze. xliv. 27.—Parkhurst;—Macknight.

‡ Isaiah liii.

ing to the same prediction. The effect of his being cut off, was to make an end of sin, and to make reconciliation for iniquity.

1 Cor. xv. 3, 'Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures.' Here it is not only asserted, that 'Christ died for our sins;' but this fact is said to have taken place 'according to the' general tenor of the 'Scriptures.' The same doctrine is taught by Christ himself, first to Cleophas and his companion, and next to the eleven; Luke xxiv. 25, 26, 45, 46. Then he said unto them, 'O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to have entered into his glory? Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures; and said unto them, Thus it is written; and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day.' In both these passages our Saviour asserts his death to have been due, or necessary, because it had been before declared by the prophets, and in the Scriptures: reproves the two disciples for not thus understanding and believing the prophets; and teaches them, that this is the substance of all which the prophets had spoken; and the eleven, that to understand this great fact in a proper manner, is to understand the Scriptures themselves at large.

Gal. i. 4, 'Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this evil world.' Heb. i. 3, 'When he had by himself purged our sins.' 1 Pet. ii. 24, 'Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree; that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.' 1 John iii. 5, 'He was manifested to take away our sins.' Rev. i. 5, 'Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God.'

In every one of these passages, as well as many others, it is evident beyond all debate, that Christ stood in the place of mankind,—bore their sins and healed them by the stripes which he suffered—that our iniquities were laid on him—that he washed our sins away—became a curse for us—was wounded for our transgressions—made reconciliation for iniquity—and was cut off, not for himself, but for mankind. The same doctrine is taught with equal precision in many other forms of expression; but I presume, it is unnecessary to add any thing farther on this part of the subject.

4. I argue the same doctrine from those passages, in which we are said to be 'forgiven,' or 'saved,' for his sake, or in his name.

Acts iv. 12, 'Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved.' Acts xiii. 38, 'Be it known unto you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins.' 1 John ii. 12, 'I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake.' 1 Cor. vi. 11, 'But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus.' Eph. iv. 32, 'Even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.'

Now it is plain, that we cannot be forgiven, washed, justified, or saved, for the sake of Christ, unless Christ was in some sense or other, a substitute for us—stood in our place—did something which we had failed to do—made amends for faults which we had committed—or in other words, made that atonement for sin which God was pleased to accept. Of the very same import are those passages of the Old Testament, in which sin is said to be forgiven, and blessings to be bestowed upon mankind, by God, 'for his name's sake,' or 'for his own sake.' In Exod. xxiii. 21, God, speaking of his own Angel, says, 'Beware of him, and obey his voice;' and 'provoke him not; for he will not pardon your transgressions: for my name is in him.' The Jews of ancient times considered the 'name of God,' mentioned in a great number of passages in the Old Testament, as being no other than one appellation of the Messiah; and construed those passages in which the forgiveness of sin was promised for the sake of the name of God, in some, and probably in all instances, as intending, and really though figuratively expressing, forgiveness for the sake of the Messiah. Thus, when in Isaiah xlviii. 9, God says, 'For my name's sake will I defer mine anger;' and in the 11th verse, 'For mine own sake will I do it;' when the Psalmist says, Psalm xxv. 11, 'For thy name's sake pardon mine iniquity;' and Psalm cix. 21, 'Do thou for me, O God, the Lord, for thy name's sake;' and Psalm cxliii. 11, 'Quicken me for thy name's sake;' and when the church says, Psalm lxxix. 9, 'Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of thy name; and deliver us, and purge away our sins for thy name's sake;' the phraseology is exactly equivalent to what it would be, if *for the sake of Christ*, had been substituted in each of these cases. This, however, is not mentioned as being necessary to the proof of the doctrine in hand; but as evidence that the same views of it are given to us in both Testaments.

On the same ground we are required to offer up our prayers to God in the name of Christ. In John xvi. 23, our Saviour says, 'Verily, Verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name; ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full:' and again: 'At that day ye shall ask in my name:' and in John xiv. 13, 14, 'And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.' See also John xv. 16. St Paul also (Col. iii. 17), 'And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.' The direction given to us, to offer up our prayers and thanksgivings in the name of Christ; and the promise, that in this case, and in this only, we shall be heard; teaches us in the strongest manner, that our prayers are acceptable to God for *his sake*, and not our own; and that in offering them we are to rely wholly for acceptance, and for blessings of every kind, on what he has done, and not on what we have ourselves done. Of course, the audience and acceptance which are granted, and the blessings which are given to us, are granted and given for the sake of Christ, and not for our own sakes. But no reason can be alleged, why blessings should be given to us for the sake of Christ, unless he has interfered in some manner or other in our behalf, and done something for us, which has made it pleasing and proper in the sight of God to give us blessings on our own account, which otherwise he would not have thought it proper to give. If God will not give us blessings on our own account, it is undoubtedly because we have done something which renders it improper for him thus to give them. Otherwise, the same benevolence which

feeds the 'sparrow' and the 'raven,' would certainly be ready to bless us. We, therefore, by our sins have forfeited our title to all blessings, and even to the privilege of asking for them. If God will give us blessings on account of Christ, it is certain that Christ has done something for us which has removed this impropriety, and which God accepts on our behalf, notwithstanding the forfeiture. In other words, he has made it consistent with the honour of the divine character and government, that the benevolence which we had forfeited, should be renewedly exercised towards us.

5. I argue the same doctrine from the sacrifices under the law of Moses.

St Paul tells us, that the ancient 'tabernacle was a figure for the present time.' In the service performed in it, victims were continually offered, under the name of 'sin-offerings;' and by them an atonement was made for the sins and for the souls of the people. On this subject, the passages which declare the doctrine here specified, are found almost everywhere in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers, and cannot need to be repeated at this time. But we know from the same apostle, that 'it is not possible for the blood of bulls and of goats to take away sin.' Yet this blood is said, in thirty or forty passages, to be the means of making an 'atonement' for those who offered it. In what manner was this true? St Paul himself has taught us that it was true in the typical, or figurative, sense only. All these sacrifices, as he has taught us expressly in the 9th and 10th chapters of the Epistle to the Hebrews, were only types of the sacrifice of Christ; and the atonement professedly made by them, was only a type of the real atonement made by him. Particularly, the ceremonial of the sacrifice on the great day of expiation, when the high-priest made an atonement for himself, his family, the priests, and the whole congregation of Israel, was a remarkable and most lively type of the death and resurrection of Christ. On this day, the tenth day of the seventh month annually, two goats were selected for an offering to God. One of these was killed, and his blood sprinkled upon the mercy-seat, and before the mercy-seat, and upon the horns of the altar. This was called making an atonement for the holy place, and reconciling the holy place, the tabernacle, and the altar unto God, as having been polluted during the preceding year, by the imperfect and impure services of sinful beings. On the head of the living goat 'the high-priest laid both his hands, and confessed over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel; and sent him away by a fit man into the wilderness.' Of this goat it was said, that 'he should bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited.' This religious service cannot, I think, need any explanation.

I shall now proceed to consider,

IV. *The manner in which the atonement was performed.*

On this subject I observe,

1. That, in my own view, all the sufferings of Christ were included in the atonement which he made for sin.

Christ was perfectly holy. No part of his sufferings, therefore, can have been inflicted or undergone for his own sake. He was always 'beloved' of God; and whatever he thought, spoke, or did, was ever 'well-pleasing' in his sight. When, therefore, we are told, that 'it pleased Jehovah to bruise him,' it was not as a punishment; for he never merited punishment: not a wanton, causeless infliction, for God cannot be the author of such an infliction. It was only as a substitute for mankind that he was afflicted in any case, or in any degree; or because he had 'laid on him the iniquities of us all.' I understand all such general expressions as these, 'Ought not Christ to have suffered?'—'it behoved Christ to suffer'—'Christ must needs have suffered'—'Christ suffered for us'—'who being rich became poor, that ye through him might become rich'—as directly indicating, that all his sufferings were parts of his atonement.

2. The death of Christ, together with its preceding and attendant agonies, especially constituted his atonement.

This must, I think, have been already made evident from many passages quoted under the third head of discourse, as proofs of the existence of an atonement for sin. I shall, however, add to these several others, which must, it would seem, place the point, now in question, beyond a doubt.

In the text it is said, that 'Christ is set forth as a propitiation, through faith in his blood.' But if the blood of Christ was not the means of his becoming a propitiation, it is difficult to conceive in what sense his blood can be the object of our faith, any more than the blood of Jeremiah, Peter, Paul, or any other martyr to the truth of God. 'But if we walk in the light,' says St John, 'the blood of his Son Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin.' Eph. i. 7, 'In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins; according to the riches of his grace.' Eph. ii. 13, 'But now in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were afar off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ.' 1 Pet. i. 18, 19, 'Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, but with the precious blood of Christ, as a lamb without blemish, and without spot.' Rev. i. 5, 'Who washed us from our sins in his blood.' Rev. v. 9, 'Thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood.' Rom. v. 9, 'Being justified by his blood.' In these passages it is directly asserted, that mankind are washed, cleansed, justified, forgiven, redeemed, and made nigh unto God, by the blood of Christ. He who admits the existence of an atonement, cannot, with these declarations in view, hesitate to admit, also, that it was accomplished by his blood, that is, by his death and its connected sufferings. The views of Christ himself, concerning this subject, cannot easily be mistaken, if we remember that he said, 'he came to give his life a ransom for many;' that the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.' 'I am the living bread, which came down from heaven; if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever. And the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world,' John vi. 51.

3. The peculiar agonies, which preceded and attended the death of Christ, and in which the atonement made by him for sin peculiarly consisted, were chiefly distresses of mind, and not of body. This I think evident from many considerations.

(1.) There is no reason, so far as I can see, to suppose that the bodily sufferings of Christ were more severe or even so severe, as those which have been experienced by many others.

The death of the cross was undoubtedly a very distressing death. But it was probably less distressing than that experienced by many of the martyrs. Some of these were roasted by a slow fire. Some were dislocated on the rack, and suffered to expire under long

continued tortures. Some had their flesh taken of piece by piece, in a very gradual manner, with red hot pincers. Others expired under various other kinds of exquisite sufferings, devised by the utmost ingenuity of man, and protracted with the utmost cruelty. Multitudes of these martyrs, however have sustained all their distresses without a complaint, and expired without a groan.

Multitudes, also, both of martyrs and others, have died on the cross itself; and for aught that appears, with bodily anguish not inferior to that which Christ endured. Yet of these, it would seem, numbers have died in the same peaceful manner. Even the thieves who were crucified together with our Saviour, seem to have died without any complaint.

Yet Christ uttered a very bitter complaint on the cross; and complained also in a similar manner in the garden of Gethsemane. Whence arose these complaints? Not from his want of resignation to the will of God; for no other person was ever so resigned: not from the want of fortitude; for no other person ever possessed it in an equal degree. The very complaints which he utters do not appear to have any respect to his bodily sufferings, but to have originated entirely from a different cause, and that cause purely mental; as I shall have occasion farther onward to explain.

(2.) Christ is expressly said to have made his soul an offering for sin.

Isa. liii. 10, 'When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin.' In the margin, 'When his soul shall make an offering for sin.' In Lowth, 'If his soul shall make a propitiatory sacrifice.' But if his soul was indeed the sin-offering, then the sufferings which he underwent as an atonement for sin, were peculiarly the sufferings of his soul, or mental suffering. Accordingly, they are called 'the travail of his soul.' *

(3.) The complaints of Christ, in Psalms xxii. xl. lxix. and lxxxviii. appear to indicate that his sufferings were chiefly sufferings of mind.

Such, at least, is the impression made on my mind by reading these passages of Scripture; an impression, resulting not so much from detached parts, as from the whole strain of the composition. To this mode of examining the subject I shall refer those who hear me, for their own satisfaction.

4. The agony which Christ underwent in the garden of Gethsemane exhibits the same truth.

Christ, in this garden, had his sufferings full in view. The prospect was so terrible, that it forced from him 'sweat, as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground.' At the same time, he prayed earnestly, thrice, that 'if it were possible, this cup might pass from him.' It cannot, I think, be imagined even with decency, and certainly not in any consistency with the character of Christ as manifested elsewhere, that the mere prospect of death, even of a most cruel and bitter death, was so overwhelming to his mind, as to convulse his constitution in this manner, or to force from him such a prayer. Perhaps no person, under the mere apprehension of death, was ever agitated in an equal degree. Had it not 'pleased Jehovah to bruise him,' there is no reason to believe that he would have been anxiously solicitous concerning the utmost evils which he could suffer from the hands of men. He had directed even his disciples, notwithstanding their frailty, 'not to fear them who could kill the body, and after that could do no more.' It cannot be supposed that his own conduct was not exactly conformed to this precept.

5. Christ himself appears to have decided this point in the manner already specified.

In his exclamation on the cross, he said, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' As this was his only complaint, it must, I think, be believed to refer to his principal suffering. But the evil here complained of, is being forsaken by God. In the language of the psalmist, 'God hid his face from him;' that is, if I mistake not, withdrew from him wholly these manifestations of supreme complacency in his character and conduct, which he had always before made. As this was in itself a most distressing testimony of the divine anger against sin, so it is naturally imagined, and, I think, when we are informed that 'it pleased Jehovah to bruise him,' directly declared in the Scriptures, that this manifestation was accompanied by other disclosures of the anger of God against sin, and against him as the substitute for sinners.

The views and feelings of one mind towards another can produce the highest sense of suffering, of which we are capable. The esteem and love of intelligent beings are, when united, the most exquisite of all enjoyment; and are naturally, and in all probability necessarily, coveted more than any other, except the approbation of our own minds. Their mere indifference towards us when they have opportunity of being so fa. acquainted with us as to give room for being esteemed and loved by them, is ordinarily the source of severe mortification. In proportion as they are more intelligent and worthy, their love and esteem are more important to us, and more coveted by us; and the refusal of it creates in us more intense distress.

The complacency of God, whose mind is infinite, and whose disposition is perfect, is undoubtedly the first of all possible enjoyments. The loss of it, therefore, and the consequent suffering of this hatred and contempt, are undoubtedly the greatest evils which a created mind can suffer; evils, which will in all probability constitute the primary anguish experienced in the world of woe. Omniscience and omnipotence are certainly able to communicate, during even a short time, to a finite mind such views of the hatred and contempt of God towards sin and sinners, and of course towards a substitute for sinners, as would not only fill its capacity of suffering, but probably put an end to its existence. In this manner, I apprehend, the chief distresses of Christ were produced. In this manner, principally, was that testimony of God against disobedience exhibited to the Redeemer, and ultimately to the universe, which so solemnly supported the sanctions of the divine law, and so illustriously honoured the divine government, as to prevent the pardon of sinners from being regarded by intelligent creatures as the mere indulgence of a weak and changeable disposition in the infinite ruler.

6. The active obedience of Christ was, in my apprehension, essentially concerned in his atonement.

This position I shall illustrate under the following particulars.

(1.) If Christ had not obeyed the law perfectly, he could not have atoned for the sins of mankind at all.

It was as 'a lamb without blemish and without spot,' that he became a proper, acceptable offering; and in

* He shall see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied.' Isa. liii. 11.

this character only. Had he been stained with iniquity, his sufferings would have been, and would have been regarded, as the mere punishment of his own sins, and not as an expiation for the sins of others. Had he been of a neutral character, his sufferings would have been of no apparent value. On the contrary, they would have been considered as strange, inexplicable, and resembling those accidents which, being unconnected with any thing preceding or succeeding, are fitted only to excite a momentary attention and wonder. The excellency of Christ gave all the real value and efficacy to his sufferings. But can it be said, that that which gave all the real value to his sufferings constituted no part of the atonement which he made by them? The atonement of Christ certainly did not consist in mere sufferings, but in such sufferings in such a person. But Christ could not have been such a person without his active obedience; nor could his sufferings have been of such a nature, if he had not been such a person. If he had not suffered, he could not have atoned for sin at all. If he had not obeyed, his sufferings would have been of no value.

(2.) It was indispensable to the existence of the atonement of Christ, that he should magnify the law and make it honourable.

This I consider as having been done by his obedience in the first instance, and in the second, by his sufferings. The former was as truly indispensable as the latter; and was indispensable to the existence of the latter. In the predictions of the Old Testament, and the declarations of the New, similar stress is laid on both these great articles. As I have expressed my views of this subject in a late Discourse, I will not repeat them here; but will only add, that the obedience of Christ as truly honoured the preceptive parts of the law, as his sufferings the penal. The doctrine which has been taught by some wise and good men, that if the law is not discerned in itself to be 'holy, just, and good,' the obedience of Christ cannot make it appear so, but only shows, that it was a law which he was so desirous to support as to be willing to obey it, is, I am bound to say, contrary to my own conviction. The character of Christ, as excellent, is certainly capable of being seen and realized, independently of the divine law. Christ, as all those with whom I am now contending will acknowledge, is a divine person. Surely we are not obliged to have recourse to the law of God, as the only means of proving the excellency of his character. Independently of this, we are able to prove, that the infinite mind is possessed of infinite excellence; and of course cannot but discern, that a law which this excellence is disposed to obey, as well as to promulgate, must be of the most glorious kind possible. The mere promulgation of the law consists in declarations only. But who does not know, that actions carry with them an evidence far more convincing, and especially far more impressive, than any declarations whatever? At the same time, the transcendent dignity of the Son of God lends the same lustre to his obedience as to his sufferings; and renders the former of the same influence in recommending the precepts of the law, which the latter possess in vindicating its penalty. Besides, the same objection may be made against the proof derived from the sufferings of Christ, that the penalty of the law is just. For it may with the same propriety be alleged, that if the penalty of the law does not appear just in itself, the sufferings of Christ can never make it appear so; since they prove no more, than that Christ was so desirous to support the law, as to be willing for this end to undergo such sufferings. Should it be said, that the sufferings of Christ involved self-denial; and that thus they exhibited the sincerity of his regard for the law, because self-denial is the strongest proof of sincerity: I answer, that his consent to become a subject, and all the parts of his obedience, involved self-denial also; less, apparently at least, in degree, but the same in kind. Should it be said, that the sufferings of Christ were a testimony of God's displeasure against sin, and of the righteousness of the penalty denounced against it: I answer, so is his obedience equally a testimony of God's complacency in the precepts of the law, and the righteousness of requiring his intelligent creatures to obey them. Should it be said, that his sufferings were inflictions from the hand of God; I answer, that his obedience was required by God, and was therefore equally a testimony of his pleasure. Finally, should it be said, that Christ's obedience was voluntary: I answer, that his sufferings were equally voluntary; otherwise, they would never have existed; or, if we suppose them to have existed, would have had no efficacy.

Upon the whole, the attempts made to discriminate between these parts of Christ's mediation, and to assign to each its exact proportion of influence in the economy of redemption, seem to me to have been very partially successful.

V. *I shall now, in a few words, consider the extent of Christ's atonement.*

On this subject I observe,

1. The atonement of Christ was complete.

By this I mean, that it was such as to vindicate the law, government, and character of God. This we know, because Christ repeatedly declared, that his work was finished; because it was appointed and accepted of God, as we are assured by the many testimonies of his approbation given to Christ; and because the Spirit of grace descended in a glorious manner on the day of Pentecost, to carry the design of it into execution.

2. The degree of suffering which Christ underwent in making this atonement, was far inferior to that which will be experienced by an individual sufferer beyond the grave.

It will not be supposed, as plainly it cannot, that Christ suffered in his divine nature. Nor will it be believed that any created nature could, in that short space of time, suffer what would be equivalent to even a slight distress extended through eternity.

3. The atonement of Christ was still of infinite value.

The atonement of Christ, great as his distresses were, did not derive its value principally from the degree in which he experienced them, but from the infinite greatness and excellency of his character. Although the divine nature is necessarily unsuffering; yet, in this case, it exactly coincided in its dictates with all the conduct of the created mind of Christ, and lent to that conduct its own infinite weight and worth.

4. The atonement of Christ was sufficient in its extent to open the door for the pardon of all human sinners.

This doctrine is so often and so plainly declared in the Scriptures, that I am surprised to find a doubt concerning it entertained by any man. 'Who gave himself,' says St Paul, 'a ransom for all, to be testified in

due time:' and again, 'Who is the Saviour of all men, especially of them that believe.' 'He is the propitiation for our sins,' says St John, 'and not for our sins only, but also for the sins of the whole world.' It is needless any farther to multiply passages to this effect.

When this Discourse was first written, disputes concerning the extent of the atonement had not openly appeared in this country; and I did not suppose it to be necessary to canvass the question with any particularity. The length of the present Discourse forbids me to dwell upon the subject now; yet I will very briefly suggest two or three arguments for the consideration of my audience.

1. If the atonement of Christ consisted in making such amends for the disobedience of man as should place the law, government, and character of God in such a light, that he could forgive sinners of the human race, without any inconsistency; then these amends, or this atonement, were all absolutely necessary, in order to render such forgiveness proper, or consistent with the law and character of God in a single instance. The forgiveness of one sinner without these amends, would be just as much a contradiction to the declarations of the law, as the forgiveness of a million. If, then, the amends actually made were such that God could consistently forgive one sinner, he might with equal consistency and propriety forgive any number, unless prevented by some other reason. The atonement, in other words, which was necessary for a world, was equally necessary, and in just the same manner and degree, for an individual sinner.

2. The atonement was, by the infinite dignity and excellence of the Redeemer, rendered infinitely meritorious. But it cannot be denied, that an infinitely meritorious atonement is sufficient for all the apostate children of Adam.

3. If the atonement of Christ consisted in suffering what those for whose sins he atoned deserved to suffer, his mediation did not lessen the evils of the apostasy. All the difference which it made in the state of things was, that he suffered in the stead of those whom he came to redeem, and suffered the same miseries which they were condemned to suffer. In other words, an innocent being suffered the very misery which the guilty should have suffered. Of course, there is in the divine kingdom just as much misery, with the mediation of Christ, as there would have been without it; and nothing is gained by this wonderful work, but the transfer of this misery from the guilty to the innocent.

4. If Christ has not made a sufficient atonement for others beside the elect, then his salvation is not offered to them at all, and they are not guilty for not receiving it. But this is contrary to the whole tenor of the gospel, which everywhere exhibits sinners as greatly guilty for rejecting Christ. Yet if Christ be not offered to them, they cannot be guilty of rejecting him.

5. The gospel or glad tidings published by Christ, is said to be good tidings unto all people. But, if there be no atonement made for the sins of all people, the gospel, instead of being good news to them, is not addressed to them at all.

6. Ministers are required to preach faith, as well as repentance, to all sinners as their duty. But if no atonement has been made for their sins, they cannot believe; for to them Christ is in no sense a Saviour, and therefore not even a possible object of their faith.

Should it be asked, Why, then, are not all men pardoned? I answer, Because all mankind do not evangelically believe in this atonement, and its author. No man is pardoned merely because of the atonement made by Christ; but because of his own acceptance also of that atonement, by faith. The way is open, and equally open, to all; although all may not be equally inclined to walk in it.

The proffers of pardon on the very same conditions are made, with equal sincerity and kindness, to every man. He who does not accept them, therefore ought to remember that nothing stands in his way, but his own impenitence and unbelief.

SERMON LVII.

THE PRIESTHOOD OF CHRIST.—HIS ATONEMENT.—OBJECTIONS ANSWERED.—APPLICATION.

Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God. To declare, I say, at this time, his righteousness; that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.—Rom. iii. 24—26.

Having finished the observations which I intended concerning the atonement of Christ, as proofs of its existence, and explanations of its nature; I shall now proceed to consider some objections to this doctrine; and to suggest several practical remarks to which it naturally gives birth.

Among the objections alleged against this doctrine, I select the following, as particularly deserving attention.

1. It is objected, that a vicarious atonement for sin is not consistent with the dictates of reason.

'The sin,' it is observed, 'is ours; and cannot belong to another. Whatever atonement is to be made, ought, therefore, to be made by us; particularly such an atonement, as is here insisted on; viz. such a one, as is to be made by suffering. The sufferings which are necessary to expiate our guilt, are due from the sinner only, and cannot be justly inflicted on any other person.'

I cheerfully agree with the objector, that the sinner cannot claim such an interference on his behalf, as is made by the atonement of Christ. Strict justice demands the punishment of the sinner only; and can, in

no wise, require the punishment of another in his stead. But I still deny the consequence which the objector derives from these premises.

No person who has observed the affairs of the present world with attention, can hesitate to admit that vicarious interference, to a great extent, producing in great numbers both good and evil consequences, is a prominent feature of the providential system by which the affairs of this world are regulated. Children thus become rich, well educated, intelligent, religious, and everlastingly happy, by the agency of their parents; while other children owe, in a great measure, to the same agency, the contrary evils of poverty, ignorance, vice, and final ruin. Friends by their interference become the means of wealth, reputation, advancement, holiness, and everlasting life, to their friends; and rescue them from poverty, bondage, disgrace, profligacy, and perdition. Enemies accomplish all the contrary evils for their enemies; and by temptation, slander, fraud, and treachery, effectuate for those whom they hate every kind of destruction. A great part of the business of human life, both public and private, is in the strict sense vicarious; the benefits or the injuries rarely terminating in the personal good of the agent only, but almost, of course, extending to others. The agency of Washington has beneficially affected every inhabitant of the United States. That of Moses extended blessings to the Israelitish nation through fifteen hundred years. That of St Paul and his companions has spread holiness through the Christian world for seventeen centuries; and added many millions to the general assembly of the first-born. Nay, this very agency will hereafter become the means of converting the whole human race to Christianity, people heaven with 'a great multitude which no man can number, of all nations, kindreds, and tongues,' and diffuse glory, honour, and immortal life, throughout never-ending ages.

From these observations, it is evident, that vicarious agency is so far from being an unreasonable thing in itself, as in one form and another to constitute an important part of the present system of things, and to have a very extensive and very efficacious influence on the most interesting concerns of mankind. The whole analogy of human affairs in the present world furnishes us, therefore, with every reason to expect that vicarious agency would be adopted, more or less, in every part of the providential system.

What the state of the world thus naturally teaches us to look for, revelation countenances in the strongest manner. A single instance will be sufficient to place this truth in the clearest light. Every one who is at all acquainted with the Scriptures, perfectly well knows that they require of all men intercession for their fellow men, and that to this intercession blessings are both promised and declared to be given. 'Is any sick among you?' says St James,' 'Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him—and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and, if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.' If restoration from disease, and the forgiveness of sins, blessings of the greatest temporal and spiritual magnitude, are promised and given in consequence of the intercession of others, our minds can set no limits to the propriety or the efficacy of vicarious interference, exhibited in other forms.

In the present case (the case objected to), the propriety of admitting vicarious interference is complete. Mankind were all sinners, were all condemned by the unalterable law of God; and were all, therefore, destined to final ruin. In themselves there was no power to expiate their sins, or to prevent their destruction. When it is remembered, that their number was incalculable, and that each of them was immortal, the case must be admitted to have been great and interesting beyond any finite comprehension. Both the magnitude of the case, therefore, and its desperate nature, demanded of a benevolent being every effort capable of being demanded. Whatever could with propriety be done, was plainly and loudly called for by circumstances so deplorable, a wretchedness so vast, a doom extending to a collection of intelligent creatures so plainly incomprehensible. But vicarious efforts could here be made, and made with propriety and success. The law and government here dishonoured could, and I hope it has been proved that they could, be supported in their full strength and efficacy; the sin could be expiated; the sinners restored to holiness, the favour of God, and immortal life; and the character of God appear, not only with the same, but increased glory. Thus, from the nature of the case, as well as from the analogy of things, a vicarious interference is so far from being, in the present instance, improbable or improper, that it is strongly recommended to our belief by the very best presumptive evidence.

2. It is objected, that the punishment of an innocent person, such as Christ was, is inconsistent with the plain dictates of justice.

To punish an innocent person for a fault not his own, will not be denied to be unjust. Nor will an inquiry now be instituted concerning the question, whether it would be consistent with justice to require, in any possible case, a being perfectly holy to suffer for the sake of other beings of a different character, in order to relieve them from greater sufferings. Neither of these will be necessary at the present time. The objection may be completely answered in another manner. For,

(1.) That Christ actually suffered, while yet he was perfectly holy, the objector cannot deny. He, therefore, suffered for himself, or for mankind. If he suffered for mankind the existence of an atonement is admitted. If he suffered for himself, then the objector must admit that he was punished, while yet he was perfectly holy; and, of course, that God can inflict suffering, not only on holy beings, but for their own sake; or in other words, can retribute punishment to obedience. I leave the objector to choose which part of this alternative he pleases.

(2.) Christ was not required to suffer. This is in the Scriptures, in a great multitude of passages, and in many forms, too well known to be specified here. Christ voluntarily assumed the office of a Redeemer; voluntarily became a substitute for man; and of his own accord 'gave his life as a ransom for many.' It is true, that in all this he obeyed the will of his Father; but it is not true, that he did not voluntarily enter upon every part of this course of obedience. 'When he was in the form of God, and thought it no robbery to be equal with God; he took upon himself the form of a servant;' and 'laid down his own life,' when 'none could take it out of his hand.' But it is evident, that there can be no injustice in requiring a being perfectly holy to fulfill his own engagements, and to do what he has covenanted to do; although by this covenant he

has engaged to yield himself to personal suffering. To consent to suffer, may be on his part right, when by his suffering, he can redeem others from great suffering, or accomplish in any way what will, on the whole, be superior good. On the part of God also, it may, and if nothing extraneous prevent, must be right to accept of his sufferings in such a case, if voluntarily proffered. The objection, therefore, is destitute of weight.

3. It is farther objected, that if Christ expiated the sins of mankind, God is obliged by justice to bestow on them salvation.

This objection is derived from misapprehensions concerning the nature of the atonement. The Scriptures, in speaking on this subject, very frequently, as well as very naturally, speak in figurative language. Particularly, they exhibit us as 'bought with a price;' as 'purchased;' as 'redeemed;' that is, literally understood, as bought from a state of bondage and condemnation by the blood of Christ; as ransomed by the λυτρον, or price of redemption. This language, derived from that fact in human affairs which, among the customary actions of men approaches nearest in resemblance to the atonement of Christ, seems unwarily to have been considered as describing literally this atonement. But this mode of considering it is plainly erroneous. We are not, in the literal sense, bought, or purchased, at all. Nor has Christ, in the literal sense, paid any price to purchase mankind from slavery and death.

The error into which the objector has fallen has, I acknowledge, been countenanced by many Christians who have held the doctrine of the atonement. These have supposed the satisfaction for sin made by the Redeemer, essentially to resemble the satisfaction made for a debtor, by paying the debt which he owed. In this case, it is evident that, if the creditor accept the payment from a third person, he is bound in justice to release the debtor. As the two cases have been supposed to be similar, it has been concluded that, since Christ has made such a satisfaction for sinners, God is in justice also bound to release them.

This, however, is an unfounded and unscriptural view of the subject. There is no substantial resemblance between the payment of a debt for an insolvent debtor, and the satisfaction rendered to distributive justice for a criminal. The debtor owes money; and this is all he owes. If, then, all the money which he owes is paid and accepted, justice is completely satisfied, and the creditor can demand nothing more. To demand more, either from the debtor or from any other person, would be plainly unjust. When, therefore, the debt is paid by a third person, the debtor is discharged by justice merely. But when a criminal has failed of doing his duty as a subject to lawful government, and violated laws which he was bound to obey, he has committed a fault, for which he has merited punishment. In this case, justice, not in the commutative, but the distributive sense, the only sense in which it can be concerned with the subject, demands, not the future obedience, nor an equivalent for the omitted obedience, but merely the punishment of the offender. The only reparation for the wrong which he has done, required by strict justice, is this punishment; a reparation necessarily and always required. There are cases, however in which an atonement, such as was described in the first of these Discourses, may be accepted; an atonement by which the honour and efficacy of the government may be preserved, and yet the offender pardoned. In such a case, however, the personal character of the offender is unaltered. Before the atonement was made, he was a criminal. After the atonement is made, he is not less a criminal. As a criminal, he before merited punishment. As a criminal, he no less merits it now. The turpitude of his character remains the same; and while it remains, he cannot fail to deserve exactly the same punishment. After the atonement is made, it cannot be truly said, therefore, any more than before, that he does not deserve punishment. But if the atonement be accepted, it may be truly said that, consistently with the honour of the government, and the public good, he may be pardoned. This act of grace is all that he can hope for; and this he cannot claim on account of any thing in himself, or any thing to which he is entitled, but only may hope, from the mere grace or free gift of the ruler. Before the atonement was made, the ruler, however benevolently inclined, could not pardon him, consistently with his own character, the honour of his government, or the public good. After it is made, he can pardon him, in consistency with them all; and, if the offender discover a penitent and becoming disposition, undoubtedly will, if he be a benevolent ruler.

From these observations it is manifest, that the atonement of Christ in no sense makes it necessary that God should accept the sinner on the ground of justice, but only renders his forgiveness not inconsistent with the divine character. Before the atonement, he could not have been forgiven; after the atonement, this impossibility ceases. The sinner can now be forgiven, notwithstanding the turpitude of his character, and the greatness of his offences. But forgiveness is an act of grace only; and to the same grace must the penitent be indebted for all the future blessings connected with forgiveness.

I have now considered all the objections against the doctrine of the atonement, which I consider as claiming an answer; and shall therefore proceed, as I proposed at the commencement of this Discourse, to make some practical remarks, arising from the preceding observations, on this important subject.

REMARKS.

From these observations it is evident,

1. That those who trust in the expiation of Christ will certainly inherit the favour of God.

In the text it is said, that God 'set forth Christ as a propitiation for sin, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness; that he may be just, when justifying him that believeth in Jesus.' The end for which Christ was set forth as a propitiation, is, that God, consistently with justice, may justify those who believe in Christ. The peculiar and essential nature of the faith of such as believe in Jesus is, in one important particular, exactly defined also, in the text, when it is styled 'faith in his blood:' the faith through which alone he is exhibited in the text as becoming a propitiation to men. This faith, or, as I shall take the liberty to call it, trust or confidence (for such I hope hereafter to show it to be), is not indeed, nor is it here asserted to be, faith in the atonement only; but it is faith in the atonement pre-eminently. We are required to believe in the whole character, and in all the offices of Christ; but we are required, peculiarly, to believe in him as the great

propitiatory sacrifice for sin. Every one who is the subject of this faith, the real and only means by which we become interested in this propitiation, is amply exhibited in the text as entitled to justification.

That every such believer will certainly inherit the favour of God, cannot be rationally doubted. While he was yet a sinner, condemned and ruined, God, moved by his infinite benevolence, sent into this world his beloved Son, to become incarnate, to become a subject of his law and a substitute for mankind; to lead a life of humiliation, and to die the accursed death of the cross, that he might redeem such sinners from the curse of the law, from a guilty character, and the endless miseries of devouring fire. The condition proposed by himself, on which we become entitled to the blessings of this redemption, are all summed up in this single phrase, 'faith in Christ,' and pre-eminently in his atonement. This condition the believer has performed; and is, therefore, entitled to these blessings. His title is secured to him by the covenant of redemption, by the immutable promise of God to him, by the glory and excellency of Christ's mediation, and by that amazing and immense purpose of infinite love, which proposed and accomplished all the parts of this wonderful work. Who can doubt for a moment, that he who proposed, he who accomplished, this astonishing design, will go on to accomplish every thing which it draws in its train? 'He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not, with him also, freely give us all things?' Can any thing be too dear to be given to those for whom Christ was given? Can any thing be too great to be expected by those who are united to the Son of God, as 'members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones;' who are become 'his seed' in the everlasting covenant; and to whom, unasked, he has from his own overflowing goodness, given the 'glory, which he had with the Father before ever the world was?'

Let every believer, then, be completely assured that his cause is safe in the hands of God. He has 'chosen the good part,' and it 'shall never be taken from him.' He who has begun to befriend him in this infinite concern, will 'never leave him nor forsake him.' 'All the steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord. Though he fall, yet shall he rise again; and his mercy God will not utterly take from him.' In the seed sown in his heart 'there is a blessing,' the beginning of immortal life. Cold and wintry as is the climate beneath which it has sprung, unkind and barren as is the soil in which it grows, doubtful and fading as we often see its progress, it cannot die. The hand that planted it will cultivate it with unceasing care, and will speedily remove it to a happier region, where it will flourish, and blossom, and bear fruit for ever. 'I am persuaded,' says St Paul, 'that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.'

2. It is equally evident, that those who reject the atonement of Christ are without any hope of the divine favour.

The favour of God is proffered to the inhabitants of this world through Christ alone; and those only are promised an interest in it who cordially believe in him, as the expiation of sin. Had there been any other condition upon which this glorious blessing could be communicated, the same benevolence which planned and accomplished our redemption would undoubtedly have communicated it to us. No such communication has, however, been made. On the contrary, it is often declared in the most explicit language, that 'he who believeth not shall be damned.'

Even if the Scriptures had been silent, and no such awful declarations had been found in them, the nature of the subject holds out the strongest discouragement to every presumption of this kind. After such amazing efforts made on the part of God to bring mankind back from a state of rebellion, and to restore them to virtue and happiness, it cannot but be believed, that their obstinate continuance in sin must be regarded by him with supreme abhorrence. His law condemned them for their original apostasy to final ruin. To the guilt of this apostasy, unatoned, unrepented of, and therefore, remaining in all its enormity, they in this case, add the peculiar guilt of rejecting the singular, the eminently divine goodness of God manifested in this wonderful provision for their recovery. In what manner they could more contemptuously despise the divine character, in what manner they could more insolently affront the divine mercy, it is beyond my power to conceive. No other offer can be so kind, no other blessing so great, no other display of the divine character of which we can form a conception, so lovely. The ingratitude, therefore, is wonderful, the insolence amazing, the guilt incomprehensible! 'If,' then 'the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall these unbelieving, ungodly sinners, appear?' If it be 'a fearful thing' for all men, for heathens and for Mohammedans 'to fall into the hands of the living God,' what must it be for these men, to whom Christ is offered freely, daily, and alway; who sit, from the cradle to the grave, under the noon-day light of the gospel, and bask through life in the beams of the Sun of righteousness?

Whence do these persons derive their hope? From their character? That could not save them under the law. It is the very guilt for which they are condemned. From their repentance? They exercise none. Even if they did, it could never be accepted. A perfect repentance, as has been hitherto proved, cannot become an expiation for sin. But such repentance was never exhibited by men. Their repentance is not even a sorrow for sin. On the contrary, it is the mere dread of danger, a mere terrified expectation of punishment. Who, however abandoned, does not at times experience such repentance as this? Who ever dreamed that the dread of death ought to excuse the felon from the gibbet?

Let every unbeliever, then, tremble at the approach of the judgment. Let him no longer say to himself, 'Peace, peace; when sudden destruction is coming upon him.' Let him 'turn to the strong hold,' while he is yet a 'prisoner of hope.' 'Let him turn to the Lord with all the heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil. Who knoweth, if he will turn, and repent, and leave a blessing behind him!'

3. It is evident from the observations made in these Discourses, that mankind are infinitely indebted to Christ for expiating their sins.

Christ, by his atonement, has redeemed mankind from under the curse of the law. The sufferings to

which they were doomed by this curse were endless sufferings. Without an expiation, a deliverance from these sufferings was impossible. Equally impossible was it for any other person beside Christ to make an expiation. From mere compassion to our ruined world he undertook the arduous labour of delivering us from these stupendous sufferings, and accomplished it at the expense of his own blood. Infinitely 'rich, for our sakes he became poor, that we through him might become rich.' For him we had done nothing, and were disposed to do nothing. For us, influenced by his own overflowing goodness, he did all things. He taught us as our prophet, 'all things pertaining to life and godliness.' He lived before us, as our example; he died for us, as our propitiation; he rose from the dead as the earnest of our resurrection to endless life. He entered heaven as our forerunner; he assumed the throne of the universe as our ruler, protector, and benefactor. At the end of the world he will appear as our judge and rewarder; and will conduct to the mansions of eternal life all those who have cordially accepted of his mediation; and will there, throughout interminable ages, 'feed them with living bread, and lead them to fountains of living waters.' To the obligations conferred by such a benefactor what limits can be set? Our deliverance from sin and sorrow is a boundless good; our introduction to endless virtue and happiness is a boundless good. But of all this good the atonement of Christ is the foundation, the procuring cause, the commencement, and the security. 'Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.' Such is the everlasting song, to which the 'four living creatures' in the heavens subjoin their unceasing 'Amen.'

With this glorious subject in our view, can we fail to be astonished at the manner in which the Saviour of the world is treated by multitudes of those whom he came to redeem? By what multitudes is he regarded with cold-hearted unbelief, and stupid indifference! By what multitudes, with open opposition and avowed hostility! By what multitudes, with shameless contempt, insolent sneers, and impudent ridicule! How often is his glorious name profaned and blasphemed by those whom he died to save from endless perdition! How many miserable wretches, tottering on the brink of eternal ruin, while in the house of God, while in this house, and while his agonies, endured for them, are resounding in their ears, quietly compose themselves to sleep, or busily employ themselves in whispering, amusement, and mirth; forgetful that they have souls to be saved, or lost, and destitute of a wish to be interested in the Saviour! Had Christ been as regardless of these miserable beings as they are of him, nay, as they are of themselves, what would have become of them 'in the day of wrath?' What will become of them in that dreadful day, if they continue to treat Christ as they have treated him hitherto?

4. It is evident from these observations, that the gospel alone furnishes a consistent scheme of salvation to mankind.

The gospel takes man where it finds him, in a state of sin and ruin, condemned by the law of God to final perdition, and incapable of justification, by his own righteousness. In this situation it announces to him a Saviour, divinely great and glorious, divinely excellent and lovely; assuming his nature to become an expiation for his sins; revealing to him the way of reconciliation to God; and inviting him to enter it, and be saved. The acceptance of this expiation it announces from the mouth of God himself. The terms in which we may be reconciled, it discloses with exact precision and perfect clearness; so that 'he who runs may read;' so that beggars and children may understand and accept them. Faith in the Redeemer, repentance towards God, and holiness of character, involve them all. They are terms reasonable in themselves, easy to us, and productive of incomprehensible good to all who embrace them. To overcome the stubbornness of our hearts, Christ has commissioned the Spirit of grace to sanctify us for himself, to draw us with the cords of his love, to guide us with his wisdom, to uphold us with his power, and to conduct us under his kind providence to the heavens. In this scheme is contained all that we need, and all that we can rationally desire. The way of salvation is here become 'a highway, and way-faring men, though fools, need not err therein.'

The religion of the gospel is a religion designed for sinners. By the expiation of Christ it opens the brazen door which was for ever barred against their return. Here the supreme and otherwise immovable obstacle to the acceptance of sinners is taken away. If sinners were to be accepted, it was not 'possible that this cup should pass from' Christ. The next great obstacle in the way of their acceptance, is found in their unholy, disobedient hearts, propense 'to evil only and continually;' and the next, their perpetual exposure to backsliding, and to falling finally away. These obstacles, immovable also, by any means on this side of heaven, the Spirit of grace, by his most merciful interference in our behalf, entirely removes. Man, therefore, in the gospel, finds his return from apostasy made possible, made easy, made certain; actually begun, steadily carried on in the present world, and finally completed in the world to come.

But no other scheme of religion presents to us even plausible means of removing these difficulties. Natural religion, to which infidels persuade us to betake ourselves for safety, does not even promise us a return to God. Natural religion is the religion of law; of that law, which in the only legal language declares to us, 'Do these things, and thou shalt live; but the soul that sinneth shall die.' These things, the things specified in the requisitions of the law, we have not done; and therefore cannot live. We have sinned, and therefore must die. It has been formerly shown, that the law knows no condition of acceptance or justification, but obedience. Concerning repentance, faith, forgiveness, and reconciliation, concerning the sinner's return to God, and his admission to immortal life, the law is silent. Its only sentence pronounced on those who disobey is a sentence of final condemnation.

Whatever we may suppose the law to be, we have disobeyed its precepts. Nothing has been ever devised or received by man, as a law of God, which all men have not disobeyed. Infidels cannot devise such a law as they will dare to call a law of God, and publish to men under this title, which they themselves, and all other men have not often disobeyed. From the very nature of law, a nature inseparable from its existence as a law, disobedience to its precepts must be condemned; and if nothing interfere to preserve the of-

fender from punishment, he must of necessity suffer. To what degree, in what modes, through what extent these sufferings will reach, the infidel cannot conjecture. To his anguish no end appears. Of such an end, no arguments can be furnished by his mind, no tidings have reached his ear, and no hopes can rationally arise in his heart. Death, with all the gloomy scenes attendant upon a dying bed, is to him merely the commencement of doubt, fear, and sorrow. The grave to him is the entrance into a world of absolute and eternal darkness. That world, hung round with fear, amazement, and despair, overcast with midnight, melancholy with solitude, desolate of every hope of real good, opens to him through the dreary passage of the grave. Beyond this entrance he sees nothing, he knows nothing, he can conjecture nothing, but what must fill his heart with alarm, and make his death-bed a couch of thorns. With a suspense scarcely less terrible than the miseries of damnation itself, his soul lingers over the vast and desolate abyss; when, compelled by an unseen and irresistible hand, it plunges into this uncertain and irreversible doom, to learn by experience what is the measure of woe destined to reward those, 'who obey not God,' and reject the salvation proffered by his Son.

In such a situation what man not yet lost to sense and thought, not yet convinced that he has committed the sin which cannot be forgiven, would not hail with transport the dawn of the gospel; the clear rising of the Sun of righteousness, to illumine his path through this melancholy world, to dispel the darkness of the grave, to shed a benevolent light upon the entrance into eternity, and to brighten his passage to the heavens.

SERMON LVIII.

THE PRIESTHOOD OF CHRIST.—HIS INTERCESSION.

But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost, that come unto God by him; seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.—Heb. vii. 24, 25.

Having in a series of Discourses examined, as far as I thought it necessary, the personal holiness of Christ, and his atonement for sin; I shall now proceed in the order originally proposed, to consider *his intercession.*

In the first verse of the text, St Paul declares, that Christ, in contradistinction to earthly high priests, 'has an unchangeable priesthood;' or, as the original more exactly signifies, 'a priesthood which passes not from one hand to another.' In the last verse he infers from this fact, 'that he is able to save' his followers 'to the uttermost; because he ever lives to make intercession for them.' The intercession of Christ, therefore, is here declared to be real—to be made for his followers—and to be effectual to their salvation. Of course, it claims, in a high degree, our serious attention.

To intercede denotes, originally, *to go between one person and another.* In its secondary or figurative sense, the only one in which it seems now to be used, it denotes *offering petitions in behalf of another;* and, in the Scriptures, *offering such petitions to God.* On this subject we have St John as a commentator, to direct us. 'If any man sin,' says the apostle, 'we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.' The original word here translated 'advocate' is παράκλητος. It denotes either a person who in the Roman courts, under the appellation of *patronus*, attended a client, and in countenancing, advising, and interceding for him, took an efficacious care of his interest: or an agent of one of the states, either allied or tributary to Rome, who took a similar care of the interests of that state before the Roman government, and interceded from time to time, with the emperor on its behalf, as those interests demanded. Such is one of the offices assumed by Christ in the heavens.

It will be seen at a glance, that this subject is merely a scriptural one. All our knowledge concerning it is derived from revelation only. Reason can add nothing but conjecture to what the Scriptures have taught; and you are not now to learn that additions of this nature are of very little value. The observations which I propose to make concerning it, I shall arrange under the following heads:—

I. *The character and circumstances of those for whom Christ intercedes.*

II. *The manner in which his intercession is performed.*

Under the former of these heads I observe,

1. That they are the children of God.

In proof of this position I cite the following passages:—

(1.) The text. 'Wherefore he is able to save to the uttermost, them that come unto God by him; seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.' It cannot but be seen, that St Paul speaks here of no other intercession than that which is made for such as come unto God by Christ.

(2.) The passage already quoted from 1 John ii. 1, 'My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.' The persons who are here said to have an advocate with the Father, are the persons denoted by the word, 'we,' that is, St John, and those to whom he writes; or whom he here styles 'little children:' in other words, the children of God.

(3.) Rom. viii. 34, 'Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died; yea, rather, that is risen again: who is even at the right hand of God; who also maketh intercession for us.' The persons for whom Christ is here said to intercede, are those included in the word 'us;'

those who in the preceding verses are called 'God's elect;' and of whom it is said, that none shall hereafter be 'able to lay any thing to their charge;' and of whom in the verses following it is declared, that nothing, whether present or future, 'shall be able to separate them from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.'

I know of no passage in the Scriptures which even seems to teach any other doctrine, except Isa. liii. 12, 'and he made intercession for the transgressors.' Of this passage, I observe,

[1.] That saints may be, and with the utmost propriety are, considered as designed by the word 'transgressors,' in this place. Saints both before and after their regeneration, are transgressors; and, in this character only, need the intercession of Christ.

[2.] The murderers of Christ are very naturally designated in this place, by 'transgressors:' and the passage may be considered as a prophecy of the intercession which he made for them on the cross.

In the same verse it is said, 'He was numbered with the transgressors;' that is, with the thieves between whom he was crucified; and with all the other capital criminals condemned to the same death. All these were eminently transgressors; and with them he was numbered or reckoned when he was pronounced to have the same character, and sentenced to the same infamy and sufferings. As the word 'transgressors' denotes malefactors or murderers in the former of these clauses, it is very naturally understood to denote persons of the same character in the latter. In the former clause, also, the prophet speaks one fact which took place on the day of Christ's crucifixion; it is very naturally supposed, therefore, that he pursues the same subject through the verse, and that the intercession mentioned by him, was made on the same day. If these remarks are just, the prophet may be fairly considered as predicting, in this passage, the prayer of Christ for his murderers, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!' This was a real and wonderful instance of intercession, and was gloriously answered in the conversion of several thousands of these persons to the faith and obedience of the gospel.

2. The children of God are still the subjects of backsliding and sin, in greater or less degrees, while they live.

In every child of God there still exists 'a law in his members,' which wars 'against the law in his mind,' and often brings him 'into captivity to the law of sin, which is in his members.' It is to be remembered, that all such sins are committed not only against the law, but against the grace of God, and are aggravated by this high consideration. Originally, they were apostates; but afterward they were reconciled to God by faith in the blood of his Son. For this unspeakable blessing their obligations to obedience are increased beyond measure. Against these obligations, and against their own solemn covenant, recognizing and enhancing them, they still have sinned. Their ingratitude, therefore, is peculiar, and all their transgressions are heightened by the amazing consideration that they have been redeemed, sanctified, and forgiven.

3. Notwithstanding their backslidings, they are not utterly cast off.

'My mercy,' saith God, 'will I keep for him for evermore; and my covenant shall stand fast with him. His seed also will I make to endure for ever, and his throne as the days of heaven. If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; if they break my statutes, and keep not my comandments: then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless, my loving-kindness I will not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail.' Psalm lxxxix. 28—33. This is the universal language of the Scriptures concerning this subject. 'Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; perplexed, but not in despair; chastened, but not killed.' Such is the language of the apostles, and such was their condition. Such also, in various respects, is that of all their followers.

From the obliteration of the sins of persons so circumstanced, it cannot be irrational to suppose, that some provision would be made by him who sent his Son to die for them; and who had promised in the covenant of redemption that they should endure for ever.

II. *I shall consider the manner in which the interces sion of Christ is performed.*

On this subject I observe,

1. Some of the ancients were of opinion, that Christ executes this office by presenting, continually, his human nature before the throne of his Father. Aquinas also, a more modern writer, says, 'Christ intercedes for us by exhibiting, with a desire of our salvation, to the view of the Father the human nature, assumed for us, and the mysteries celebrated or accomplished in it.'

It will be admitted on all hands that Christ does thus exhibit his human nature in the heavens; nor can it be denied, that this is a continual exhibition of what he has done and suffered for the glory of his Father, and the salvation of his church. All this was done by him in the human nature; which is, therefore, an unceasing and affecting symbol of his wonderful labours for these great ends. The same exhibition is, also, a strong and constant memorial of his own love to his followers, and his earnest desires that they may be forgiven and saved. These desires, therefore, together with these labours and sufferings, being all forcibly exhibited in this presentation of his human nature before 'the throne of the Majesty in the heavens,' it is, I think, a well founded opinion, that in this manner the intercession of Christ is, partially at least, performed. In support of this opinion we are to remember, that the high-priest, whose intercession was a type of that of Christ, made his intercession, not by offering prayers for the people in the most holy place, but by sprinkling the blood of sacrifices on the mercy-seat. As the blood of the sacrifice was here presented before God by way of intercession, so Christ is considered as presenting the memorials of his sacrifice before God in the heavens; and as the high-priest by this act opened to the Israelites the earthly holy places, so Christ is considered as in the like manner opening the heavenly holy places to his own followers for ever.

2. Christ pleads, substantially, for the forgiveness of the sins of his followers, their preservation in holiness, and their final acceptance into heaven.

Intercession in its very nature involves petition. The manner in which it is performed may vary, but the substance is always the same. In whatever manner, therefore, Christ may be supposed to intercede for his children, he must substantially offer up petitions on their behalf. That they need this intercession cannot be rationally doubted. The blessings to which they are conducted are the greatest of all blessings;

their final forgiveness, acceptance, purification, and eternal life. Of these and all other blessings they are wholly unworthy. That much is necessary to be done for such persons, in order to save them from punishment, and secure to them immortal happiness, is a doctrine accordant with the dictates of common sense. In this world great evils are remitted, and great blessings procured to the undeserving, by the intercession of the worthy and honourable. Analogy, therefore, leads us to look to similar means for the accomplishment of similar purposes, in the universal providence of God. Especially will this seem natural and necessary, where the greatest blessings are to be obtained for those who are unworthy of the least of all blessings.

3. In John xvii. we have, if I mistake not, an example of this very intercession.

This chapter is the last communication of Christ to his apostles before his death. In it he recites, briefly, his wonderful labours for the glory of his Father, and for the good of his children; declares that he had finished the work allotted to him; and announces, that he was bidding adieu to the scene of his humiliation, and preparing to enter into his glory.

On these grounds he prays his Father to sanctify and perfect his children; to keep them while they were in the world, from the evil; to make them one in their spirit, their character, and their pursuits; and to cause the love which he exercised towards Christ, to rest upon them. At the same time he declares, that he had given to them his own glory; and that it was his will that they should be where he was, and behold his glory for ever. All these illustrious things also he solicits on the ground of his Father's love to him, and his own labours and sufferings in obedience to his will.

In this prayer of Christ we have probably a fair specimen of his intercession in the heavens. The same things are recited, and the same things requested here, which we are taught to expect there; and all is asked of God which can contribute to their safety or their happiness.

If these observations be allowed to be just, it will be seen that the great ends of Christ's intercession are to preserve his followers from final backsliding; an evil to which, if left to themselves, they would certainly be exposed, notwithstanding all the virtuous principles which they possess; to obtain the forgiveness of those sins which they commit after their regeneration; and to secure their reception into the world of glory. These ends are of the highest importance to them, and in the highest degree declarative of the goodness of God.

This method of proceeding on the part of God is wholly accordant with the common dictates of the human mind. Similar means, as I have observed, are used, and efficaciously used, to procure the remission of punishment and the enjoyment of good for unworthy men in the present world. That which is done here, therefore, and has ever been done with the plainest propriety and the most decisive efficacy, strongly illustrates the reasonableness and propriety of what is thus done in the heavens.

From these observations I infer,

1. The perfect safety of the children of God.

Christ, the Son of God, and the infinitely meritorious Redeemer of men, intercedes for their preservation in holiness, the forgiveness of their backslidings and their final acceptance into heaven. 'The Father always heareth' the Son. It is impossible that his intercession should fail, or that the purposes of it should not be accomplished. His followers, therefore, though exposed to ten thousand dangers, and to numberless temptations, enemies, and backslidings, though always in a state of peril, and living only a doubtful and scarcely perceptible life, will pass safely through all these hazards, and finally arive at the possession of perfect holiness and everlasting joy.

In the preceding Discourse I evinced the truth of this doctrine by arguments drawn from the atonement of Christ. It is equally evident from his intercession. Christ, in his prayer at the tomb of Lazarus, says to the Father, 'I knew that thou hearest me always.' In his intercessory prayer, in the xviith of John, he declares, that he intercedes not only for his apostles and their fellow disciples then existing, but also 'for them, who should believe on him through their word;' that is, the gospel. Those then who believe on him through the gospel, are universally interested in that intercession of Christ, which 'the Father heareth always.' Of course, their safety is complete, their interest in the divine favour indefeasible, and their title to endless life unalterably secure.

2. We have here a strong proof that Christ is unchangeable.

In Prov. viii. after giving a variety of testimonies of his compassion for sinners, he informs us, that 'before the mountains were settled, or the earth was made, he rejoiced in the habitable parts of the earth,' in a glorious foresight of the good which he intended to accomplish; and that 'his delights were' from eternity 'with the sons of men.' In the indulgence of this divine benignity, though infinitely 'rich' in the possession of all good, yet 'for our sakes he became poor, that we through him might become rich.' 'The Word, who was in the beginning with God, and by whom all things were made, became flesh, and dwelt among us; and we beheld his glory (the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth.' While he dwelt in this apostate world, he underwent a course of extreme humiliation, labours, and sufferings for the sake of mankind; and in the end purchased for them the regeneration of the soul, and a title to everlasting life, with the agonies of the cross.

To the heavens he has gone before, 'to prepare a place for them, and to receive them to himself.' In that glorious world, amid all the splendours of his exaltation, he forgets not for a moment those worms of the dust, whom he came to redeem; those backsliding, frail, sinning apostates, for whom he poured out his blood on the accursed tree; but, in the strong language of the apostle, 'ever lives to make intercession for them.' By his intercession, as well as by his government, he secures their continuance in holiness; 'cleanses them from secret faults; restrains them from presumptuous sins;' and thus keeps them 'innocent of the great transgression.' Thus his love is, from everlasting to everlasting, the same boundless love; to himself divinely glorious, to them great beyond example, beneficial beyond degree.

3. The intercession of Christ most affectingly teaches us the grace of God in the salvation of sinners.

Sinners are originally redeemed, forgiven, and sanctified by the mere sovereign goodness of God. After all these mighty works are accomplished, they are still

guilty and undeserving; they need the intercession as well as the atonement of Christ; and without it could not, as far as we are informed, be with propriety blessed in the heavens. In consequence of this intercession they are preserved from fatal declension, their sins committed after their regeneration are forgiven, and themselves admitted to the presence of God.

In heaven this intercession is continued for ever. Throughout eternity the children of God are thus furnished with the strongest evidence, that their everlasting happiness is the result of mere sovereign goodness and mercy; and that all the glory of devising, accomplishing, and bestowing this happiness is to be ascribed to him. The praises of the heavenly world, and the gratitude whence they spring, will from this source derive a more exquisite rapture; their sense of dependence on God be more humble, intense, and lovely; and their perseverance in holiness find the most delightful, as well as the most powerful motives.

4. How wonderful is the love of Christ to sinners!

It is beyond measure wonderful, that he should love them at all. What are they? Guilty, rebellious, odious creatures, opposed to his will, designs, and character; requiting his love with ingratitude, hatred, and contempt; 'crucifying him afresh' by their unbelief; 'and accounting the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing.' Why did he love them? Not because they were rational beings. With a word he could have created millions of such beings for one of them; and all more rational and more exalted than themselves. Not because of their moral excellence; for they had none. Not because he needed them; for he cannot need any thing, and they possessed nothing which they did not receive from him.

On the contrary, all his conduct towards them sprang from his own boundless good-will; his disinterested love. They were not deserving, but he was pitiful; they were not valuable, but he was bountiful; they were not necessary to him, but he was infinitely necessary to them. 'Herein is love; not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and gave his Son to die for us.' It was because Christ was superlatively good; and because we were 'poor, and wretched, and miserable, and blind, and naked, and in want of all things,' that this glorious person had compassion on us in our apostasy and ruin. He lived and died, he reigns and intercedes, that we might live, and not die. This great work he began to execute here, and he carries it on in the heavens throughout eternity.

In that world of glory, although elevated to the throne of the universe, and beholding all things beneath his feet, although loved, obeyed, and worshipped with supreme attachment and homage by the great kingdom of virtuous beings, he assumes and executes the office of an intercessor for the fallen children of Adam. In that world 'he is not ashamed to call them,' however degraded by their apostasy, and however odious by their guilt, by the endearing names of 'friends' and 'brethren.' He is the universal ruler; but he is not ashamed to appear as the 'elder brother, the first-born,' of this human assembly; nay, as a suppliant for those whom he rules. He is a person of infinite dignity and perfection, but he is not ashamed to appear as a companion to those who could originally 'say to corruption, Thou art our father, and to the worm, Thou art our mother and our sister.' Thus the character which he exhibited on earth, he sustains in heaven. He is still in the same manner 'meek and lowly of heart;' and still 'feeds his disciples,' and 'leads them to fountains of living waters.' To him they have been indebted for the atonement of their sins and the salvation of their souls, and to him they will be infinitely indebted for the communication of knowledge, holiness, and enjoyment throughout the endless ages of their being.

What character can be compared with this? Before it, how does all other excellence fade! In it what exaltation and condescension are blended! What greatness and benignity united! What must be the mind in which these majestic and these sweet and lovely characteristics thus unchangeably and for ever harmonize; a mind supremely great and glorious in the lowly station of a man, a child, a servant to an humble artisan, and divinely meek and condescending in the infinite splendour of universal dominion.

What dishonour is here reflected on the pride of men and fallen angels! Pride, unsatisfied with all present attainments, and making the greatest communications from God, of distinction and glory, the mere foundations of claiming more, and of murmuring because they are not elevated to higher honours, and replenished with more extensive enjoyments! How poor, how debased, how odious, how guilty is that pride! How contemptible does it appear, when compared with the Redeemer's condescension! In heaven there is no pride; on earth and in hell it is the prevailing character. Men are proud, fallen angels are proud. Christ is 'meek and lowly of heart.' What would become of the universe, were pride to find a place in the infinite mind?

5. How differently are Christians regarded by Christ, and by evil men!

Christ descended from heaven, and left 'the glory which he had with the Father before ever the world was' to befriend Christians. He became a man, he lived, he laboured through life, he hung upon the cross, and was buried in the tomb, to redeem them from sin and death. He arose from the dead, ascended to heaven, 'sat on the right hand of the Majesty on high, became 'head over all things,' governs all things, and intercedes with his Father for ever, for the benefit of Christians. To save and bless them is, in a sense, his professional employment throughout eternity.

How different is the conduct of evil men towards the very same persons! In the eyes of these men, Christians are objects of contempt and hatred; and in their customary language are styled superstitious, enthusiasts, hypocrites, fanatics, and bigots. Men of the same character mocked and crucified Christ; their followers have ever since exhibited the same spirit; at times in the same, at other times in different manners; but in all its exhibitions the spirit has been the same.

Reason would naturally ask, when contemplating this subject, What evil have Christians done, to merit this treatment? Have they injured these enemies? Have they injured the public? Are they not as industrious, as peaceable, as just, as sincere, as kind, as useful, as other men? Do they not, as parents, children, friends, neighbours, magistrates, and citizens, perform the duties of life as fathfully, as those who are not Christians? Do they transgress the laws, oppose the government, or disturb the peace of society, more than their enemies themselves? If they are guilty of such crimes, it can undoubtedly be proved; it ought to be

proved; and they ought, accordingly, to be condemned and punished. To this no fair objection can be made even by Christians themselves.

But how far from these dictates of reason has been all the conduct of their adversaries! Have they even attempted any proof of this nature? Have not their accusations been general and indefinite, like the outcry raised against Paul and his companions, 'These, that have turned the world upside down, have come hither also:' the mere exclamations of undiscriminating malevolence, not the specific charges of sober conviction.

To this malevolence what an endless train of men, women, and children—of men covered with the hoary locks of age, of children scarcely escaped from the cradle—have been offered up on the altar of persecution! What multitudes by the ancient heathen, what multitudes by the idolatrous apostates from Christianity, what multitudes by the infidels of modern times!

Where law and government have prevented these atrocities, how many private and personal injuries, how many sneers and taunts, how many stings of gall and bitterness, have Christians been obliged to endure! How many aspersions have been cast on their doctrines, designs, and characters, merely to load them with shame! How frequently are their best intentions misconstrued, and their most benevolent labours perverted, in this very land, originally peopled by Christians, and consecrated to religion: this land converted by Christians from a wilderness into a habitation of industry, peace, civilization, and happiness: to change which from a howling wilderness into an asylum of persecuted piety, Christians encountered the perils of the ocean, and the sufferings of the desert; sustained all the horrors of savage war, and all the evils of famine, disease, and death. In this very land, how many enemies have risen up to the church of God, among the descendants of these very Christians, and among the brethren of those who are persecuted! They know not, perhaps, that their curses are directed to the 'fathers who begat them,' or that 'their eye is evil towards the mothers who bore them,' nor mistrust, that their scorn is pointed against the source whence, under God, they have derived every enjoyment and every hope.

Against this source of blessings, the religion of Christians, they are more malignant than even against Christians themselves. The Bible is hated more than those who believe it; the doctrines and duties of Christianity more than its professors. What are those duties? They are all summed up in these two great precepts, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbour as thyself;' and in the means of producing obedience to these precepts in the soul of man. What is there in these precepts which can be the object of vindicable hatred? Who will stand up and say, who will say in the recesses of his own heart, it is an odious and contemptible thing to love God, to obey his voice, to believe in his Son, to shun the anger of God, to escape from endless sin and misery, and to attain everlasting virtue and happiness? Or is it, in the view of common sense, wise to choose the anger of God rather than his favour, a depraved character rather than a virtuous one, the company of apostates and fiends rather than of saints and angels, and hell rather than heaven?

Is it odious, is it contemptible, is it ridiculous, does it deserve obloquy and persecution to 'love our neighbour as ourselves,' to exhibit universal kindness, to deal justly, to speak truth, to fulfill promises, to relieve the distressed, to obey laws, to reverence magistrates, to resist temptation, to be sober, chaste, and temperate, and to follow all things which are 'honest, pure, lovely, and of good report?'

Is it, on the contrary, honourable, is it praiseworthy, does it merit esteem and reward, to be impious, profane, and blasphemous, to be infidels; to have a seared conscience; to possess a hard heart; to be unjust, unkind, and unfaithful; to be false, perjured, and seditious; to be light-minded, lewd, and gluttonous?

Is not the true reason of all this hostility to Christians, the plain superiority of their character to that of their enemies? Does not the hatred arise from their consciousness of this superiority; from the impatience which they feel whenever they behold it; from the wounds which neighbouring excellence always inflicts? Do they not feel that good men cast a shade upon their character; reprove them, at least by the silent and powerful voice of their own virtue; serve as a second conscience, to hold out their sin before their eyes, and alarm their hearts with a secret and irresistible sense of future danger? Do not wicked men say in their hearts, as they said at the time when the Wisdom of Solomon was written, 'Therefore let us lie in wait for the righteous, because he is not for our turn, and he is clean contrary to our doings. He upbraideth us with our offending the law, and objecteth to our infamy the transgressions of our education. He professeth to have the knowledge of God, and calleth himself the child of the Lord. He was made to reprove our thoughts. He is grievous unto us, even to behold: for his life is not like other men's, his ways are of another fashion. We are esteemed of him as counterfeits; he abstaineth from our ways as from filthiness; he pronounceth the end of the just to be blessed; and maketh his boast that God is his father. Let us see if his words be true, and let us prove what shall happen in the end of him. Let us examine him with despitefulness and torture, that we may know his meekness and prove his patience. Let us condemn him with a shameful death; for by his own saying he shall be respected.' Apply this description, and you will find it as exact and just, as if it had been written yesterday, and intended to mark out in the most definite manner, the loose and profligate of our own land.

But let Christians remember that these things will not always be. The time will come, it will soon come, when their enemies, however numerous, proud, and prosperous, 'will like sheep be laid in the grave. Death shall feed on them; and the worm shall cover them. Their beauty shall consume away; and the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning.' Then shall all the just 'be far from oppression, for they shall not fear: and from terror, for it shall not come near them.' God shall 'redeem them from the power of the grave,' and shall 'wipe away all tears from their eyes.' Then shall it be seen that their 'light affliction' in the present world was 'but for a moment,' and that its real and happy efficacy was no other than to 'work for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.'

SERMON LIX.

CHARACTER OF CHRIST AS A KING.

Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places; far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come. And hath put all things under his feet; and gave him to be the head over all things to the church.—Eph. i. 20—22.

I have now in a series of Sermons examined the character of Christ, as the Prophet and High Priest of mankind. Under his prophetical character I have considered his preaching, by himself, and by his apostles—the things taught by both—the manner in which they were taught—and their consequences. Under his priesthood I have considered his personal holiness—his atonement—and his intercession.

I shall now, according to the original scheme mentioned when I began to discuss the mediation of Christ, proceed to consider his character *as a King.*

That this character is given to Christ in the Scriptures, in instances almost literally innumerable, is perfectly well known to every reader of the Bible. In the second Psalm there is a solemn annunciation of the kingly office of Christ to the world. It is introduced with these words, 'I have set,' or, as in the Hebrew, have anointed, 'my king on my holy hill of Zion.' 'Unto us,' says Isaiah, 'a Child is born; unto us a Son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the Father of the everlasting age, the Prince of peace; and of the increase of his government and of his peace there shall be no end: upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice, from henceforth, even for ever.' 'The Lord hath sworn,' says David, 'and will not repent. Thou art a priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedek.' Melchisedek was both a king and a priest. The priesthood of Christ, therefore, was a 'royal priesthood;' or the priesthood of a person who was at the same time a king: like Melchisedek, a 'king of righteousness,' and a 'king of peace.' 'Thy throne, O God,' says David, 'is for ever and ever: and the sceptre of thy kingdom is a sceptre of righteousness.' 'He shall reign,' says Gabriel, when predicting his birth to Mary, 'He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end.' 'His name,' says St John, 'is called the Word of God; and he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, King of kings, and Lord of lords.'

In the text we are presented with several interesting particulars concerning the kingly office of Christ, which shall now be the subject of our consideration.

We are taught in this passage,

I. *That God hath exalted Christ to this dominion:*

II. *The extent of this dominion:*

III. *That this dominion was given and assumed for the benefit of the church.*

I. *We are taught, that God hath exalted Christ to this dominion.*

This doctrine is repeatedly taught in the text, in the following expressions: 'He set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places.'—'He hath put all things under his feet.'—'He gave him to be head over all things.' In these expressions, the exaltation of Christ to the dominion and dignity ascribed to him in the text, is as unequivocally attributed to the Father as it can be in human language. Of course, their plain import must be acknowledged by every Christian. I insist on this doctrine of the text; I have insisted on it particularly, because it has been made by Unitarians an argument against the divinity of Christ. 'If,' they say, 'Christ is a divine person, whence is it that we hear so many things said in the Scriptures concerning his exaltation, and particularly of his exaltation by the Father? If Christ is God, how is it possible that he should be in any sense exalted? But should we, contrary to plain probability, suppose him to have undergone voluntarily an apparent humiliation, can he who is truly God be indebted to any other than himself for a restoration to his former dignity and greatness? To be exalted at all, necessarily involves a preceding state of inferiority, particularly to the state to which he is exalted; and, certainly, of inferiority to the proper state and character of Jehovah. He who has all power, knowledge, wisdom, and greatness, cannot have more; and, therefore, can in no sense be exalted. To be exalted by another person, also, involves dependence on that person; and a dependent being cannot be God.'

As this, in my view, is the most plausible argument against the divinity of Christ, and that which has had more weight in my own mind than any other, though I believe, less relied on and less insisted on by Unitarians, than some others, I shall consider it with particular attention.

As a preface to the answer which I intend to this objection, I observe, that the argument contained in it, is in my own view conclusive; and, if applied to the subject without any error, must be admitted in its full force. The error of those who use it, lies in the application made of it to Christ. That exaltation involves a state of preceding inferiority is, I apprehend, intuitively certain; and that he who is exalted by another must be a dependent being, dependent on him by whom he is exalted, cannot be denied. Let us see how far this argument is applicable to Christ, and how far it would conclude against his Deity.

It must be acknowledged by all Trinitarians, as well as others, that if Christ be God in the true and proper sense, it is impossible for him to be exalted above the dignity and greatness which he originally and always possessed. He cannot be more powerful, wise, or excellent. He originally possessed all things, and therefore can have nothing given to him. It cannot, of

course, be in this sense that the scriptural writers speak of Christ as exalted.

But it is equally clear, and will be equally insisted on by every Trinitarian, that Christ is *man* as well as *God*. In this character it is evident that he can receive exaltation; and that to any degree less than infinite. It is farther evident, according to the Trinitarian doctrine concerning Christ, that the Messiah, or Mediator, Jesus Christ, is distinguishable from Christ considered as God, and from Christ considered as man: being constituted by the union of the eternal Word with the man Christ Jesus: 'A union,' as the Westminster Assembly expresses it, 'of two distinct natures and one person for ever.' This Mediator in his complete character began to exist at the birth of the man Jesus Christ, as being a person then new to the universe. Of this Mediator, then commencing his perfect existence, the predictions concerning the kingdom of Christ, and the accounts concerning his assumption of that kingdom, are, I apprehend, all or nearly all written. It is of the Mediator that it is said, 'I set my King on the holy hill of Zion.' It is of the 'Son' who was 'born,' and whose 'name was called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God;' on whose 'shoulder the government was to be placed.' Of the Mediator Gabriel said, 'He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end.' Of the Mediator St Paul says, 'Wherefore God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth.' It is of the Mediator that it is said in the text, 'God set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above every name that is named in this world, and in that which is to come:' and that it is farther said, 'He hath put all things under his feet; and given him to be head over all things to his church.'

As the Mediator Jesus Christ began to exist at the birth of the man Jesus Christ, so, until his resurrection, he existed in a state of humiliation only. The Word, though 'originally in the form of God, and' justly 'thinking it no robbery to be equal with God, yet' voluntarily 'took upon himself the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men.' In this form or character of a servant, he fulfilled all the several duties which he had engaged to perform, and in this humble character he acted till he arose from the dead.

It will not be denied, that this person, allowing him to have existed, was capable of exaltation; nor that, if he received it at all, he must receive it from him under whose commission he acted, and to whom he had voluntarily become a servant when 'he was made in the likeness of men.'

This person, it is plain, had received no kingdom until his ascension to heaven; had not before been 'head over all things to the church;' nor been 'exalted above every name that is named in this world, and that to come.' This kingdom is frequently spoken of as the reward of the labours and sufferings of Christ, in the character of Mediator. These labours and sufferings had never before existed, and therefore could not have been rewarded at an earlier period.

From these views of the subject it is clear that although Christ, as God, was incapable of exaltation equally as of suffering; yet as Mediator he was capable of both; and that exaltation was with perfect propriety given him by the glorious person under whose authority he placed himself, by voluntarily assuming the form of a servant. In this view of the subject the Trinitarians are so far from being inconsistent with themselves, that they merely accord with the necessary consequences of their own doctrine.

II. *We are taught in the text the extent of this kingdom.*

The word 'kingdom' sometimes denotes the rule which is exercised by a king; and sometimes the persons and regions which he rules. According to the former of these senses, David says, 'Thou hast prepared thy throne in the heavens; and thy kingdom is over all.' Of the latter sense, 'it shall be given thee' to the half of the kingdom,' is an example.

1. The kingdom of Christ is the universe.

In the text, the extent of Christ's kingdom is repeatedly denoted by the phrase 'all things.' The absolute universality of this phrase is sufficiently manifest from the text itself, when it is said, that 'he is set at the right hand of God, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named in this world, and that which is to come.' But it is placed beyond all doubt in the corresponding passages in Phil. ii. 10, where it is said, that 'every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess, that Jesus Christ is Lord.' 'Heaven and earth' is the phrase by which the Jews denoted the universe. When they meant to express this idea with emphasis, they sometimes added the phrase, 'under the earth.' Here we have the most emphatical language ever used by a Jew to denote the universe, and all things which it contains. 'Every knee' in this vast dominion we are assured will one day bow to Christ; and 'every tongue' found in it will confess, at a future period, that 'Christ is Lord.' In the same manner, in Col. i. 16, 'All things' are said to be 'created by him, and for him;' whether they be 'visible or invisible,' whether in 'heaven or in earth.' As in this absolutely universal sense they were made by and for himself, so from this passage we cannot doubt, that in the same sense they will be his absolute possession, and that after as well as before he became Mediator. This world, therefore, the planetary system, the stellary systems, the highest heavens above, and hell beneath, are all included, and alike included in the immense empire of which he is the head. Men are his subjects. Angels, both fallen and virtuous, are his subjects; and the inhabitants of the innumerable worlds which compose the universe, 'confess that he is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.'

2. His authority over this great kingdom is supreme.

The whole course of providence is under his immediate control. 'He upholds all things by the word of his power,' and directs them with a universal and irresistible agency to their proper ends. The affairs of this world and all its inhabitants are directed by his hand. He has the 'keys of hell and of death,' or of the world of departed spirits. 'He openeth, and no one shutteth; and he shutteth, and no one openeth.' Into that world none enter without his bidding, and out of it none can come but by his permission. The world of misery beneath, is in the same manner under his absolute dominion; and the glorious system of happiness in the heavens above, is the mere result of his wisdom, goodness, and power.

In the exercise of his dominion he will, at the close

of this providential system, summon the dead from the grave, consume the world with fire, and judge both the righteous and the wicked, both angels and men. In the exercise of the same authority also, he will send the wicked down to the regions of darkness, and 'punish them with an everlasting destruction from his presence, and from the glory of his power.'

III. We are taught in the text, that *this kingdom was given and assumed for the benefit of the church.*

This doctrine is directly asserted in the text; and will, therefore, not be questioned. In the exercise of his government over all things for the benefit of his church, he,

1. Defends it from all enemies.

The enemies of Christians are their temptations, internal and external; their sins, death, evil men, and evil angels.

Against their temptations he furnishes them with defence by all the instructions, precepts, warnings, reproofs, threatenings, and promises which are contained in his word. These constitute a continual and efficacious protection from the influence of lusts within, and enemies without, by rectifying the views of the soul concerning its interest and duty, awakening in it solemn consideration, alarming it with affecting apprehensions, encouraging it with hope, alluring it with love and gratitude, stimulating it with the prospect of a glorious reward, and thus prompting it to suspend the dangerous purpose, to watch against the rising sin, to oppose with vigour the intruding temptation, and to pray unceasingly for that divine assistance which 'every one that asketh shall receive.'

To the means of defence furnished by his word, he adds continually the peculiar influences of his Spirit. This glorious agent commissioned by Christ for this divine purpose, diffuses through the soul the spirit of resistance, the hope of victory, the strength necessary to obtain it, and the peace and joy which are its happy as well as unfailing consequences.

From their sins he began to deliver them by his atonement. This work he carries on by his intercession, and completes by his providence. In the present world, where all things are imperfect, this deliverance partakes, it must be acknowledged, of the common nature; yet it is such, as to secure them from every fatal evil, and such as we know to be one of those things, which 'work together for their good.' Their progress towards perfect holiness is slow, irregular, and interrupted; yet it is real and important; producing hope, comfort, and perseverance unto the end.

At the judgment this deliverance will be complete. There the glorious effects of his atonement and intercession will be all realized. Every one of his followers will find himself entirely interested in them both; and will see, at that trying period, all his sins washed away, and nothing left to be 'laid to his charge.' These dreadful enemies, at this dreadful season, will be powerless, and overthrown; and Christians will 'be more than conquerors through him that hath loved them.'

From death he has taken away its sting, and from the grave its victory. Death, so terrible to the impenitent, will be found by them to be no other than a rough, gloomy, unwelcome messenger, sent to summon them to the house of their Father. Over all its dangerous power they will triumph in a glorious manner, and be enabled to sing with everlasting exultation, 'O Death! where is thy sting? O Grave! where is thy victory? All the preceding diseases, sorrows, and trials through which they have passed in this vale of tears, they will distinctly perceive to have been scarcely enemies at all. On the contrary, they will appear to have been sent with infinite kindness, to check them in the career of iniquity, to warn them of approaching danger or existing sin, and to recall them effectually to the path of life.

Against evil men and evil angels he furnishes them throughout their pilgrimage, with a continual and sufficient protection: not a protection, indeed, which will prevent them from suffering and sorrow; but this is because suffering and sorrow are necessary to their safety and improvement. Hence, they are maligned, calumniated, despised, persecuted, and at times brought to a violent death. They are also at times perplexed, insnared, allured, and tempted to wander from their duty by art, sophistry, and falsehood. By the former class of evils they are gradually weaned from that love of the world, that desire of human favour, and that lust for human applause, which so naturally charm the eyes and fascinate the hearts even of Christians, and which are wholly inconsistent with the love of God. By the latter they are made sensible of their own weakness, taught their dependence on God, driven to their closets and their knees, and induced to 'walk humbly with God' all their days, in the intimate and most profitable communion of faith and prayer.

'The triumphing of the wicked is short;' and 'the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning.' When Christians are 'redeemed from the power of the grave,' they shall see all these enemies retiring behind them, and speedily vanishing, with the flight of ages, to a distance immeasurable by the power of the imagination. All around them will then be friends. God will then be their Father, angels their brethren, happiness their portion, and heaven their everlasting home.

2. In the exercise of this authority he bestows on them all good, temporal and eternal.

Of temporal good he gives them all that is necessary or useful for such beings in such a state. The world may be, and often is, a vale of tears; and like a solitary pilgrimage through 'a weary land.' Poverty may betide, afflictions befall, diseases arrest, and death, at what they may think an untimely period, summon them away. By enemies they may be surrounded, and by friends forsaken. They may be exposed to hatred, contumely, and persecution. Their days may be overcast with gloom, and their nights with sorrow. But he has assured them, and they will find the assurance verified, that these are 'light afflictions,' which only 'work for them an eternal weight of glory;' and that these as truly as all other things 'work together for their good.' Even these, therefore, however forbidding their aspect, will be found to be good for them; good upon the whole; good in such a sense as to render their whole destiny brighter, better, and more happy.

In the mean time, he furnishes them also, and furnishes them abundantly, with spiritual good. He furnishes them with the sanctification of the soul. He gives them light to discover their own duty, and his glory and excellency. He gives them strength to resist temptations; sorrow for their sins; patience, resignation, and fortitude, under afflictions; faith to confide in him, and to 'overcome the world;' hope, to encourage their efforts, and to fix them firmly in their obedience; peace, to hush the tumults of the mind, and to shed a cheerful serenity

over all its affections; and joy, to assure them of his glorious presence, and to anticipate in their thoughts the everlasting joy of his immortal kingdom.

In the future world, when death shall have been 'swallowed up in victory,' and 'all tears shall be wiped away from their eyes,' he will begin to bestow upon them eternal good. In this 'fulness of joy,' every thing will be only delightful. Their bodies, raised from the grave 'in incorruption, power, and glory,' will be 'spiritual, immortal,' ever vigorous, and ever young; their souls, purified from every stain, and luminous with knowledge and virtue, will be images of his own amiableness and consummate beauty; their stations, allotments, and employments will be such as become those who are 'kings and priests' in the heavenly world; their companions will be cherubim and seraphim, and their home will be the house of their Father and their God.

At the same time, in bestowing all this good he himself is the dispenser, and the good dispensed. 'I,' says Christ, 'am the light of the world.' 'The city,' says St John, 'had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it; for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.' In other words, Christ is the medium through which all the knowledge of God is conveyed to the intelligent universe, his character discovered, and his pleasure made known. Of the heavenly world, particularly, he is here expressly declared to be 'the light:' 'The glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.' The Lamb is this 'glory of God,' which is said to be 'the light of heaven.' Christ is not only the dispenser of the good enjoyed in heaven, but the very good which is dispensed; not only the dispenser of knowledge, but the thing known; not only the communication of enjoyment, but the thing enjoyed; the person divinely seen, loved, worshiped, and praised for ever. In his presence all his followers and all their happy companions 'with open face beholding' in him, 'as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, will be changed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord.'

REMARKS.

From these observations may be conclusively argued,

1. The Divinity of Christ.

From the text, and the comments here given on it, it is evident that Christ holds the sceptre of the universe, and rules the great kingdom of Jehovah. Let me ask, Who but the infinitely perfect One can possibly hold such a sceptre, or control successfully, or even at all, such an empire? Unless he be every where present, how can he every where act, rule, and bring to pass, such events as he chooses; such as are necessary to the divine glory, and the universal good? Unless thus present, acting, and ruling, how can he prevent the existence of such things as will be injurious to this good; or fail to be disappointed of his own purposes, and ultimately of the supreme end of all his labour? How evident is it, even to our view, that inanimate things must cease to operate and to move in their destined course, that animated beings must wander out of it, and that rational beings must, if virtuous, go astray, from the defectiveness of their imperfect nature, and, if sinful, from malignity and design. The evil designs of the latter, particularly, must, if he be not present, multiply in their numbers, and increase in their strength, until various parts of this immense kingdom become disordered, and perhaps destroyed. What an impression would it make on the feelings, what a change in the affairs of this world, if mankind, if evil spirits, were to know that the ruler of all things would be absent from it even a single year! What courage would sinners gather! With what strength, and to what a multitude, would sins accumulate! What a tempest of violence would ravage this globe! To what a mountainous height would be heaped up the mass of human misery!

Nor is his absolute knowledge of all things less indispensable than his universal presence. This knowledge is completely necessary to enable him to discern the ends deserving of his pursuit, and the proper means of their accomplishment. When all these are resolved on, the same knowledge only can direct the operations of these means, prevent their disorder or their failure, preclude successful opposition, and avoid the consequent confusion, disturbance, and disappointment. Especially is this knowledge indispensable to the efficacious government of rational or moral agents. The powers of these agents are thought, volition, and motivity: all invisible to every eye, except the omniscient; and, if discovered at all before their operations exist, discovered by that eye only. But these agents are beyond measure the most important instruments of the divine designs in this great kingdom; and, if not prevented, the most able to disturb its order and happiness. It is plain, therefore, that he who rules the universe, must, in order to prevent the disturbance of this kingdom, 'understand the thoughts afar off;' or, as in the translation formerly in use, 'long before' they are formed.

By the same knowledge only is the same exalted person qualified to be the final judge and rewarder of the universe. A great part of the sin and holiness of such beings, and of the enhancements and diminutions of both, lies altogether in their thoughts and volitions. To judge his creatures justly, then, it is absolutely necessary that he should 'search the heart and try the reins' of every rational being.

With the same knowledge only can he determine, apportion, and execute the unnumbered allotments of intelligent creatures. These united, form an immense and eternal system of providence; compared with which the providence exercised in this world is but a point; and this vast system must, indispensably, be contrived aright, and without any defect, from the beginning. The parts of which it will be composed will be literally infinite, and can be devised only by an infinite mind.

Nor is omnipotence less necessary for all these vast and innumerable purposes than omniscience and omnipresence. No power inferior to omnipotence could produce or hold together so many beings, or carry on to completion so many and so various purposes. To the power actually exerted for these ends, every being must be completely subjected, and all created power entirely subordinate. An absolute and irresistible dominion must be exercised unceasingly over every part of his kingdom, or the great designs of creation and providence must be in continual danger of being finally frustrated.

Equally necessary is infinite rectitude for the just, benevolent, and perfect administration of such a government. The least defect, the least wrong, would here be fatal. From the decision there can be no appeal, from the arm of execution there can be no escape. A creature, if wronged here, is wronged hopelessly, and for

ever. The ruling mind must, therefore, be subject to no weakness, passion, or partiality. Without perfect rectitude there can be no ultimate confidence; and without such confidence, voluntary or virtuous obedience cannot exist.

Thus, when Christ is 'exalted to be head over all things,' and constituted the ruler, judge, and rewarder of the universe; he is plainly exalted to a station and character demanding infinite attributes, perfections literally divine. Either then he possesses these attributes, or he has been exalted to a station which, so far as reason can discern, he is unqualified to fill. But he was exalted to this station by unerring and boundless wisdom. Of course, he certainly possesses all the qualifications which it can demand. In other words, he is a person literally divine.

2. From the same observations we may discern how greatly we need such a friend as Christ.

That we are creatures wholly dependent, frail, ignorant, exposed, and unable to protect ourselves or provide for our interests, needs neither proof nor illustration. To us futurity is all blank. Between our present existence, and the approaching vast of being, hangs a dark and impenetrable cloud. What is beyond it no human eye is able to discern, and no human foresight to conjecture. There, however, all our great concerns lie, and are every moment increasing in their number and importance. There we shall enjoy the exquisite emotions and the high dignity of immortal virtue, the pure pleasures of a serene, self-approving mind, the eternal interchange of esteem and affection with the 'general assembly of the first-born,' and the uninterrupted favour of God in the world of joy; or we shall suffer the unceasing anguish of a guilty, self-ruined soul, the malignity of evil men and evil angels, and the wrath of our offended Creator, in the regions of woe. Between these infinitely distant allotments there is no medium, no intervening state, to which those who fail of final approbation can betake themselves for refuge. When, therefore, we bid adieu to this world, we shall meet with events whose importance nothing but omniscience can estimate, to us, utterly uncertain, and utterly beyond our power.

Nay, the present moment, and every moment when present, is fraught with consequences incapable of being estimated by any finite understanding. On time eternity hangs. As we live here we shall live hereafter. If our time be well employed, and our talents well used, it will be well with us in the end. But if we abuse both here, it will be ill with us hereafter. The present moment is important, chiefly as it affects those which are future; begins or strengthens an evil or virtuous habit; depraves or amends the soul; hardens or softens the heart; and contributes in this way to advance us towards heaven or towards hell. There is no man who is not better or worse to-day, by means of what he thought, designed, or did yesterday. The present day, therefore, is not only important in itself, as a season for which we must give an account, but because of the influence which it will have on the events of the morrow. Thus circumstanced, frail, irresolute, wandering, wicked, exposed to immense dangers, and yet capable of immense enjoyments, how infinitely desirable is it that we should have such a friend as Christ. In his mind are treasured up all the means of happiness which we need, the immense power, knowledge, and goodness, the unchangeable truth, faithfulness, and mercy which, and which only, can provide and secure for us immortal blessings, or preserve us from evils which know no end. In all places he is present, over all things he rules with an irresistible dominion. No being, no event, can be hidden from his eye. No enemy, however insidious, or however powerful, can escape from his hand. His disposition is written in letters of blood on the cross. He who died that sinners might live, he who prayed for his murderers, while imbruing their hands in his blood, can need, can add, no proofs of his compassion for men. This glorious Redeemer is also 'the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.' Such a friend to man as he was when he hung on the cross, he will be throughout eternity; and to every one, who sincerely desires an interest in his good-will, he will manifest his friendship in an endless succession of blessings.

While we wander through the wilderness of life, amid so many wants, how desirable must it be to find a friend able and willing to furnish the needed supplies! Amid so many enemies and dangers, how desirable must it be to find a friend, able and willing to furnish the necessary protection? Amid so many temptations to watch over us! Amid so many sorrows to relieve us; in solitude, to be our companion; in difficulties, our helper; in despondence, our support; in disease, our physician; in death, our hope, resurrection, and life! In a word, how desirable must it be to find a friend who, throughout all the strange, discouraging state of the present life, will give us peace, consolation, and joy, and cause all things, even the most untoward and perplexing, to 'work together for our good!'

On a dying bed especially, when our flesh and our hearts must fail of course, our earthly friends yield us little consolation, and no hope, and the world itself retires from our view, how delightful will such a friend be? Then the soul, uncertain, alone, hovering over the form which it has so long inhabited, and stretching its wings for its flight into the unknown vast, will sigh and pant for an arm on which it may lean, and a bosom on which it may safely recline. But, there Christ is present, with all his tenderness and all his power. With one hand he holds the anchor of hope, and with the other he points the way to heaven.

In the final resurrection, when the universe shall rend asunder, and the elements of this great world shall rush together with immense confusion and ruin, how supporting, how ravishing will it be, when we awake from our final sleep, and ascend from the dust in which our bodies have been so long buried, to find this glorious Redeemer 're-fashioning our vile bodies like unto his glorious body,' and re-uniting them to our minds, purified and immortal! With what emotions shall we arise, and stand, and behold the Judge descend 'in the glory of his Father, with all his holy angels!' With what emotions shall we see the same unchangeable and everlasting friend placing us on his right hand in glory and honour, which kings will covet in vain, and before which all earthly grandeur shall be forgotten! With what melody will the voice of the Redeemer burst on our ears, when he proclaims, 'Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world!' How will the soul distend with transport, when accompanied by 'the church of the first born,' and surrounded by 'thrones, principalities, and powers,' it shall begin its flight towards the highest heavens, to meet 'his Father and our Father,

his God and our God?' What an eternal heaven will dawn in the mind, when we shall be presented before the throne of Jehovah; and, settled amid our own brethren in our immortal inheritance and our final home, behold all our sins washed away, our trials ended, our dangers escaped, our sorrows left behind us, and our reward begun, in that world where all things are ever new, delightful, and divine!

At these solemn and amazing seasons, how differently will those unhappy beings feel, who on a death-bed find no such friend; who rise to the resurrection of damnation; who are left behind, when the righteous ascend to meet their Redeemer; who are placed on the left hand at the final trial; and to whom, in the most awful language which was ever heard in the universe, he will say, 'Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.'

SERMON LX.

MIRACLES OF CHRIST.

Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you, by miracles, and wonders, and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know.—Acts ii. 22.

In a series of Discourses, I have considered at length the character of Christ as a Prophet, Priest, and King. I shall now proceed to investigate his character as a worker of miracles.

In the text, Christ is styled 'Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among' the Jews. This approbation is declared to have been testified 'by miracles, and wonders, and signs, which God did by him in the midst' of that people: and of all this it is asserted the Jews themselves had been witnesses. These subjects I propose to consider in the following Discourse, so far as I shall judge necessary to my general design. I shall, however, neglect the order of the text: and adopt one more suited to the present purpose. I shall,

I. *Define a miracle.*

II. *Show that Christ wrought miracles.*

III. *Point out their importance.*

I. *I shall define a miracle.*

A miracle is a suspension or counteraction of what are called the laws of nature. By the laws of nature I intend those regular courses of divine agency which we discern in the world around us. God, to enable us to understand his works, and his character as displayed in them, and to enable us also to direct with success our own conduct in the various duties of life, and probably for other purposes, has been pleased to conform his own agency to certain rules formed by his wisdom; called by philosophers, laws of nature, and in the Scriptures, 'ordinances of heaven.' To these laws all things with which we are acquainted by experience are usually conformed. A miracle is either a suspension or counteraction of these laws; or, more definitely, of the progress of things according to these laws. I have chosen both these words, because I would include all possible miracles, and because some events of this kind may more obviously seem to be suspensions, and others counteractions, of these laws.

II. *I shall show that Christ wrought miracles.*

In this case I shall, for the present, assume the story as true which is told us by the evangelists concerning the works of Christ, and refer my observations on this subject to another part of the discussion. Taking it, then, for granted that Christ really did the things ascribed to him in the gospel, I assert, that a considerable number of these things were real miracles. I say a considerable number, because it would be idle to extend the debate on the present occasion, to any thing supposed to be of a dubious nature, and because, after every deduction which can be asked, a sufficient number will remain to satisfy every wish of a Christian, and to overthrow every cavil of an infidel. Among other examples of this nature, I select the following:—

The case of the man who was born blind; who observed justly concerning it, 'Since the world began it was not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind.' No arguments are necessary to prove this to have been a miracle in the perfect sense; for every individual knows, that it is a total counteraction of the laws of nature, that clay, made of spittle and earth, and smeared upon the eyes, should restore sight to a person born blind. I select this case the rather, because it was formerly examined by the Jewish Sanhedrim, and evinced to have been real beyond every doubt.

The case of Christ's walking upon the water in the lake of Gennesaret, is another equally unexceptionable.

The cures which he wrought on lepers by his mere word and pleasure—cures which no other person has been able to perform by any means whatever, are instances of the same nature. Of the same nature also, are those cases in which he raised the dead to life: viz. the daughter of Jairus, the son of the widow of Nain, and Lazarus. That these persons were all really dead, there is not the least room to doubt; that they were all raised to life is certain.

I shall only add two instances more—one in which he fed four, and the other in which he fed five, thousand men, besides women and children, with a few loaves of barley-bread and a few little fishes. In this miracle creating power was immediately exerted, with a degree of evidence which nothing could resist, or rationally question.

That all these were miracles, according to the definition given above, must I think, be acknowledged without hesitation. Arguments to prove this point, therefore, would be superfluous.

That these facts really took place, and that the narration which conveys the knowledge of them to us is

true, has been so often, so clearly, and so unanswerably proved, that to attempt to argue this point here would seem a supererogatory labour. All of you have, or, easily can have, access to a numerous train of books containing this proof, elucidated with high advantage. I shall, therefore, consider this subject in a manner extremely summary, and calculated to exhibit little more than a mere synopsis of evidence pertaining to the subject. For this end I observe,

1. The facts were of such a nature as to be obvious, in the plainest manner, to the senses and understanding of all men possessed of common sense.

2. The marrators were eye and ear-witnesses of them.

3. They were performed in the most public manner; in the presence of multitudes, the greater part of whom were opposers of Christ.

4. They were generally believed; so generally, as to induce, customarily, the friends of the sick and distressed wherever Christ came to apply to him, with absolute confidence in his ability to relieve them: a fact which proves the universal conviction of the Jewish people at that time, that Christ certainly and continually wrought miracles. But this conviction could not have existed to any considerable extent, unless he had actually wrought miracles.

5. The apostles had no possible interest to deceive their fellow men. They neither gained, could gain, nor attempted to gain, any advantage in the present world by publishing this story. On the contrary, they suffered through life the loss of all things while declaring it, and the religion of which it was the foundation, to mankind. In the future world, as Jews, believing the Old Testament to be the word of God, they could expect nothing but perdition, as the reward of their useless imposture.

6. They were men whose integrity has not only been unimpeached, but is singular. This is evinced by the fact, that innumerable multitudes of their countrymen, and of many other nations, embraced the religion which they taught; committed to their guidance their souls, and their everlasting interests; hazarded and yielded all that they held dear in this world for the sake of this religion; and still esteemed these very men, through whose instrumentality they had been brought into those distresses, the very best of mankind. It is also proved by the farther fact, that in the ages immediately succeeding, as well as in those which have followed, their character has in this respect stood higher than that of any other men whatever.

7. Their narratives wear more marks of veracity than any other which the world can furnish.

8. The existence of these miracles is acknowledged by Jews and heathen, as well as Christians, and was wholly uncontradicted by either for fifteen hundred years.

9. These narratives were the genuine productions of those to whom they are ascribed. That they were written by these persons is unanswerably proved by the testimony of their contemporaries, and very early followers. That they have come down to us uncorrupted and unmutilated is certain; from the age and coincidence of numerous manuscripts; from the versions early made of them into various languages; from the almost innumerable quotations from them found in other books still extant; from the joint consent of orthodox Christians and heretics; from the impossibility of corrupting them with success; because of the frequency and constancy with which they were read in public and in private; because of the numerous copies very early diffused throughout all Christian countries; because of the profound religious veneration with which they were regarded; and because of the eagle-eyed watchfulness with which contending sects guarded every passage which furnished any inducement to corruption or mutilation.

No other history can boast of these, or one half of these powerful proofs of its genuineness and authenticity. If, then, we do not admit these narratives to be true, we must bid a final farewell to the admission of all historical testimony.

Mr Hume has written an Essay to disprove the existence of the miracles recorded in the gospel. In the introduction to this Essay he says, 'he flatters himself he has discovered an argument which will prove an everlasting check to all kinds of superstitious delusion.' When this Essay first appeared, it was received with universal triumph by Infidels, and with no small degree of alarm by timorous Christians. Since that time, however, it has been repeatedly answered. It was most triumphantly refuted by Dr Campbell, and completely exposed as a mere mass of sophistry, ingenious indeed, but shamefully disingenuous, and utterly destitute of solid argument, and real evidence.

After such ample refutation, it would be a useless employment for me to enter upon a formal examination of the scheme contained in this Essay. I shall, therefore, dismiss it with a few observations.

The great doctrine of Mr Hume is this: 'That according to the experience of man, all things uniformly exist agreeably to the laws of nature; that every instance of our experience is not only an evidence that the thing experienced exists in the manner which we perceive, but that all the following events of the same kind will also exist in the same manner.' This evidence he considers, also, as increased by every succeeding instance of the same experience. According to his scheme, therefore, the evidence that any thing which we perceive by our senses now exists, is made up of the present testimony of our senses, united with all former testimonies of the same nature to facts of the same kind. The existence of any fact, therefore, instead of being completely proved, is only partially proved, by the present testimony of our senses to its existence. According to this scheme, therefore, we who are present in this house know that ourselves and others are present, partly by seeing each other present at this time, and partly by remembering that we have been present heretofore. Of course, the first time we were thus present we had not the same assurance of this fact, as the second time. This assurance became still greater the third time; greater still the fourth; and thus has gone on accumulating strength in every succeeding instance. Every person, therefore, who has been here one hundred times, has a hundred times the evidence that he is now here, which he had when he was here the first time that he was then present; and I, who during twenty-four years have been present many thousand times, know that I am now here with a thousand degrees of evidence more than is possessed concerning the like fact by any other person who is present. A scheme of reasoning which conducts to such a manifest and gross absurdity must, one would

think, have been seen to be false by a man much less sagacious than Mr Hume.

Every man of common sense knows, and cannot avoid knowing, even at a glance, that all the evidence which we possess, or can possess, of the existence of any fact is furnished by the present testimony of our senses to that fact. Of course, every such man knows equally well, that no testimony of the senses to any preceding fact can affect a present fact in any manner whatever. The person who is now present in this house for the first time, has all the evidence that he is here, which is possessed by him who has been here a thousand times before. The evidence of the senses to any single fact is all the evidence of which that fact is ever capable. Nor can it be increased, even in the minutest degree, by the same evidence repeated concerning similar facts existing afterward, in any supposable number of instances. He who has crossed a ferry safely, never thought of crossing it a second time in order to know whether he was safe or not.

The influence which experience is intended by Mr Hume to have on our belief of the existence of future events, is of the same nature. Past experience is, by his scheme, the great criterion for determining on all that which is to come. An event which has already been witnessed a thousand times, is, in his view, to be expected again with a confidence exactly proportioned to this number. If an event, on the contrary, has not taken place, it is not to be at all expected; but regarded as incredible. Thus, if a ferry boat has crossed the ferry a thousand times without sinking, the probability is, as one thousand to nothing, that it will never sink hereafter.

The analogy here referred to is founded on the general maxim, that 'the same causes produce in the same circumstances the same effects.' The instances in which causes and circumstances apparently the same, are really such, are so few, that, in the actual state of things, it can answer Mr Hume's purpose in a very small number of cases only. Almost always the causes themselves, or the circumstances in which they operate, are in this mutable world so continually changed, that analogies founded on this maxim are rarely exact, and are, therefore, rarely safe rules for forming conclusions. All men are so sensible of this truth, that they easily and uniformly admit testimony as a sufficient proof of the fallacy of such conclusions. The smallest credible testimony will induce any man to believe that a ferry-boat has sunk, although it may before have crossed safely and regularly for many years. Much more do we always admit beforehand, that almost all events may come to pass, contrary in their nature and appearance to those which have already happened.

Mr Hume exhibits to me a full conviction in his own mind that his scheme was unsound, by the recourse which he was obliged to have to the disingenuous arts of controversy. Thus he at first uses the word experience, which is all-important to this controversy, to denote, what alone it truly denotes, the actual evidence of a man's own senses. In the progress of his essay, he soon diverts it into a sense entirely different; and means by it the experience of all who have preceded us. But of their experience we know nothing, except by testimony; the very thing to which Mr Hume professedly opposes what he calls experience. On this testimony, styled by him experience, he founds an argument upon which he places great reliance, to overthrow the evidence of the same testimony. Thus he declares miracles to be contrary to all experience; meaning by it the experience of all mankind, when he knew that a part of mankind had testified that they in their own experience had been witnesses of miracles; for this testimony was the very thing against which he wrote his essay.

Miracles he defines to be 'violations and transgressions of the laws of nature.' These words being regularly used to denote oppositions of moral beings to moral laws, and involving naturally the idea of turpitude, or wrong, were, I presume, used to attach to miracles an idea of some variation from that perfect moral conduct which we attribute to God.

Miracles, he also says, 'are contrary to our experience.' In this declaration he is unhappy. They may be truly said to be aside from our experience; but are in no sense contrary to it. All that can be said is, that we have not witnessed miracles. No man can say, that he has experienced any thing contrary to them.

Having made these observations, I proceed to examine Mr Hume's capital doctrine, that testimony cannot evince the reality of a miracle. His argument is this: the evidence that any thing exists in any given case, is exactly proportioned to the number of instances in which it is known to have happened before. If then an event have happened a thousand times, and the contrary event should afterward happen once: then there are one thousand degrees of evidence against the existence of this contrary event, and but one in its favour. We are, therefore, compelled, by a balance of nine hundred and ninety-nine degrees of evidence against nothing, to believe that this event has not taken place. We are here, as Mr Hume teaches, to weigh experience against experience, and to be governed in our decision by the preponderating weight. In this manner he determines, that our experience has in the number of instances furnished such a vast preponderation of evidence against the existence of a miracle, that if we were to witness it, we could not rationally believe it to have existed, until it had taken place as many times, and some more, than what he calls the contrary event. For example: if we have known a thousand deceased persons to have been buried, and none of them to have been raised from the grave; we cannot rationally believe a man to have been raised from the grave, although we saw him rise, conversed with him, and lived with him ever so many years afterward. Before we begin to believe that a person was raised from the dead, we must have seen, at least, one more person thus raised than the whole number who have been buried, and have not risen. Then, and not till then, we shall become possessed of one degree of evidence, that a person has been raised from the dead: the whole influence of all the preceding resurrections being to diminish, successively, the previously existing evidence against the fact, that a person has been raised from the dead. Our own experience of the existence of a miracle is thus not to be admitted as a proof of its existence. But as testimony is founded on experience, and is evidence of a less certain nature, it is clear, that what experience cannot prove can never be evinced by testimony.

This reasoning has a grave and specious appearance, but is plainly destitute of all solidity. Every man knows by his own experience, that the repetition of an

event contributes nothing to the proof or certainty of its existence. The proof of the existence of an event lies wholly in the testimony of our senses. When the event is, as we customarily say, repeated, that is, when another similar event takes place, our senses in the same manner prove to us the existence of this event. But the evidence which they give us of the second has no retrospective influence on the first, as the evidence given of the first has no influence on the second. In each instance the evidence is complete; nor can it be affected by any thing which may precede it, or succeed it. What is once seen and known, is as perfectly seen and known as it can be, and in the only manner in which it can be ever seen and known. If we were to see a man raised from the grave, we should know that he was thus raised, as perfectly as it could be known by us; nor would it make the least difference in the evidence or certainty of this fact, whether thousands, or none, were raised afterward.

In perfect accordance with these observations has been the conduct of mankind in every age and country. No tribunal of justice ever asked the question, whether a crime had been twice committed, in order to determine with the more certainty and better evidence, that it had been committed once. No evidence of this nature before any such tribunal was ever adduced, or considered as proper to be adduced, to evince the existence of any fact, or to disprove its existence. No individual ever thought of recurring to the testimony of his senses on a former occasion, to strengthen their evidence on a present occasion.

The man born blind (to apply this scheme directly to miracles) could not possibly feel the necessity or advantage of inquiring whether he had been restored to sight before, in order to determine that he had received it from the hands of Christ; or of asking the question whether he saw at any time before, to prove that he saw now. The leper who acquired his health by the command of Christ was as perfectly conscious of his restoration, as if he had been restored on twenty former occasions. All around him also, when they saw the scales fall off with which he had been incrusted, and the bloom of health return; when they beheld his activity renewed, and all the proofs of soundness exhibited to their eyes, perceived the cure as perfectly, as if they had been witnesses of one hundred preceding cures of the same nature.

What is true of these is equally true of all similar cases. Experience, therefore, is capable of completely proving the existence of a miracle.

What we experience we can declare, and declare exactly as it has happened. Were this always done, testimony would have exactly the same strength of evidence which experience is admitted to possess. It is not, however, always done. Errors, both intentional and unintentional, and those very numerous, accompany the declarations of men. Still the weight of testimony is very great; so great, that the conduct of almost all the important concerns of mankind is regulated entirely, as well as rationally, by the evidence which it contains. Should twelve men, known and proved to possess the uniform character of unimpeachable veracity, declare to one of us, independently (no one of them being acquainted with the fact that any other had made the same declaration), that they had seen in the midst of a public assembly a leper cleansed, and the white, loathsome crust of the leprosy fall off, and the bloom and vigour of health return at the command of a person publicly believed to have wrought hundreds of such miracles, and to be distinguished from all men by unexampled wisdom and holiness, every one of us would believe the testimony to be true. Especially should we receive their testimony, if we saw these very men endued with new and wonderful wisdom and holiness, professedly derived from the same person; forsaking a religion for which they had felt a bigoted attachment, embracing and teaching a religion wholly new; and in confirmation of this new religion professedly taught by God himself, working many miracles, forsaking all earthly enjoyments, voluntarily undergoing all earthly distresses, and finally yielding their lives to a violent death. A miracle, therefore, can be proved by testimony.

I have already pursued this subject farther than I intended in this Discourse. Some other considerations relative to it, I shall probably mention hereafter. At the present time, I will only remark farther, that Mr Hume confidently, but erroneously supposes a presumption to lie strongly against the existence of miracles. The presumption is wholly in favour of their existence. We know that innumerable miracles have taken place. The creation of the world is one immense complication of miraculous works, and the first beings of every sort were miraculous existences. As miracles were wrought here, so the analogy of the divine works, as well as the uniformity of the divine character, irresistibly compels us to believe that they will be wrought, wherever a sufficient occasion is presented. The illumination and reformation of mankind is a cause of this nature, existing in the highest degree. That God should work miracles to prove the truth and spread the influence of Christianity is, therefore, with the highest reason to be expected, especially as miracles are the most proper as well as most forcible of all proofs that a religion is derived from him.

III. *I shall now attempt to point out the importance of miracles.*

1. The importance of the miracles of Christ is manifest in the immediate benefit of those for whom they were wrought.

All the miracles of Christ were glorious acts of beneficence. In his own words, 'The blind received their sight, and the lame walked; the lepers were cleansed, and the deaf heard; the dead were rised up, and the poor had the gospel preached to them.' That acts of this general nature were of high importance to those for whom they were done; and that, multiplied as we are told they were, particularly by St John, they constituted a mass of beneficence incalculably interesting to the age and country in which they existed, will not admit of a doubt.

2. The miracles of Christ were of great importance to his character.

They were important, first, as proofs of power. Christ, for the wisest and best reasons, appeared as the son of a carpenter, and lived always in a state of general humiliation. But it was necessary also that his character, even in this world, should be distinguished by personal greatness. That distinction nothing could so effectually produce, as the power of controlling in this manner the

laws of nature, and suspending or counteracting in this manner the agency by which the affairs of this world are carried on. As Christ wrought miracles in his own name, he was thus proved to possess this power in himself, as an inherent energy. But how superior is this power to all that can be boasted by the greatest men who have ever lived? What conqueror would not cheerfully barter all the power in which he glories, for the control of wounds and diseases, of winds and waves, of life and death? This power exhibited Christ in the midst of all his humiliation as greater than any, and than all of the children of Adam, and surrounded his character with a splendour becoming his mission. How important, how necessary, this greatness was to Christ, as the Mediator between God and man, I need not illustrate.

3. The miracles of Christ were necessary as proofs of his benevolence.

Benevolence is proved by action. But no actions were ever equally proofs of benevolence with the miraculous actions of Christ, except his condescension, atonement, and intercession. It would not have been possible for Christ in any other manner to exhibit the same character with the same strength. No actions could have been equally beneficent. The good done was the most necessary and the most useful to those for whom it was done. Those for whom it was done were persons to whom it is usually least done, who most need it, to whom it is of the highest consequence, and who, therefore, as objects of Christ's beneficence, illustrate more clearly than any others could do, this excellence of his character. At the same time, it was beneficence accomplished by a person, possessed of stupendous power and greatness, manifested in the very communication of the good. Those who possess great power very rarely manifest, and therefore are justly believed very rarely to possess, an eminent degree of good-will. Intoxicated with their greatness, they are generally employed in displaying it to mankind, and in thus engrossing admiration and applause. From such persons Christ is gloriously distinguished, by employing his own unexampled power solely in communicating kindness to those around him.

In both these great particulars the miracles of Christ invest him with greatness and glory, to which there has been nothing parallel in the present world.

4. The miracles of Christ are of vast importance, as proofs of the divinity of his mission.

A miracle is an act of infinite power only, and is, therefore, a proof of the immediate agency of God. None but he can withhold, suspend, or counteract his agency exerted according to the laws of nature.

A miracle becomes a proof of the character or doctrine of him by whom it was wrought, by being professedly wrought for the confirmation of either. A miracle is the testimony of God. From the perfect veracity of God it irresistibly results, that he can never give, nor rationally be supposed to give, his testimony to any thing but truth. When, therefore, a miracle is wrought in confirmation of any thing, or as evidence of any thing, we know that that thing is true, because God has given to it his testimony. The miracles of Christ were wrought to prove that the mission and doctrine of Christ were from God. They were, therefore, certainly from God.

To this it may be objected, that miracles are asserted by the Scriptures themselves, to have been wrought in confirmation of falsehood; as, for example, by the magicians—the witch of Endor—and by Satan in the time of Christ's temptation.

If the magicians of Egypt wrought miracles, God wrought them, with a view to make the final triumph of his own cause in the hands of Moses more the object of public attention, and more striking to the view of mankind. This was done when the magicians themselves were put to silence, and forced to confess, that the works of Moses were accomplished by 'the finger of God.' But the truth is, the magicians wrought no miracles. All that they did was to busy themselves with 'their enchantments,' by which every man now knows that, although the weak and credulous may be deceived, miracles cannot possibly be accomplished. That this is the real amount of the history given by Moses, any sober man may, I think, be completely satisfied by reading Farmer's Treatise on miracles.

The witch of Endor neither wrought, nor expected to work, any miracle. This is clearly evident from her astonishment and alarm at the appearance of Samuel. Saul, who expected a miracle, beheld Samuel without any peculiar surprise; she, who expected none, with amazement and terror.

Satan is said by the evangelists to have taken our Saviour up into 'a very high mountain, and to have shown him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time.' The Greek word οικουμενης, here translated 'world,' very frequently signifies *land* or *country*, and ought to have been thus rendered here; the meaning being no other, than that Satan showed our Saviour the four tetrarchies, or kingdoms, comprised in the land of Judea. In this transaction it will not be pretended that there was any thing miraculous.

The doctrine, that miracles have been, or may be wrought in support of falsehood, has been incautiously adopted by several respectable divines, and they have taught us, that we are to try the evidence furnished by the miracle, by the nature of the doctrine which it was wrought to prove. This, I apprehend, is infinitely dishonourable to the character of Jehovah; for it supposes, that he may not only countenance, but establish, falsehood. At the same time, it is arguing in a circle. It is employing the doctrine to prove the miracle, and then the miracle to prove the doctrine. That the miracles of Christ were complete proof of his doctrine, is clearly evident from the words of Christ himself, when he declares concerning the Jews, that 'if he had not done among them such works as no other man did, they had not had sin: but that now they had no cloak for their sin.'

SERMON LXI.

RESURRECTION OF CHRIST.

—And killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses.—Acts iii. 15.

In the preceding Discourse, I made a number of general observations concerning the miracles of Christ. The subject which next offers itself to our view concerning this glorious person, is *his resurrection.* This interesting subject I propose now to examine with particular attention. Its importance in a System of Theology can scarcely need to be illustrated.

If Christ was raised from the dead, he was certainly the Messiah; or, in other words, whatever he declared himself to be. His doctrines, precepts, and life were all approved by God, possess divine authority, and demand, with the obligation of that authority, the faith and obedience of mankind. To prove this fact, therefore, is to prove, beyond a reasonable debate, the truth of the Christian system.

At the same time the arguments which prove the reality of this miracle, lend their whole force to the other miracles recorded in the gospel. For this reason, I have reserved most of the direct arguments in behalf of miracles for the present occasion.

In the context we are informed, that 'a certain man, lame from his mother's womb, who was now more than forty years old, and who had been carried and laid daily at the gate of the temple, called Beautiful, to receive alms of them that entered into the temple,' was cured of his lameness by the command of St Peter. So extraordinary an event astonished the Jews assembled to worship in the temple, and collected them in great numbers around Peter and John. Peter, observing their astonishment, addressed to them a pertinent and very pungent discourse, in which he informed them, that the Lord Jesus Christ, whom they had killed, and whom God had raised to life, had restored this lame man to soundness and strength. This proof of Christ's Messiahship, he made the foundation of an earnest and persuasive exhortation to them to repent of their sins, and turn to God. The efficacy of this discourse on those who heard it was wonderful. About five thousand men received it with the faith of the gospel, and were added unto the Lord.

In the text (the hinge, on which all this discourse of St Peter turns), he declares to the Jews the three following things:

1. That they had killed the prince of life:
2. That God had raised him from the dead: and,
3. That the apostle himself and his companions were witnesses of this wonderful event.

The first of these assertions has very rarely been doubted. I know of but a single instance in which it has been denied in form. Volney has made a number of silly observations, intended to persuade the world that Christ never existed; and that the history of him contained in the gospel is a fiction, compiled, with some variations and improvements, from the Hindoo tales concerning the god Creshnoo. I will not attempt a serious answer to such nonsense. Infidelity must be pitied, when it is driven to such fetches as this in order to support itself, and maintain its contest with Christianity.

The second assertion has been often disputed; as indeed, it must always be by every man who denies the revelation of the Scriptures, or the mission of Christ. It is the design of this Discourse to state the evidence concerning the great fact here declared, with candour and fairness. It demands no other manner of statement; as will, I trust, be sufficiently evinced in the prosecution of this design. As the proof of this fact is almost all furnished by the apostles and their companions, the witnesses appointed by Christ himself, the evidence alleged here will of course be principally derived from them. It will be unnecessary, therefore, to make the two last assertions of St Peter the subject of distinct heads of discourse.

If the apostles have not given us a true account concerning the resurrection of Christ, it must be,

I. *Because they were themselves deceived:* or,

II. *Because they intended to deceive others.*

For if they were not themselves deceived, but knew the truth, and have faithfully declared it in their writings, the plainest and most ignorant man cannot fail to discern, that Christ was certainly raised from the dead. That neither of these suppositions is just, I shall now attempt to prove.

I. *The apostles were not themselves deceived with regard to this fact.*

In support of this assertion I observe,

1. The fact is of such a nature, that they were competent judges whether it existed or not.

In the nature of the case, it is just as easy to determine whether a person once dead is afterwards alive, as to determine whether any man is living who has not been dead. A familiar instance will prove the justice of this assertion. Suppose a person, who was an entire stranger to us, should come into the family, in which we live: suppose he should reside in this family, eat and drink, sleep and wake, converse and act, with them exactly in the manner in which these things are done by us, and the rest of mankind: suppose him, farther, to enter into business in the manner of other men; to cultivate a farm; or manage causes at the bar; or practise medicine; or assume the office of a minister; and preach, visit, advise, and comfort, as is usually done in discharging the duties of this function; every one of us who witnessed these things would, beyond a doubt, know this stranger to be a living man, in the same manner and with the same certainty with which we know each other to be alive.

The proofs of life in this and every other case are the colour, the motions, the actions, and the speech of a living man. These we discern perfectly by our senses, under the general regulation of common sense. The proofs thus furnished are complete; and when

united, as in a living man they always are, they have never deceived, they can never deceive, any man who has the customary use of his senses.

As these are complete proofs of the facts in question, so they are always equally complete. The evidence which they contain admits of no gradations, but is always entire, always the same, and in every supposable case perfectly satisfactory. Nor is there an instance within our experience, nor an instance in the records of history, which has impaired this evidence at all, or rendered it capable of being even remotely suspected.

Were this evidence not entire in every instance, considered by itself; were it capable of being suspected in the smallest degree, we should be obliged when we met, conversed, or bargained with each other, to settle the question, whether we were mutually living beings. The farmer would be obliged, before he bought a piece of land of his neighbour, to settle by a formal investigation the question, whether he was about to buy it of a real man, or a phantom of the imagination. The judge, when called upon to try a prisoner, would in the same manner be compelled, before he began the trial, to decide, whether he had brought to him for adjudication a living being, or a spectre. The religious assembly would be equally necessitated to examine whether such an assembly was really gathered, and whether a real and living preacher was in the desk, or whether what seemed to be a preacher and a congregation were only the phantasms of a waking dream.

As these proofs are in every instance complete, so they are the only evidence of the fact in question. If then they can deceive us, we are left wholly without a remedy: for we have no other possible mode of coming to the knowledge of the fact.

To the case of the stranger, whom I have supposed, all these proofs have obviously a perfect application. We know as well as we can possibly know, we know beyond any possible doubt, that he is a living man. But we do not and cannot know, that he has never been dead, and afterwards raised to life. To prove this, we must be supplied with totally new evidence, derived from totally other sources, than any hitherto supposed to be furnished by him. The evidence, therefore, that he is a living man, is wholly independent of the fact that he has, or has not, been raised from the dead; and is, by itself, absolutely complete. If, then, we should be afterward informed, with evidence which could not be questioned, that this stranger had been actually dead, and buried, and had been afterward raised to life, the evidence which we had before received, that he was a living man, from the time when we first became acquainted with him, could not in the least degree be affected by the fact, that he had before been dead. The story of his death and resurrection we should undoubtedly admit, if we acted rationally, only with extreme slowness and caution, and upon decisive evidence. But no one of us would or could hesitate to believe the man, circumstanced as above, to be alive. Otherwise, it is plain we could not know that any man is alive; for all the proofs which can attend this subject actually attend it in the case supposed. If, therefore, the evidence can be justly doubted in one case, it can with equal propriety be doubted in all.

That the apostles possessed all the means of judging accurately concerning the existence and the nature of these proofs, cannot be denied. They were possessed of the common sense, and had the usual senses of man. No judges could be better qualified for this purpose. Had Newton, Bacon, or Aristotle, been employed in examining these proofs, they must have used exactly the same means of examination which were used by Peter and John. Had they summoned philosophy to their assistance, it could only have told them that it had no concern with cases of this nature.

2. The apostles were unprejudiced judges.

In proof of this assertion I observe,

(1.) That the apostles were not enthusiasts.

Enthusiasm is a persuasion that certain religious doctrines are true, derived from a peculiar strength of imagination and feeling, relying on internal suggestions supposed to come from God, and not relying on facts or arguments. In the whole history, preaching, and writings of the apostles, there is not the least appearance of this character. According to their own accounts of themselves (which in this case we readily believe, because in their view they were accounts of their defects,) they were slow of belief, even to weakness and criminality. For this conduct they were often and justly reproved by their Master; and, as we see in their writings, received his declarations with difficulty when their evidence was complete. Nor were they finally convinced, even when uninfluenced by this sceptical spirit, except by evidence of the best kind, to wit, that of facts. These also existed before their eyes and ears, in the presence of multitudes and enemies, who were equally convinced with themselves. Nor were they witnesses of such facts once, twice, or a few times only; but beheld them in an uninterrupted succession of several years. Had they not yielded to them in such circumstances, they must have been either idiots, or madmen.

Enthusiasts also appeal to their internal suggestions, as proof which plainly ought, in their view, to satisfy others. The apostles have never made such an appeal; nor demanded belief on any other considerations, except those which reason in the highest exercise perfectly approves.

Enthusiasts always boast of the leaders whom they professedly follow. The apostles, although following the most extraordinary leader ever seen in the world, have written the history of his life without a single panegyric, and recorded the unparalleled injustice, abuse, and cruelty which he suffered from his enemies, both in his life and death, with only a single direct censure of those enemies, contained in these words, 'For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.'

Enthusiasts always boast of their own excellences and attainments. The apostles had higher reason for such boasting than ever fell to the lot of men. They set up a new religion, and to the belief and profession of it converted a great part of mankind. They wrought, or were certainly believed to work, miracles of the most stupendous nature, rose to an influence which kings never possessed, and ruled more human beings than most monarchs have been able to claim as their subjects. To this height of influence they ascended also from the humble employments of fishing, collecting taxes, and making tents. How few of the human race, nay, who beside these very men, would not have become giddy in the ascent from such a lowly condition to such distinguished eminence? Yet Matthew records nothing of himself, except that he was a publican, that he followed

Christ, and that he once entertained him at his table. Mark and Luke do not even mention their own names. John says nothing of himself by way of commendation, unless that he was 'the disciple whom Jesus loved,' and this he expresses obscurely, in the most modest manner conceivable. Indeed, the subject of self-commendation seems never to have entered their thoughts.

There is, I acknowledge, one apparent exception to this remark in the writings of the apostles, I mean, St Paul's commendation of himself to the Corinthian church. This, however, is prefaced with a quotation from the Old Testament as the word of God, in which it is declared, that 'not he who commendeth himself is approved, but he whom the Lord commendeth.' He then pronounces boasting to be folly; and declares himself to be compelled to this folly by the Corinthian church, because some of its members had denied his apostleship; a denial fraught with the utmost mischief to the Christian cause, and particularly in that city. The things which he recites are calculated in the most perfect manner to establish his character as an apostle, and to refute the unworthy calumnies which they had uttered against him. At the same time they are accompanied with such proofs of ingenuousness, truth, and modesty, as leave irresistibly on the mind a stronger impression of these attributes in St Paul, than we could have felt, if he had not written this passage. Let it be remembered, that this is the conduct of a person who had converted half the civilized world.

In the mean time, the apostles, in the most frank, artless, and faithful manner possible, do that which enthusiasts never do at all; that is, they record their own mistakes, follies and faults, and those of very serious magnitude, acknowledged to be such by themselves, and severely censured as such by their Master. No example of this nature can be found in the whole history of enthusiasm, and no other such example in the whole history of man. Enthusiasm, is always a proud, vain, boasting spirit, founded in the belief that the enthusiast is the subject of immediate and extraordinary communications from heaven, and, therefore, designated by God as his peculiar favourite; raised of course above the human level; and irresistibly prompted to publish on every occasion, this peculiar testimony of heaven to its pre-eminent worth, and to unfold to the view of all around it a distinction too flattering to be concealed.

Enthusiasts also, in all their preaching and conversation on religious subjects, pour out with eagerness the dictates of passion and imagination, and never attempt to avail themselves of the facts or arguments on which reason delights to rest. Strong pictures, vehement effusions of passion, violent exclamations, loudly vociferated, and imperiously enjoined as objects of implicit faith and obedience, constitute the substance and the sum of their addresses to mankind. They themselves believe because they believe, and know because they know. Their conviction, instead of being, as it ought to be, the result of evidence, is the result of feeling merely. If you attempt to persuade them that they are in an error by reasoning, facts, and proofs, they regard you with a mixture of pity and contempt, for weakly opposing your twilight probabilities to their noon-day certainty, and for preposterously labouring to illumine the sun with a taper.

How contrary is all this to the conduct of the apostles. When a proof of their mission or doctrine was demanded of them, they appealed instantly and invariably to arguments, facts, and miracles. These convinced mankind then, and produce the same conviction now. The lapse of seventeen centuries has detected in them no error, and in no degree enfeebled their strength. Their discourses were then, and are now, the most rational, noble, and satisfactory discourses on moral and religious subjects ever witnessed by mankind. There is not an instance in them all, in which belief is demanded on any other grounds than these, and on these grounds it is always rightfully demanded. But on these grounds it is never demanded by enthusiasts. There is not in the world a stronger contrast to the preaching of enthusiasts, than that of Christ and his apostles.

2. The apostles were unprejudiced judges of this fact, because every thing respecting it contradicted their favourite prejudices.

In common with their countrymen, they expected a conquering, reigning, glorious Messiah, who was to subdue and control all the nations of men. With him, also, they themselves expected to conquer and reign, together with the rest of the Jews, as princes and nobles in the splendid earthly court of this temporal Messiah. No expectation ever flattered the predominant passions of men so powerfully as this. It was the source of almost all their follies and faults, and, in spite of Christ's instructions and their piety, it broke out on every occasion, and clung to them with immovable adherence till the day of Pentecost. For just at the moment of Christ's ascension, ten days only before that festival, they asked him, 'Lord, wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?'

They did not and could not believe that he would die. After he had predicted his death at five or six different times in as plain language as can be used, St John informs us, that 'they understood not that saying,' and that it was hidden from them.' Peter also, when Christ had uttered a prediction of this nature, understanding the meaning of the prediction, took upon himself the office of rebuking his Master, and said, 'Be it far from thee, Lord; this shall not be unto thee.'

Nor do they appear to have believed that he would live again. They plainly disbelieved all the testimonies of his resurrection, except that of their own eyes and ears; and regarded the accounts of their companions, whom on all other occasions they esteemed persons of unstained veracity, 'as idle tales.' It may seem strange that, believing as they did implicitly the declarations and Messiahship of their Master, they should not believe that he would rise again, after his various prophecies concerning that event. But we are to remember that his death had violated all their prejudices, blasted all their fond hopes, and buried them in gloom and despondency, The Jews customarily, whenever passages of Scripture admitted of no interpretation accordant with their established opinions, resolved the difficulty, or rather removed it, by pronouncing the passage to be mysterious. The apostles in all probability had recourse to the same expedient to reconcile the predictions of Christ with that train of facts whose future existence they believed; and chose rather not to understand the true import of his predictions, plain as it was, than to admit an interpretation of them, which opposed all their riveted opinions. At the same time, melancholy as were their circumstances and their feelings, they were

ill fitted for the business of commenting on the predictions of Christ, and seem not to have made even an attempt to gain the conviction which would so effectually have relieved their distresses. When, therefore, they had evidence of his resurrection sufficient to convince any reasonable person, they still disbelieved, and were hardly brought to admit the testimony of their own eyes and ears. After various reports of his resurrection from those who had seen him; reports so satisfactory, that Christ himself afterward 'upbraided them with their unbelief, and hardness of heart,' because they had not believed them who had seen him after he was risen; 'Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and said, Peace be unto you. But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit. He then said unto them, Why are ye troubled, and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet; that it is I myself. Handle me, and see: for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have. And when he had thus spoken, he showed them his hands and his feet.' You are to remember, that 'the print of the nails,' by which he was fastened to the cross, was still perfectly visible both in his hands and feet. These were, therefore, appealed to by Christ, because they thus furnished evidence 'that it was he himself,' which no man would counterfeit. Still 'they believed not for joy, and wondered.' To remove this doubt, which, like most that preceded it, was the result of feeling, and not of judgment, he farther said to them 'Have ye here any meat?' In answer to this inquiry, 'they gave him a peace of a broiled fish, and of a honey-comb. And he took it, and did eat before them.' At the end of this process only did they entirely believe that he was risen from the dead.

From this story, written after they had all in the fullest manner realized his resurrection, and therefore intended severely to censure their own unbelief; from this story, written in a manner so perfectly artless and natural, and with circumstances of such nice discrimination as the writer could not have invented; and on both these accounts carrying with it the clearest evidence of its truth, we have the strongest proof that the apostles were 'slow of heart to believe' the resurrection of Christ. Their assent was reluctant, and gradual; such as is always yielded to evidence which contradicts prejudices strongly imbibed.

I have observed, that the story of St Luke is written in a manner perfectly artless and natural, and with circumstances of such nice discrimination as the writer could not have devised. It is extremely natural to the human mind in a state of despondency, either not to believe at all, or to believe with extreme difficulty, those things which would remove its despondency. The good in question seems too great to be realized, and therefore too improbable even to be hoped. The apostles for this reason disbelieved at first; and for the same reason continued their disbelief after Christ stood in the midst of them, and discovered himself to their eyes and ears. A strong and mixed emotion of pleasure and surprise partially overwhelmed their reason, and prolonged their doubts, in spite of the clearest evidence. Never was the nature of man exhibited with more exactness, or with nicer discrimination, than in this remarkable declaration, 'They believed not for joy, and wondered.'

From these observations it is, if I mistake not, unanswerably evident, that the prejudices of the apostles were all directed against the resurrection of Christ, and that they were not inclined to admit this fact by any bias in its favour.

3. The apostles had sufficient means and opportunities of judging whether Christ was raised from the dead.

He appeared to some or other of them, or their companions eleven times distinctly recorded in the Scriptures. He appeared to Mary Magdalene; to her companions with her; to Peter; to the disciples going to Emmaus; to James; to the ten apostles, Thomas not being present; to the eleven, Thomas being present; to the apostles again at the sea of Tiberias; to above five hundred brethren at once; to the apostles before, and during, his ascension; and finally to St Paul; in his way to Damascus. Besides these instances, he appeared several times afterward to St Paul; and, as St Luke informs us, 'showed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs; being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God,' It ought to be particularly remembered, that in nine of the instances mentioned above, he appeared to the apostles themselves; in several instances to many, or all of them; and once to more than five hundred disciples together. Should we then admit such an illusion of the senses as infidels sometimes contend for to be possible, and mankind to be capable of being deceived by it in such degrees as they urge; still the improbability must, even according to their own principles, be very great, that two persons should, at the same time, experience exactly the same illusion concerning the same object, and concerning so many circumstances attending it. Of a fact of this kind history furnishes no record, and conversation no testimony. All the extraordinary and inexplicable things actually testified in which such illusions may be supposed to have taken place, have invariably existed, if they existed at all, to the view of one person only. No instance can be mentioned in which two unexceptionable witnesses have testified to the same illusion, at the same time, concerning the same thing. Far more improbable is it that three persons should thus experience the same illusion. When we raise this number to eleven, the improbability becomes incalculable; and when to five hundred, it transcends all limits.

The improbability is also enhanced without measure, by the repetition of this fact in so many instances, to so many persons, together with all the circumstances, by which it was attended. But when we remember, that Christ not only appeared, but eat, drank, walked, and conversed with them, at so many different times, through forty days, and declared to them a great number of divine truths concerning the kingdom of God, the improbability ceases, and is changed into an impossibility. The apostles and their companions had here all the evidence that Christ was living, which they had of the life of each other; all the evidence which we have, that those around us, with whom we have daily intercourse, are alive. If, then, the apostles could be deceived with respect to the fact that Christ was living, they could with the same ease, be equally deceived with respect to the life of each other. With the same ease can we be equally deceived in our belief, that men whom we see daily, with whom we converse, and with whom we act, are living men. A stranger who has visited us, continued with us forty days, conversed with us, and united

with us in eating, drinking, and the serious business of life, must, on the same grounds, be denied or doubted to be a living man, and supposed to be a spectre, a phantom of the imagination, an illusion of the senses, or an inhabitant of a dream. To this length the principles carry us, on which alone we can deny that the apostles had perfect evidence that Christ was alive after his death. He who can admit these principles, has renounced the evidence of his senses; and ought from motives of consistency, to believe a man to be a post, as readily as to believe him to be a man.

SERMON LXII.

RESURRECTION OF CHRIST.

—And killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead, whereof we are witnesses.—Acts iii. 15.

In the preceding discourse I observed, that in this passage St Peter declares to the Jews the three following things:

I. *That they had killed the Prince of life:*

II. *That God had raised him from the dead:* and

III. *That the apostle himself, and his companions, were witnesses of these facts.*

The first of these assertions, I observed, had been scarcely controverted, and therefore needed no discussion from me. To establish the second, I remarked, was indispensable to a System of Christian Theology, as being the great point on which such a system must depend; and therefore proposed it as the immediate object of that Discourse. The evidence of its truth, I farther observed, was chiefly furnished by the apostles and their companions. This evidence, therefore, I proposed to state, and to show, that it was a proper and unexceptionable object of reliance for the truth of the important fact declared in the text.

In pursuance of this design I observed, that if Christ was not raised from the dead, the apostles were either themselves deceived, or have of design deceived others. That they themselves were not deceived, I endeavoured to prove in that Discourse; and shall now attempt to show,

II. *That they have not deceived others.*

By this you will understand, that they have not deceived others of design: all other deceptions having been considered under the former head.

In support of this assertion I observe,

1. That the known probity of the apostles places them beyond every reasonable suspicion of intentional deception.

The probity of the apostles stands on higher ground, and has been regarded with higher confidence by mankind, than that of any other men whatever. This has been so often evinced, and with arguments so plainly unanswerable, that it would be probably thought tedious to expatiate on the subject at the present time. Suffice it then to say, that the histories which they have given us of our Saviour's life, contain more internal and decisive proofs of sincerity than any other human writings; that they recite facts, and utter doctrines, with a simplicity and artlessness unequalled; that their story both as to the subject, and as to the manner, is such, as no impostor could or would tell; that the character of Christ is drawn with excellences so great, combined with features so distinctive, as to prove it beyond the power of human invention, and much more beyond the invention of such humble, uneducated men; that, greatly as they respected him, horrible as were the injuries which he received from his enemies, gross and abominable as was the character of those enemies, and intensely as the apostles abhorred both them and their conduct, they have recited his whole story without a single panegyrical remark concerning him, and without a single testimony of resentment, unkindness, or prejudice against them. Let it be remembered, also, that no impostor would have ever thought of terminating his account concerning a favourite and splendid character with the history of his trial and crucifixion as a malefactor; that no impostor, if we were to suppose him to have done this, would have prefaced his history with a recital of his own disbelief that this favourite was to die; especially after he had predicted his death many times, in the plainest language; that no impostor would have recorded his own ignorance and disbelief of the true character, mission, and doctrines of the hero of his story; or his severe and stinging reproofs of his follies and faults, and all this without disguise or palliation; that the doctrines and precepts contained in the gospel are beyond the discovery of any men, particularly of such men; that, if an impostor could discover them, he could never have enjoined them on mankind, because of their spotless purity and perfect excellence; that every impostor must, of course, have blended with the better doctrines and precepts which he thought proper to deliver, others sufficiently licentious to countenance, or at least to palliate, his own crimes; that the end, uniformly proposed and intensely pursued in the gospel, viz. the amendment of the human character, is such as no impostor would be willing to promote; that four impostors, writing independently, or without concert, could not possibly have exhibited the same accordance of facts, nor the same perfect harmony of doctrines; and that the character of the apostles was, in their own age, not only unimpeached, but considered as superior to that of all other virtuous men. To these proofs of integrity ought to be added that decisive one, their cheerful relinquishment of all the pleasures of this life, and their voluntary endurance of all its distresses, and, in the end, their voluntary surrender of life itself, for the sake of the religion which they professed, and of the Master whom they served.

That men who gave so many efficacious and uniform proofs of integrity, should conspire to palm upon mankind this gross imposition is too replete with absurdity to be admitted by any sober man.

2. The apostles had no interest in attempting to deceive mankind with respect to this event.

In order to render the imposition profitable to its authors, it was necessary that it should be believed; and, to gain credit elsewhere, it must first gain credit where it was originally published. The story was first declared to the Jewish nation; and without a single hope or thought of spreading it among other nations. It was for twelve years confined to Jews only. Now, let me ask, what inducement had the apostles to believe that a tale, so incredible in itself, would be received by this people? a tale concerning the resurrection of a crucified malefactor; for such, if false, must the story have been; and such, although true, it was believed to be by the Jews. By them Christ was regarded as an impostor, as a blasphemer of God, as an impious pretender to the Messiahship, and an impious opposer of a religion unquestionably derived from heaven. Yet with Jews this publication was to begin, and so far as they knew, to end; Jews beyond example bigoted to their own religion, and furious in their hostility to every other; the bitter persecutors of Christ, while he lived, and the accusers and witnesses who caused his death. What hope could any but a madman entertain that among such a people, such a story could gain even a solitary admission? To give credit to this story, was in a Jew no other than to yield up his religion, his bigotry, his connexion with the Jewish church, his interest in the public opinion of his countrymen, and in the protection of its government. It was to expose his possessions, his family, and his life, to become excommunicated, outlawed, and an outcast from society, and to place himself within the reach of all the dreadful threatenings contained in the law of Moses. At the same time, it was to acknowledge himself a murderer, a murderer of the Messiah, a murderer of the Son of God; to confess, that he had found this glorious person in the son of a carpenter; in a man, emphatically styled by him and his countrymen, 'a friend of publicans and sinners; a gluttonous man, and a wine-bibber.' It was, also, to renounce all his bright and dawning hopes of the deliverance of himself and his nation from Roman servitude, by that mighty Prince, with whom they were all in hourly expectation of triumphing and reigning over every nation on earth. All this, also, was to be done without any good to balance these mighty evils, either in hand or in reversion. Never was there a field so unpromising to the talents or the efforts of an impostor.

At the same time, this tale was to be told by the followers of the person professedly raised, and the enemies of those to whom it was told; by men, poor, ignorant, and despised, without friends, and without influence; abhorred by their countrymen, and regarded as apostates from their religion. Never were persons so ill qualified for successful efforts at imposition. Suppose such a story were now to be told. None of these embarrassments, it is evident, would attend the recital, except those which arise out of the story itself. The narrators would lie originally under no public odium. The subject would be obnoxious to no peculiar prejudice. The reception of it would be followed by no peculiar sacrifices; by no civil or religious disqualifications; by no loss of property, reputation, safety, or even quiet. How plain is it, that such a story, if false, could not even here produce any other effect but pity, contempt, and ridicule? To persuade others to believe it, is in the nature of the case a thing so hopeless and desperate, that no impostor has been found weak, rash, or impudent enough to think of making the attempt. But, of all persons on earth, none were ever more disadvantageously situated to propagate such a story, than the apostles. The Jews were certainly less inclined to believe this story than the apostles themselves. They refused to believe it, long after very sufficient evidence had been furnished them of its truth. The Jews would certainly require evidence still more ample. This the apostles could not but know, and therefore must have been hopeless of persuading them to believe it, unless themselves were able to support it by such evidence. But this evidence could never be produced in support of a falsehood.

If the story did not gain belief, the attempt to spread it could be of no possible use to the apostles. As, then, they could not entertain a single hope of inducing the Jews to believe it, they could have no possible inducement to attempt to palm it upon the Jews. But if the Jews did not believe it, it could never be received by any other people. Jews, in great numbers, were scattered over all the countries in which the apostles could ever hope or wish to spread the story. These Jews carried on a continual correspondence with those at Jerusalem, and in immense numbers visited that city every year. If, then, the story were not believed at Jerusalem, this fact would be perfectly well known wherever Jews resided. But the knowledge that the story gained no credit at Jerusalem, the place where the event had professedly existed, would effectually prevent it from gaining the least credit in any other place. To the spot, where the event was said to exist, all thinking men would have recourse, to learn the true state of the evidence concerning it. If it were there found insufficient, it would at once be pronounced to be insufficient by all men. The gospel was, probably, directed by Christ to be preached first at Jerusalem and in Judea, for this as one great reason, that the story of his resurrection, on which his whole scheme depended, being established there in the immovable belief of multitudes, might be successfully and irresistibly published in other countries.

But, whatever advantages the apostles could derive, or expect to derive from their imposture (if it were one,) must be wholly derived from persuading mankind to believe this story. They themselves perfectly understood, and frankly declared to mankind, that their whole system turned on this single hinge. 'If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain,' is the constant language of all which they said. For proof of this you need only examine the sermons of St Peter and St Paul, recorded in the Acts of the Apostles. Unless this fact were established, therefore, they could not hope for a single follower, nor for the smallest reward. But of the establishment of this fact among either Jews or Gentiles, I flatter myself I have shown they could not, in the existing circumstances, form even the remotest hope. They had not, therefore, the smallest interest in making the attempt.

3. They were assured, with absolute certainty, of suffering every imaginable disadvantage.

All the losses and injuries mentioned under the preceding head, must have stared them in the face at the beginning. At every step of their progress new evils could not fail to arise, and those of the most distressing kind. Had they been blind enough not to have perceived their miserable destiny, before they commenced

this wretched work of deception, the first attempt could not fail to produce the most ample conviction; and to this every new attempt would add fresh proof. The scourge, the prison, and the cross, have always proved effectual antidotes to imposition. All other dishonest men, are, equally with Voltaire, no friends to martyrdom. Had the apostles possessed the same character, they would have soon been wearied of the sufferings which they everywhere underwent. Everywhere they were hated, calumniated, despised, hunted from city to city, thrust into prison, scourged, stoned, and crucified. For what were all these excruciating sufferings endured? Gain, honour, and pleasure are the only gods to which impostors bow. But of these the apostles acquired, and plainly laboured to acquire, neither. What, then, was the end for which they suffered? Let the infidel answer this question.

As they gained nothing, and lost every thing in the present world, so it is certain that they must expect to gain nothing, and suffer every thing, in the world to come. That the Old Testament was the word of God, they certainly believed without a single doubt. But, in this book, lying is exhibited as a supreme object of the divine abhorrence, and the scriptural threatenings. From the invention and propagation of this falsehood, therefore, they could expect nothing hereafter, but the severest effusions of the anger of God.

For what, then, was all this loss, danger, and suffering incurred? For the privilege of telling an extravagant and incredible story to mankind, and of founding on it a series of exhortations to repentance, faith, and holiness; to the renunciation of sin and the universal exercise of piety, justice, truth, and kindness; to the practice of all that conduct which common sense has ever pronounced to be the duty, honour, and happiness of man, and the avoidance of all that which it has ever declared to be his guilt, debasement, and misery. Such an end was never even wished, much less seriously proposed, by an impostor.

At the same time, they lived as no impostors ever lived, and were able to say to their converts, with a full assurance of finding a cordial belief of the declaration, 'Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily, and justly, and unblamably, we behaved ourselves among you that believe.' That this was their true character is certain, from the concurrent testimony of all antiquity. Had they not nobly recorded their own faults, there is not the least reason to believe that a single stain would have ever rested on their character.

If, then, the apostles invented this story, they invented it without the remotest hope or prospect of making it believed; a thing which was never done by an impostor: propagated it without any interest, without any hope of gain, honour, power, or pleasure; the only object by which impostors were ever allured; and with losses and sufferings, which no impostor ever voluntarily underwent; proposed as their only end, or at least only end which has ever been discovered to mankind, an object which no impostor ever pursued, or even wished; and during their whole progress through life, lived so as no impostor ever lived, and so as to be the most perfect contrast ever exhibited by men to the whole character of imposition.

III. *The apostles were not deceived, and did not deceive others with regard to this fact; but the fact was real.*

In support of this declaration I observe,

1. That if Christ was not raised from the dead, it could certainly have been proved.

Christ was put to death by the Roman governor, at the instigation of the government and nation of the Jews. His body was in their hands, and entirely under their control. They knew that he had predicted his resurrection. They knew that, if he should rise, or should be believed to have risen, his cause would gain more by this fact, or by this belief, than by every thing which he had taught or done during his life. All this they declared to Pilate in form, for the express purpose of guarding against this dreadful evil. 'Now the next day that followed the day of the preparation,' says St Matthew, 'the chief priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate, saying, sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again. Command therefore, that the sepulchre be made fast, until the third day; lest his disciples come by night, and steal him away; and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead. So the last error shall be worse than the first. Pilate said unto them, Ye have a watch: go your way; make it as sure as you can. So they went, and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone and setting a watch.' In this remarkable passage we have a distinct account of their knowledge of Christ's prediction, that he should rise on the third day; of their dread of the prevalence of a future belief that he had risen; of their conviction that this belief would advance his cause more than all his preaching, life, and miracles; and their earnest request to the governor, that effectual measures might be taken to prevent this peculiar evil. We are farther informed, that the governor, in compliance with their fears and their wishes, after reminding them that they had a watch or guard under their control, directed them, with a communication of unlimited authority, 'to make the sepulchre as sure as they could.' Finally, we are informed that, with this power in their hands, 'They went their way, and made the sepulchre sure;' that is, according to their own judgment; and we are completely assured that such eagle-eyed and bitter enemies, under the influence of such apprehensions, left no precaution untried, to secure themselves against the danger which they dreaded. Accordingly, the evangelist informs us, that they not only set a guard at the sepulchre, which we may be certain was more than sufficient, but also 'set a seal upon the stone which was rolled to it for a door;' in order to produce complete and universal conviction that Christ was not raised, because the seal was unbroken.

But, notwithstanding all these precautions, thus carefully taken, the body was missing. In this great fact the Sanhedrim and the apostles perfectly agree: it cannot therefore be questioned. The Sanhedrim would, otherwise, have certainly produced it; and thus detected the falsehood of the apostles' declaration that he was risen from the dead, and prevented it from gaining credit among the Jews.

There are but two ways in which it could be missing. It was taken away, or it was raised. If it was taken away, it was undoubtedly taken by the apostles. But this was not true; because,

(1.) They had no interest in taking it away.

Christ had declared that he should rise from the dead. The mere taking away of his body, instead of evincing the truth of this prediction to the apostles themselves,

would have been an unanswerable proof of its falsehood; and, by consequence, of the falsehood of him who uttered it. If the prediction were unfulfilled, of which the presence of his dead body would have been the proper and complete proof, Christ was a false prophet, an impostor. Of course, the apostles could expect no possible advantage from following him, and plainly saw themselves exposed to every disadvantage. They had, therefore, no conceivable inducement to take away his body, nor even to accept it, if it had been offered to them freely. This, it is believed, has been sufficiently evinced under a former head.

To others they could never produce the body of Christ as evidence, either of his sincerity, or their own; for it would have completely destroyed the character of both. The only end, therefore, which the theft could answer, would have been to gain some credit to the story of his resurrection, from the fact that his body was missing. When we consider that the body was perfectly in the power of their enemies, the Jewish Sanhedrim, it must be acknowledged, that an argument of some force might be drawn from this fact in favour of Christ's resurrection. At the same time, it is evident that this single fact would have been wholly insufficient to establish the point; and the apostles, in attempting to palm the story on the world, would have engaged in a cause wholly desperate. We demand very important additional proof, derived from other sources, to establish this point in our own minds. The necessity of such proof the apostles could not but have seen, with, at least, as much certainty as ourselves; they could, therefore, never have been willing to take it away for this purpose.

(2.) The apostles durst not take away the body of Christ.

They knew that a guard was placed at the sepulchre, a numerous and amply sufficient band of Roman soldiers. They themselves were few, friendless, and discouraged; in hourly expectation of being arrested and put to death, as followers of Christ; and voluntarily confined to a solitary chamber, for fear of being either crucified or stoned. The time was that of the Passover, when Jerusalem customarily contained more than a million of people. It was the time of the full moon. The sepulchre was just without the walls of the city, and exposed therefore to continual inspection. How could a body of men, who had just before fled from a similar guard, notwithstanding their Master was present with them, venture to attack this band of armed soldiers, for the purpose of removing the body of Christ from the sepulchre? How, especially, could they make this attempt, when they had nothing to gain; and when they must become guilty of rebelling against the Roman government; and, if they escaped death from the hands of the soldiers, were exposed to this evil in a much more terrible form?

(3.) The apostles, with respect to this subject, had formed no plan; and entertained no expectations and no hopes.

They disbelieved the story of his resurrection, when asserted by the most unsuspicious witnesses, his female disciples, and their own companions. Nay, they disbelieved it after he had appeared several times; when they had seen and known that his body was gone from the sepulchre, and even when he had appeared to themselves. The truth is, they were completely discouraged and broken-hearted. The death of Christ had violated all their prejudices, destroyed their fondest hopes, and sunk their spirits in the dust. Nor was any expedient less fitted to revive their hopes, than the wretched cheat imputed to them by their enemies.

(4.) The story told concerning this subject by the Sanhedrim, and thoughtlessly believed by the great body of the Jews even to the present time, is itself strong evidence of the truth of the assertion which I am maintaining.

This story, as you well know, is, that the disciples stole the body of Christ, while the guards were asleep. I will not here insist on the ridiculousness of this story, but will only consider it as the real account given by the Sanhedrim concerning the disappearing of the body from the sepulchre. This sagacious collection of men, sharpened into extreme cunning by the constant management of human affairs in very difficult times, thought it proper to tell the world this story, as the best account which they could give of the subject. To what straits must their ingenuity have been driven, when they were compelled to such a resort? Every man knows that the guards would, of their own accord, have never ventured upon such a narration; for it would have been the infallible cause of their condemnation to death. It is scarcely possible that a Roman sentinel should acknowledge himself to have slept upon his post; nor is it much more possible, that a Jewish senate should, unless under extreme pressure of circumstances, publicly accord with so contemptible a tale. Had that senate been possessed of any truth which would at all have favoured their designs, they would have never disgraced their character by acknowledging their reliance, and persuading their countrymen to rely, on the testimony of a heathen guard, nor of any other men, concerning what was done when they were asleep. Had truth favoured their wishes in any manner, neither the senate nor the people of the Jews would have rested themselves, in a case of this consequence, nor indeed in any case, upon a story, which carried with it its own refutation.

2. The Jews in great numbers believed the resurrection of Christ.

The Jews most ardently hated Christ and his apostles. Him they persecuted throughout his public ministry, and at the end of it nailed him to the cross. The apostles directly charged them with these enormous crimes, particularly in this very sermon of St Peter, from which I have taken my text. On this ground they urged them to repentance; asserting always before them, that he had risen from the dead. Clear and unanswerable evidence, as I have already remarked, is necessary to convince the most candid man of so wonderful an event. But to convince Jews, that the man whom they had hated and crucified, was risen from the dead—Jews, so opposed to his character, mission, and doctrines—Jews, who in admitting his resurrection, acknowledged themselves to have sinned in a manner unparalleled—demanded singular evidence. Yet three thousand of these Jews believed the apostles' declaration of this fact on the day of Pentecost, fifty days only after the crucifixion. Within a few days more, five thousand others adopted the same belief, and soon afterward very great multitudes.

The evidence of their faith is complete. All these men publicly professed it, and, in spite of their former prejudices and their furious hatred, submitted them-

selves to Christ, as the Messiah. This crucified man they acknowledged in that glorious character, and yielded themselves to him as the Son of God. Judaism, to which they had been attached with such bigotry, they now publicly renounced; and gave up their ceremonious worship, their sabbath, temple, priests, and sacraments; adopting in their stead the Christian worship, sabbath, and sacraments; submitting themselves to the ministers of the gospel; and embracing a new life, a life of real holiness, to them in the highest degree self-denying and difficult. A great number of them also sold their possessions, and distributed the avails of them in mere charity to their Christian, brethren. Beyond this, these converts voluntarily forsook their friends, their interests, and their hopes, and underwent a series of dreadful sufferings, terminating not unfrequently in a violent death.

To persuade men to renounce their religion, especially bigoted men, and to exchange a sinful life for a virtuous one, is undoubtedly as hard a task as was ever assigned to the human mind; especially when that religion contravenes all the selfishness of man. Jews now exist in great numbers, and have existed ever since the crucifixion of Christ. They hold the same character, and the same religion. Christianity, the religion to which they are to be converted, is also the same. But more Jews were made converts to the religion of Christ by these two sermons of St Peter, than have embraced it within the last sixteen hundred years. It is therefore certain, that the apostles possessed advantages for this end, which their followers have not possessed; and these advantages, independently of miracles, consisted, in a great measure at least, in the peculiar circumstances of their hearers. They knew and remembered the life, preaching, and miracles of Christ, and the wonderful events which attended his death. These, as is obvious from the declaration of St Luke, greatly affected their minds. 'And all the people,' says the evangelist, 'that came together to that sight, beholding the things that were done, smote their breasts, and returned.' The guards, also, went into the city, and told the story of the descent of the 'angel,' who 'rolled away the stone from the sepulchre,' the awful circumstances by which he was attended, and the resurrection of Christ.* When to these things were added the miraculous events of the day of Pentecost, and the marvellous cure of the lame man at the Beautiful gate of the temple, these Jews yielded up their prejudices, and submitted to truths which they could no longer resist. The facts here specified were, in the hands of the Spirit of grace, the means by which such multitudes of enemies were converted to the faith of the gospel.

3. The Sanhedrim believed the resurrection of Christ.

In Acts iv. we are informed, that the Sanhedrim had the apostles brought before them for preaching in the name of Christ the doctrines of Christianity, and for affirming that Christ was risen from the dead. Had they believed that the apostles stole away the body of Christ, they would now certainly have charged them with this gross fraud, this direct rebellion against the Roman and Jewish government; and, unless they could have cleared themselves of the crime, would have punished them for it with at least due severity. Such punishment would not only have been just but it had now become necessary for the Sanhedrim to inflict it, in order to save their own reputation. They had originated the story, and were now under the strongest inducements to support it. Yet they did not even mention the subject; but contented themselves with commanding them to preach no more in the name of Christ.

In Acts v. we are told, that the whole body of the apostles were brought before them again, for continuing to preach in opposition to this command. On this occasion also they kept a profound silence concerning the theft, which they had originally attributed to the apostles; but charged them with disobedience to their former injunctions. In this charge are contained the following remarkable words: 'Did we not straitly command you, that ye should not teach in this name? and behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us.' To bring the blood of one person upon another, is phraseology frequently used in the Bible. In fifteen* different instances in which we find it there, it has but a single meaning; viz. to bring the guilt of contributing to the death of a person, or the guilt of murder, upon another person. When it is said, 'His blood shall be upon his own head;' it is clearly intended, that the guilt of his death shall be upon himself. When, therefore, the Sanhedrim accuse the apostles of attempting to bring the blood of Christ upon them, they accuse them of an intention to bring upon them the guilt of shedding his blood; this being the only meaning of such phraseology in the Scriptures.

Should any doubt remain in the mind of any man concerning this interpretation, it may be settled, I think, beyond all question, by recurring to another passage, to which hitherto, I have not alluded. In Matt. xxvii. 24, 25, we are told, that when Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing towards releasing Christ, 'he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person; see ye to it;' and that then 'all the people answered, and said, His blood be on us, and on our children.' The meaning of the phraseology in this passage cannot be mistaken; and it is altogether probable that the declaration of the Sanhedrim being made so soon after this imprecation, to the apostles, so deeply interested in the subject, and on an occasion which so naturally called it up to view, the Sanhedrim referred to it directly.

But if Christ was not raised from the dead, he was a false prophet, an impostor, and, of course, a blasphemer; because he asserted himself to be the Messiah, the Son of God. Such a blasphemer the law of God condemned to death. The Sanhedrim were the very persons to whom the business of trying and condemning him was committed by that law, and whose duty it was to accomplish his death. If, therefore, his body was not raised from the dead, there was no guilt in shedding his blood, but the mere performance of a plain duty. His blood, that is, the guilt of shedding it, could not possibly rest on the Sanhedrim; nor, to use their language, be brought upon them by the apostles, nor by any others All this the Sanhedrim perfectly knew; and therefore, had they not believed him to have risen from the dead, they could never have used this phraseology.

* Matt. xxviii. 11.

* Lev. xx. 9, 11, 13, 16, 27; Deut. xix. 10; xxii. 8; 2 Sam. i. 16; xvi. 8; 1 Kings ii. 37; Jer. li. 35; Ezek. xviii. 13; xxxiii. 5; Matt. xxiii. 35; Acts xviii. 6.

It is farther to be observed, that on both these occasions the apostles boldly declared to the Sanhedrim, in the most explicit terms, that Christ was raised from the dead; yet the Sanhedrim not only did not charge them with the crime of having stolen his body, but did not contradict, nor even comment on, the declaration. This could not possibly have happened through inattention. Both the Sanhedrim and the apostles completely knew, that the resurrection of Christ was the point on which his cause, and their opposition to it, entirely turned. It was the great and serious controversy between the contending parties; and yet, though directly asserted to their faces by the apostles, the Sanhedrim did not even utter a syllable on the subject.

Had they believed their own story, they would either have punished the apostles with death, as rebels against the Jewish and Roman governments, or confined them as lunatics in a bedlam.

IV. *Christ was raised from the dead, because the apostles converted mankind to his religion*

The apostles, from the beginning to the end, published the story of Christ's resurrection as the proof of his mission, and doctrines; and as the foundation on which rested their own commission, and the truth of the religion which they taught. To prove the reality of his resurrection, they publicly declared that he had invested them with the power of working miracles on all occasions, and openly asserted that they were possessed of this power. Here, then, the cause was fairly at issue between them and mankind. If they wrought miracles in proof of this story, the story was true of course; because, as I observed in a preceding Discourse, none but God can work a miracle; and God cannot support a falsehood.

That this was the real profession of the apostles is unitedly testified, without one dissenting voice, by all antiquity; heathen, Jewish, and Christian. It is, therefore, certainly true.

If the apostles, after having made this profession, did not work miracles, they were convicted of falsehood in a moment. Their cause fell at once; for they had rested it wholly on this single fact. The weakest man would see, at a glance, that they were cheats and liars, and could never place the least confidence in any of their declarations. They could not, therefore, have made a single convert.

But they did convert a great part of the civilized, and not a small part of the savage world. They, therefore, certainly wrought miracles in the manner which they professed, as proofs of the reality of Christ's resurrection. The resurrection of Christ was of course real. God set to it his own seal, and placed it beyond every reasonable doubt.

That the apostles wrought miracles in great numbers, is clearly proved also by the united testimony of heathen, Jews, and Christians. All these classes of men were deeply interested to deny this fact, if it could with any pretence be denied. The heathen and Jews would certainly have denied it; because they wished to prevent, as far as possible, other heathen and other Jews from embracing Christianity; and because, if they could have supported the denial, they would have stopped the growth of that religion in its infancy. Christians would have denied it; that is, such as became Christians in consequence of a belief in these miracles under any illusion which could have been practised on them, because they would certainly have detected the cheat, and must have strongly resented the villany, by which it had been played off upon themselves. I say these things, admitting the supposition that the imposture might succeed for a time; but, to my own view, such success must plainly have been impossible.

All these persons have, however, agreed in asserting that the apostles wrought miracles. The Jews and heathen attributed them to magic. Christians, under the influence of their conviction that miracles were thus wrought, hazarded and yielded every enjoyment of life, and very often life itself.

We have now, if I do not mistake, come to the clear and certain conclusion, that Christ was raised from the dead by the power of God. But, if Christ was raised from the dead, it follows, by irresistible consequence, that he was approved of God; and, of course, that he was the Son of God, and the promised Messiah sent from heaven to communicate the divine will to mankind concerning their duty and salvation. The religion which he taught is in all its parts divine truth, the will of our Maker, and the sum and substance of all our interest and duty. Of course, it cannot be rejected without infinite hazard; it cannot be embraced without complete assurance of infinite gain, the favour of God in this world, and eternal life in the world to come.

SERMON LXIII.

THE AMIABLENESS OF CHRIST IN PUBLISHING THE GOSPEL TO MANKIND.

How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion thy God reigneth.—Isa. lii. 7.

In a long series of Discourses, I have investigated minutely the character and mediation of Christ; and have considered his divine and human nature; his offices as a Prophet, Priest, and King; his miracles; and his resurrection. I shall now close this great and interesting subject of theology by attempting to exhibit, summarily, the excellency and amiableness of Christ, as manifested in his interference on the behalf of mankind.

In the text, the prophet Isaiah presents to us the advent of a messenger of good tidings to mankind. This messenger is represented as announcing to the world

'good,' or happiness at large; as 'publishing peace'—'salvation'—and the glorious news, that the God who reigns universally, is the God of Zion. His appearance is exhibited by the prophet as filling his own mind with astonishment and ecstasy. Nothing could more forcibly convey to us the prophet's rapturous sense of the importance of these tidings, or his exalted views of the messenger who brought them, than the manner in which he dwells on these subjects, in the repeated and fervid exclamations of the text. When the soul becomes the seat of strong emotions, and especially when it is agitated by strong alternations of wonder and joy, it usually finds language, in every form of phraseology, too feeble to give full vent to its feelings, or to convey them to others with such force, as to satisfy the demands either of the imagination or the passions. When we ourselves feel, we wish others to feel; and when our emotions become peculiarly ardent, we are prone to fear that the corresponding emotions of others will be less vivid than we desire. The mind in this case seizes the most forcible language within its reach, and conscious that even this language halts behind its own fervours, naturally seeks to increase the impressions, by reiterating them in new and more animated phraseology. From this source were derived the exclamations of the text, peculiarly suited to the mind of Isaiah, whose imagination was not only more sublime, but on all occasions more ready to glow, than that of any other writer.

St Paul applies this text to the ministers of the gospel generally, and perhaps more especially to the first ministers. This application teaches us decisively, that the gospel, the meaning of which word you know is merely 'good tidings,' is the subject of the annunciation in the text; and that ministers of the gospel at large are, in a loose and general sense, included in the purport of these exclamations. The prophet, however, speaks of one messenger only; and this messenger is the person who publishes the gospel to mankind. The Lord Jesus Christ is undoubtedly the messenger here intended, by whose voice the gospel was originally communicated to the world. The prophet, who beyond any other writer embodies all his thoughts, and holds them out to the view of the eye, exhibits this divine herald as advancing over the mountains surrounding the city of Jerusalem, and as proclaiming joyful news to its inhabitants. The reader is transported to the spot; sees this illustrious person approach; hears him proclaim the tidings which he comes to announce; and unites with the prophet and his exulting countrymen in their joyful exclamations.

The only characteristical circumstance on which the prophet rests in the text, is the beauty which adorned the person of this glorious messenger. 'How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings!' To the consideration of this subject I propose to devote the following Discourse.

In the discussion of it I shall consider,

I. *The persons to whom these tidings were published:*

II. *The tidings themselves:* and,

III. *The messenger who published them.*

I. *The persons to whom these tidings were published, were the children of apostate Adam.*

It will be useful to the design which I have proposed, to consider both their character and their circumstances.

Their character, like that of their progenitor, was formed of apostasy. Every man who searches his own bosom, or examines the conduct of his own life, is presented with irresistible evidence that he is a sinner. Let him form whatever rule of life he is pleased to prescribe, by which his duty to himself, to his fellow men, and to God, ought even in his own view to be regulated, and he will find himself, in innumerable instances, a transgressor of that rule. The heathen philosophers anciently, and the infidels of modern times, have formed such rules. Weigh them in their own balances, and they will invariably be 'found wanting.' Lax, licentious, and even monstrous as the laws are, which they have proposed for the regulation of their own moral conduct, they still have not obeyed them, and will, if tried by them, be certainly condemned. How much more defective do they appear, when examined by the dictates of a sober and enlightened conscience! How far more defective, when tried by the perfect law of God! Searched by this law, it will be uniformly found, and every man faithfully employed in the search will be obliged to confess, that 'in our flesh dwelleth no good thing.'

Among the most affecting specimens of this evil character, a conscientious investigator will be deeply afflicted with those which constitute his own personal debasement. If he open his eye on what he has been, and on what he has done, he will find the most abundant reason to exclaim, with Job, 'I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.' He will find that he has, in the true and evangelical sense, neither loved God nor man; that he has neither accepted of his Saviour, nor repented of his sins; that he has neither laboured to be a blessing, nor even endeavoured not to be a nuisance, to the divine kingdom. Instead of worshipping God 'in spirit and in truth,' according to the first dictates of his conscience and of revelation, he will find that he has in truth prostrated himself to gold, to office, to fame, and to pleasure. Instead of the exact justice, unwavering truth, and expansive benevolence of the gospel, he will see, written in the volume of his life with a pen of iron, a succession of melancholy scenes and acts of unkindness, insincerity, and injustice; all contrived and finished by a mind shrunk with selfishness, swollen with pride, heated with anger, debased with avarice, and steeled with insensibility. Page after page he will see stained with the licentious wanderings of an impure imagination, and deformed by the malignant purposes of an envious, angry, and revengeful spirit. In vain will his eye, pained with these narratives of shame and sin, wander from one leaf to another with an anxious, inquisitive search, to find the delightful records of filial confidence, submission, and gratitude to the Creator, or the sweet and cheering remembrances of evangelical charity towards those around him, or a portrait of himself, which shall be a fair counterpart to that of the good Samaritan. In vain will he watch and explore the humiliating story, to glean from it refreshing recollections of self-purification, the refinement of his mind, the amendment of his heart, or the cleansing of his life. Over himself he will find the most distressing reasons to mourn, as over a graceless and ruined child; ruined, on the one hand, by the gratification of pernicious appetites and passions, and on the other, by a senseless, thoughtless indulgence, doting with a mixture of idiocy and madness.

The public exhibitions of the human character are

still more striking displays of human guilt. Almost the only government of mankind has been tyranny. Almost all the conduct of nations may be summed up in the rage of plunder, the fury of war, and the frenzy of civil discord. Men seem to have thought their blessings too numerous and too great, and the duration of their life too long. Accordingly, they have robbed each other of the former, shortened the latter, and struggled hard to reduce both to nothing. At what time has human blood ceased to flow? In what country have rage and revenge ceased to desolate? When and where have the cries of mourning and misery ceased to resound? The groans of suffering have echoed from California to Japan. The stream of sorrow has flowed without interruption for six thousand years. On all the public concerns of man, on every nation, on every age, have been labelled, 'Lamentation, mourning, and woe.'

Such has been the conduct of man towards man. Not less shameful, not less guilty, has been the conduct of man towards his Maker. Instead of rendering to this glorious Being, whose we are, and whom we are bound to serve, the direct, instinctive homage of the heart, and the cheerful obedience of the hands; instead of acknowledging his rightful government, rejoicing in his divine perfections, and voluntarily labouring to accomplish his exalted purposes; we have said to him with one united voice, 'Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways.' For Jehovah, the only living and true God, mankind have substituted deities, formed by the imagination, graven by art, and molten in the furnace. The forest has been scoured, the ocean swept, and the sky ransacked, for objects of worship. The world has prostrated itself before men deformed with villany, and putrid with pollution. The knee has bent to the ox, the snake, the frog, and the fly. Nay, the heart has yielded its homage, prayers, and oblations, to the stock of a tree; and parents have sacrificed their children to the great enemy of God and man. Look over the long page of history, and you will be astonished to see how rarely a country is mentioned, and how rarely a period occurs, in which you would be willing to have lived.

But guilt is not the only ingredient of the human character. It is scarcely less humble and insignificant, than it is guilty. We are born of the dust, allied to worms, and victims to corruption. Weak, ignorant, frail, perishing, and possessed only of an ephemeral existence, we still are proud; proud of our reason with all its errors, and of our temper with all its sins We claim kindred to angels; but, by a voluntary slavery to passion and appetite, assimilate ourselves to 'the beasts which perish.' We boast loudly of the dignity of our nature; and prostitute that nature daily, on objects of shame and remorse, and to purposes which we would not, for a world, have known even to our dearest friends. What a dreadful display of our character would our thoughts, wishes, and designs make to mankind, if they were all printed in a volume, and read even by such eyes as ours! How few thoughts do we form which we should be willing to have an angel know! How few purposes, over which an angel would not weep!

In this character, at the same time, we are immovably fixed and perverse. No event, in the immense providence of God, has contributed to prove that there is in a sinful mind a tendency to renovation. Arguments plead, reason testifies, judgments warn, and mercies allure, in vain! The sinful heart is incased in adamant, and is proof even to the arrows of the Almighty. God 'calls' earnestly, and continually; but we 'refuse. He stretches out his hand' both to smite and to heal, 'but we disregard.'

In consequence of our character, our circumstances have become deplorable. The law of God, with an unalterable sentence, has declared that 'the soul which sinneth shall die.' As a prelude to the execution of this penalty, thorns and briars have overspread this melancholy world. Toil and care, sorrow and suffering, disease and death, entered paradise the moment it was polluted by sin; withered all its bloom, and blasted its immortality. Death, the dreadful offspring of this dreadful parent, has claimed the earth as his empire, and mankind as his prey. All nations have perished under his iron sceptre; 'the young man and maiden, old men and children.' Half mankind has he compelled to the grave in the dawn of childhood, and converted the world into one vast burying ground. We walk on human dust; and the remains of men once living are turned up by the plough, and blown about by the wind.

From this deplorable lot, and the guilty character of which it is the reward, there was, independently of Christ's mediation, no escape; and to both there was no end. With heaven our communication was cut off. No messenger ever came from that delightful world, to soothe the fears or awaken the hopes of mankind, concerning a future existence. If in the vast of being, or the boundless extent of divine benevolence, good was laid up in store for them, it was unknown. No tidings of relief or hope, no intimations of forgiveness or reconciliation, had ever reached this desolate region. Eternity, solemn and awful in itself, and more solemn and awful from its obscurity, became intensely dreadful to beings who could make no claims to acceptance, and find no solid ground of hope.

To such beings how delightful must be any tidings of good! How much more delightful, tidings of extensive good! How transporting, tidings of such good, which, by their certainty, banished distrust and doubt from the soul!

II. *The nature of these tidings next demands our consideration.*

This is exhibited in five forms of phraseology; 'That bringeth good tidings;—that publisheth peace;—that bringeth good tidings of good; that publisheth salvation;—that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth.' The first and third of these forms indicate, generally, that the tidings are good, or joyful; and tidings concerning good of great value. The remaining forms teach us the nature of that good.

In the two first-mentioned forms of expression, we are assured, that the subject of these tidings is real good, attainable by us, reserved by God for our enjoyment, certain, future, and immortal. Good, fitted for the enjoyment of such minds as ours, such as God himself esteems real good, and such as it becomes his character to proffer and bestow. The tidings concerning this glorious allotment are also in themselves pronounced to be good; because they are sincere and certain, and because they communicate easy and effectual means of making it ours.

It is styled in the second phrase, 'Peace.' Peace is the cessation of war or contention: and in the present case, the cessation of our hostility with God, ourselves, and our fellow men. The soul of man is at war with his Maker. The great subject of controversy here, is our obedience to his will. This he requires, and we refuse. Nothing can terminate the contest but our submission; for it cannot be supposed, that the Creator will bend his own pleasure to the rebellious spirit of his creatures. In announcing these tidings to mankind, Christ first proclaims to them, that God is willing to be reconciled. This is intelligence which, before the mediation of Christ commenced, could never have gained credit, even in the world of benevolence itself. Angels knew no reward for revolt from their Creator, but final rejection; the reward to which their own companions had been irrevocably condemned. With wonder and amazement they saw a new system of dispensations commencing in this apostate world, and heard forgiveness and reconciliation proclaimed to man. Humble as was our origin, guilty and little as was our character, we were commanded, invited, and entreated to lay down the weapons of our warfare; to return to God, our duty, and our happiness; and to receive from his hands peace, commencing in this world, and extending its benign and delightful influence throughout eternity.

The soul reconciled to its God, becomes at once reconciled to itself. With himself man is as truly at war, as with his Maker. A contention, real, unceasing, and violent, is carried on between the conscience and the passions. Conscience claims to control the man, as her original and rightful province. Against this claim a mob of furious passions revolt, and demand, and wrest out of her hands the controverted dominion. As in all cases where the order established by God becomes inverted, so here every real interest is sacrificed. The soul is debased with guilt, harassed by fear, tossed by the tempest of conflicting desires, wounded with remorse, and hastened onward to final destruction. Conscience, in the mean time, infixes all her stings into the heart of this miserable subject of domestic discord, and holds up her awful mirror before his eyes, presenting him with an exact and terrible portrait of himself; pale, languid, sickly with mental diseases, his spiritual life already gone, and himself, both soul and body, destined speedily to an eternal grave. But when the soul submits to its Maker, and bows its own will to his, the man becomes reconciled to himself. The control of conscience is not only permitted, but chosen. The froward passions, like stubborn children who have renounced their filial impiety, bend with a gentleness and serenity before unknown, to a dominion now first discovered not only to be safe, but easy, reasonable, and delightful. No longer a seat of confusion and discord, the soul becomes henceforth a mansion of peace and harmony, where sweet affections rise and operate, under the control and the approbation of conscience. The man is reconciled to himself; and turning his eyes inward, beholds henceforth a prospect beautiful and lovely, an image of heaven, a resemblance faint and distant indeed, but still a real resemblance, to the character of his Maker.

Peace with our fellow men is the natural consequence of peace with ourselves; not indeed necessarily, nor uniformily; but always, so far as they are possessed of the same blessing, and under the influence of the same disposition. While the same internal hostility predominates in them, they are unfitted to be at peace with God or man. But the period is hastening when this happy state of mind shall be the state of all men, and peace shall prevail on earth, according to the full import of the hymn sung by angels at the birth of the Saviour. The tidings of the text will then be illustriously realized; and man, at peace with his Maker and himself, will be at peace also with all his fellow men. The 'confused noise of the battle of the warrior' will then be heard no more; and 'garments' be seen no more 'rolled in blood.' 'Violence shall' then 'be no more heard in the' world; 'wasting nor destruction within its borders.' The earth, no longer convulsed by human passions, no longer gloomy and desolate with the miseries of human conflicts, will assume the aspect of a delightful morning in the spring, where all is verdant and blooming beneath, and all is bright and glorious above.

In the fourth of these forms of expression, this good is styled 'Salvation.'

Salvation denotes a deliverance from evil, and an introduction to the enjoyment of good. In the present case, both the evil and the good are immeasurable.

The evil is twofold; a compound of sin and misery: both imperfect in this world, and both finished in the world to come. From both, in this world, the deliverance announced is partial; beginning from nothing, and enlarging, and ascending, with a constant, though unequal progress, towards perfection. The soul, before a mass of deformity and corruption, begins to be adorned with life, and grace, and beauty. With it angels love to commune, on it God is pleased to look with complacency.

From future sin and future misery, the deliverance is complete. With death our last sins terminate, and our last misery is undergone. Cast your eyes forward through the vast of duration, and think what it would be to sin and suffer for ever. How amazing the evil! How astonishing the deliverance!

The good announced is twofold also; a glorious union of virtue and enjoyment; like the evil, imperfect here, and consummate hereafter. The virtue of man in his present state is infantine; tottering with an unsettled step, and lisping with half-formed accents. In the future state, the mind, advanced to perfect manhood, is completely sanctified, and cannot fail of being completely blessed. To enjoyment and virtue that state is wholly destined. Every thing found in it, as once in the earthly paradise, blossoms with life and happiness, and, like Adam, all its inhabitants are formed for immortality.

In the last phrase of the text, this good is disclosed to us in the declaration, 'that saith unto Zion, thy God reigneth.'

God, the author of all things, is the source of all good. 'Every good gift,' in this and all other worlds, 'and every perfect gift, is from above; and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.' From him, the ocean, flow all those streams of holiness which water, enrich, and beautify his immeasurable kingdom. His character, his moral essence, is 'love;' and, wherever happiness is found, it may justly be said, that the name of every blessing is like that of the city seen in vision by Ezekiel, 'The Lord is there.'

With these tidings resounding in their ears, the children of Zion may joyfully say, 'This God is our God

for ever and ever.' To their present and everlasting good, his boundless power, wisdom, and goodness are by himself graciously consecrated. To renew, purify, preserve, protect, enlighten, guide, quicken, and save them in this world, and to form them in his own perfect image, and exalt them to his own perfect felicity in the world to come, is declared to be his constant and favourite employment. In that glorious and happy world he will unveil his face to them, and give them to 'see as they are seen,' and to 'know as they are known.' In the smiles of forgiving, redeeming, and sanctifying love, they will there rove, and bask, and brighten for ever.

III. *I shall consider the messenger who published these tidings.*

In the investigation of this subject I shall inquire,

Who he was?

What he became?

What he did? and,

What he suffered?

1. I shall inquire who he was,

(1.) He was a person of supreme glory and dignity.

This divine person was from everlasting, underived, independent, all-sufficient, and unchangeable in his being, wisdom, goodness, and power. All things were the work of his hand, and lay beneath his feet. At the head of a kingdom filling immensity and eternity, 'he was; and in comparison with him 'there was none else.' 'All nations before him were as nothing, and were counted unto him as less than nothing and vanity.' Angels in his presence veiled their faces, and archangels durst not attempt to penetrate the unapproachable light with which he clothed himself as with a garment. To obey him was their highest honour; to please him was their greatest happiness. In his service they employed all their powers, and found all their transports. Suns lighted up their fires at his bidding; systems rolled, to fulfill his pleasure; and to accomplish his designs, immensity was stored with worlds and their inhabitants.

(2.) He was rich in all good.

'All things were' not only 'made by him,' but 'for him.' They were his property; they were destined to fulfill his pleasure. When he looked on all the beauty, greatness, and glory, conspicuous in the beings which compose and which inhabit the universe, he beheld nothing but the works of his own hands, reflecting the boundless beauty, greatness, and glory, which, in forms and varieties infinite, were treasured up from everlasting in his own incomprehensible mind. If he chose to bring into existence any additional number of creatures, to display new forms and varieties of power, wisdom, and goodness, pre-existent in his own perfect intellect, his choice would instantaneously give them being. To the universe which he had made, he could with infinite ease add another, and another; and fill with worlds, and suns, and systems, those desolate wilds of immensity, where the wing of angels never ventured to rove, and whither no created mind ever sent out a solitary thought. Thus the universe of possible things was his own.

He was rich in the veneration and good-will, the complacency and gratitude, of all virtuous beings. Heaven, throughout her vast regions, had from the beginning echoed to his praise. 'The morning stars' had 'sung' his perfections from their birth, 'and the sons of God shouted' his name 'for joy.' The everlasting hymn of that exalted and delightful world had ever been, 'Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto our God that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever; and to this divine ascription every virtuous world had continually as well as solemnly answered 'Amen.'

He was rich in himself. His own mind was the mansion of all things great, excellent, and delightful. Pure from every stain, free from every error, serene without a cloud, secure beyond a fear, and conscious of wisdom and holiness only, himself was an ocean of eternal and overflowing good.

He was rich in the complacency of his Father. He was from everlasting his 'beloved Son, in whom he was ever well pleased.' 'From everlasting was he by him, as one brought up with him. He was daily his delight, rejoicing alway before him.' In the transcendent communion of the ever-blessed Trinity, he experienced enjoyment which 'no' created 'eye hath seen, or can see,' and which no mind less than infinite can conceive. On this subject beings 'of yesterday' must not presume to expatiate. With the deepest reverence they can only exclaim, 'It is higher than heaven, what can we know?'

2. This glorious person, to accomplish the good announced in these tidings, became man.

Although 'he was' originally 'in the form of God, and thought it no robbery to be equal with God, yet he made himself of no reputation, took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men.' In this character of immense humiliation, he lived in this sinful, melancholy world. To man, 'who is a worm, and the son of man, who is but a worm,' he allied himself by birth, kindred, and character. All the infirmities of our nature, except sin, he voluntarily assumed; sprang from an humble lineage, lived in an humble employment, was united to humble companions, and was invariably in humble circumstances. So depressed was he in all things, that he himself has thought proper to say, 'I am a worm, and no man.'

3. In this situation he did all things well.

His life was filled up with usefulness and duty; was laborious beyond example, and was wholly consecrated to the glory of God, and the good of mankind. In conformity to this great purpose, he spent all the former part of his life in an illustrious discharge of the duties of filial piety. In his public ministry he taught, with unceasing diligence, the law of God, the ruin of man by his disobedience, and the tidings of his recovery by his own mediation. The way of life he marked out with an unerring hand; the means of life he disclosed with a benevolent voice. The duties to which man is summoned, he exemplified in his own perfect conduct. The hopes which man was invited to cherish, he portrayed in colours of light. The door of heaven, shut before to this apostate world, he unbarred with his own power; and love invited 'labouring and heavy laden' sinners to enter in, and find 'rest.' Wandering prodigals, perishing with want and nakedness, and lost to the universe of God, he sought, and found, and brought home to his Father's house rejoicing. Wretches, 'dead in trespasses and sins,' he raised to spiritual and immortal life. This vast earthly catacomb he entered; and summoned together by his voice the bones of the immense congregation in its gloomy recesses, 'bone to his bone.' The host of skeletons he covered with flesh; and, breathing upon them the breath of life, bade them

'stand upon their feet, as an exceeding great army for multitude.'

4. To accomplish this divine purpose, he underwent every humiliation, and every suffering.

He was born in a stable, and cradled in a manger. The greatest part of his life he spent in the humble and laborious business of a mechanic, and literally earned his bread 'with the sweat of his brow.' Poor beyond the common lot of poverty, 'he had not,' while ministering immortal blessings to a world, a place 'where to lay his head.' For all the suffering he wrought miraculous works of beneficence; but the power with which they were wrought, ready at the call of others, was rarely exerted for himself. At the same time he was hated and persecuted day by day. Wickedness employed all its hostility against him; its pride and cunning, its malice and wrath; calumniated his name, invaded his peace, and hunted his life. By his friends he was betrayed and forsaken. By his enemies he was accused of drunkenness and gluttony, of impiety and blasphemy, of being the friend of sinners, and the coadjutor of Satan. From the agonies of Gethsemane he was conveyed successively to the iniquitous tribunal of the Sanhedrim, to the bloody hall of Pilate, to the cross, and to the tomb. At the close of a life spent in bitterness and sorrow, he consummated all his sufferings by undergoing that last and greatest of all evils, the wrath of God, poured out upon him as the substitute for sinners.

All these things he foresaw, when he brought these tidings to mankind. They were always before him; and were indispensable parts of that mediation which he voluntarily assumed. They were undergone, therefore, in a continual anticipation. Every day 'he was' literally 'a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.' In the full view of them all, he came to this world, to proclaim 'peace and salvation' to those who despised, rejected, and persecuted him; who nailed him to the cross, and compelled him to the grave. To these very men he announced all good; himself, his favour, his kingdom, his house, his presence, his everlasting joy. Think what tidings these are! Think to whom they are published!

Thus, from a summary view of this subject, Christ, in publishing these tidings to mankind, appears invested with supreme amiableness and beauty. No attribute which forms, no action which becomes, the perfect character is wanting in him. With all things in his hands, with all excellence and enjoyment in his mind, he pitied us, miserable worms of the dust; descended from heaven, became man, lived, and died, and rose again, that we might live for ever. With his own voice he proclaimed, in the tidings of the text, the very things which he has done and suffered, and the infinite blessings which in this manner he has purchased for mankind. 'There is now (he cries,) glory to God in the highest,' while there is 'peace on earth, and good-will towards men.' In this ruined world, so long enveloped in darkness, so long deformed by sin, so long wasted by misery; where guilt, and sorrow, and suffering, have spread distress without control, and mourning without hope; where war and oppression have ravaged without, and remorse and despair consumed within; where Satan has 'exalted his throne above the stars of God,' while its sottish millions have bent before him in religious worship; in this ruined world, where, since the apostasy, real good was never found, and where tidings of such good were never proclaimed; even here, I announce the tidings of expiated sin, a pardoning God, a renewing Spirit, an opening heaven, and a dawning immortality. Here peace anew shall lift her olive branch over mankind. Here salvation from sin and woe shall anew be found; and here God shall dwell and reign, the God of Zion. 'Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden; and I will give you rest.' 'Incline your ear, and hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.' 'The spirit of Jehovah is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound.' 'I will greatly rejoice in the Lord; my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with garments of salvation; for he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness; as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments; as a bride adorneth herself with jewels.'

Every messenger of good news is, of course, desirable and lovely in the eyes of those who are deeply interested; and a part of that lustre, belonging to the tidings themselves, is by a natural association diffused around him by whom they are borne, especially because he is regarded as voluntarily announcing good to us, and as rejoicing in our joy. How glorious, how lovely then, does Christ appear, when coming with all the inherent splendour and beauty of his character, and the transcendent dignity of his station, to proclaim to us tidings infinitely desirable, of good infinitely necessary and infinitely great! Men to him were wholly unnecessary. Had all their millions been blotted out of the kingdom of God, they would not even have left a blank in the creation. With a word he could have formed, of the stones of the street, other millions, wiser, better, and happier: more dutiful, and more desirable. How divinely amiable does he appear, when the tidings which he brings, are tidings of his own arduous labours on our behalf, and of his own unexampled sufferings; labours and sufferings, without which, good tidings could never have reached us, and real good never been found in this miserable world! How divinely amiable does he appear, when, notwithstanding the apostasy and guilt of the race of Adam, he came, of his own accord, to publish these tidings of immortal good to rebels and enemies; and, while proclaiming them, 'rejoiced in the habitable parts of the earth,' and found 'his delights with the sons of men!'

What, then, must be the guilt, what the debasement, of those who are regardless of the glorious declarations, hostile to the benevolent designs, and insensible to the perfect character of this divine herald! How blind, and deaf, and stupid must they be to all that is beautiful, engaging, and lovely! How groveling must be their moral taste! How wonderful their neglect of their own well-being! How evidently is their ingratitude 'as the sin of witchcraft, and their stubbornness as iniquity and idolatry!' Were these tidings to be proclaimed in hell itself, one can scarcely fail to imagine that all the malice, impiety, and blasphemy in that dreary world would be suspended; that fiends would cease to conflict with fiends; that sorrow would dry the stream of never-ending tears; that remorse would reverse and blunt his stings; that despair would lift up his pale form with a

commencing smile; that the prisoners of wrath (then 'prisoners of hope') would shake their chains with transport; and that all the gloomy caverns would echo to the sounds of gratitude and joy. In our own world, once equally hopeless, these tidings are actually proclaimed. What must be the spirit of those who refuse to hear!

But, O ye followers of the divine and compassionate Saviour, infinitely different is the wisdom displayed by you! When this divine messenger proclaims to you peace and salvation; when he informs you that he has died, that you may live; when he demands of you cordially to embrace his atonement, and accept his intercession; you cheerfully hear, believe, and obey. Conscious of your own guilty character, and ruined condition, you have yielded yourselves to him with all the heart, in the humble, amiable, and penitent exercise of faith and love, and finally chosen him as your own Saviour. On your minds his image is instamped; in your life his beauty shines with real, though feeble, radiance; in your character his loveliness is begun; in your souls his immortality is formed. On you his Father smiles, a forgiving God. On you his Spirit descends, with his sanctifying and dove-like influence. To you his word unfolds all his promises, his daily favour, his everlasting love. To you hell is barred, and all its seducing and destroying inhabitants confined in chains. Heaven for you has already opened its 'everlasting doors;' and 'the King of glory' has 'entered in,' to 'prepare a place for you.' The joy of that happy world has been already renewed over your repentance. The Spirit of truth conducts you daily onward in your journey through life, and in your way towards your final home. Death, your last enemy, is to you deprived of his strength and sting, and the grave despoiled of its victory. Your bodies will soon be 'sown' in the corruption, weakness, and dishonour' of your present perishable nature, to be 'raised' in the 'incorruption, power, and glory' of immortality. Your souls cleansed from every sin, and stain, and weakness, this divine messenger will present before the throne of his Father, 'without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing,' to be acquitted, approved, and blessed. In the world of light, and peace, and joy, enlarged with knowledge, and refined with evangelical virtue, he will unite you to 'the general assembly of the first-born,' and 'to the innumerable company of angels;' will make you 'sons, and priests, and kings to God,' and cause you to 'live, and reign with him for ever and ever.' 'All things' will then be 'yours;' you will be 'Christ's; and Christ' will be 'God's.' Anticipate, and by anticipation enjoy to the full, this divine assemblage of blessings; they are your birthright. But while you enjoy them, deeply pity, and fervently pray for your foolish, guilty, and miserable companions.

SERMON LXIV.

CONSEQUENCES OF CHRIST'S MEDIATION.—JUSTIFICATION.—JUSTIFICATION BY THE FREE GRACE OF GOD.

Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.—ROM. iii. 24.

IN the series of Sermons which I have preached hitherto, as a part of a System of Theology, I have considered the existence and perfections of God; the disobedience and apostasy of man; and the impossibility of his justification by his own righteousness; the covenant of redemption made between the Father and the Son; the character, mediation, and offices of Christ; the former class of subjects constitutes what is frequently called the religion of nature; the latter, the first branches of the Christian, or remedial system, grafted upon that religion. Perfect beings are justified by their own obedience, since they fulfill all the demands of the divine law. To them, therefore, the religion of nature is amply sufficient to secure their duty, their acceptance with God, and their final happiness. Sinful beings cannot thus be justified; because they have not rendered that obedience which is the only possible ground of justification by law. Of course, some other ground of justification is absolutely necessary for them, if they are ever to be accepted, or rewarded. For this the religion of Christ professes to have made ample provision. In my examination of the character and offices of Christ, I have attempted to show that he has taught all which is necessary to be known, believed, or done by us, in order to our acceptance with God; and has accomplished the expiation of our sins in such a manner that God, in justifying us, may be just to himself, and to the universe. Thus far, it is hoped, the way to our return from our apostasy has been made clear and satisfactory.

The next great question to be asked, and a question of infinite moment to every one of us, is, in what manner do we become interested in the mediation of Christ, and entitled to the glorious blessings which he has purchased for man? This question is partially answered in the text. Here we are said to be 'justified freely by the grace of God, through the redemption of Christ Jesus.' In this declaration our justification is immediately connected with 'the redemption of Christ,' as its meritorious or procuring cause. The source of it, also, on the part of God, is directly asserted; as is also the manner in which it was accomplished. We are said to be 'justified freely;' and 'justified by his grace.' All this is also said to be done 'through,' by means of, or on account of, 'the redemption of Christ.' These subjects are intended to occupy the following Discourse.

In the course of my investigation I shall consider,

I. *In what sense mankind are justified under the gospel.*

II. *In what sense we are freely justified by the grace of God.*

I. *I shall consider in what sense mankind are justified under the gospel.*

The word 'justified,' as I observed in a former Discourse, is taken from the business of judicial courts; and denotes the acquittal of a person tried by such a court, upon an accusation of a crime. The person accused, being upon trial found innocent of the charge, is declared to be just in the view of the law; and, by an easy and natural figure, is said to be justified; that is, made just. In this original, forensic sense of the term, it is obvious, from what has been said in a former Discourse, that no human being can be justified by the law, or before the bar of God. As all mankind have disobeyed this law, it is clear, that he 'whose judgment is' invariably 'according to truth,' must declare them guilty.

Still the Scriptures abundantly teach us, that 'what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for a sin-offering,' has, by thus 'condemning sin in the flesh,' accomplished for multitudes of our sinful race. It is however certain, that justification, when extended to returning sinners, must, in some respects be, of course, a thing widely different from justification under the law. A subject of law is justified only when he is in the full and strict sense just; that is, when he has completely obeyed all the requisitions of the law. In this case, his obedience is the only ground of his justification, and is all that is necessary to it; because he has done every thing which was required of him, and no act of disobedience can be truly laid to his charge. From this case, that of the penitent under the gospel differs entirely. He has been guilty of innumerable acts of disobedience, and has not fulfilled the demands of the law even in a single instance. All these acts of disobedience are truly chargeable to him, when he comes before the bar of God at the final trial; nor can he ever be truly said not to have been guilty of them. If, therefore, he be ever justified, it must be in a widely different sense from that which has been already explained. The term is, therefore, not used in the gospel because its original meaning is intended here, but because this term, figuratively used, better expresses the thing intended than any other. The act of God, denoted by this term as used in the gospel, so much resembles a forensic justification, or justification by law, that the word is naturally, and by an easy translation, adopted to express this act.

The justification of a sinner under the gospel consists in the three following things: pardoning his sins; acquitting him from the punishment which they have deserved; and entitling him to the rewards or blessings due by law to perfect obedience only.

In order to form clear and satisfactory views of this subject, it will be useful to examine the situation of man, in his progress from apostasy to acceptance, as it is exhibited in the Scriptures.

In the covenant of redemption, the Father promised Christ, that, 'if he should make his soul a propitiatory sacrifice for sin, he should see a seed which should prolong their days;' * or, as it is expressed by God in the lxxxixth Psalm, 'His seed should endure for ever, and his throne,' that is, his dominion over them, 'as the days of heaven.' In this covenant three things are promised to Christ, in consequence of his assumption and execution of the mediatorial office; (1.) That a seed shall be given him; (2.) That they shall endure and be happy for ever; and, (3.) That his dominion over them shall be co-extended with their eternal being. It was then certain, antecedently to Christ's entrance upon the office of Mediator, that he should not assume nor execute it in vain; but should receive a reward for all his labours and sufferings, such as he thought a sufficient one; such as induced him to undertake this office, and to accomplish all the arduous duties which it involved. This reward was to be formed of rational and immortal beings originally apostate, but redeemed by him from their apostasy, through the atonement made for their sins by his sufferings, particularly his death; and the honour which he rendered to the divine law by his personal obedience. All these redeemed apostates were to 'endure for ever' in a state of perfect holiness and happiness; and both this holiness and happiness were to be for ever progressive, under his perfectly wise and benevolent administration.

In this covenant, then, it is promised, that the persons here spoken of, and elsewhere declared to be 'a great multitude, which no man can number, of all nations, kindreds, and tongues,' should be 'the seed,' the children of Christ; his property: and that not only in a peculiar, but in a singular sense; not only created by him, as all other intelligent beings were, but redeemed by him also, and that at the expense of his own life.

The least consideration, however, will clearly show us, that sinners can never become Christ's in any such sense as to be accepted by him, unless they are delivered from the sentence of condemnation pronounced against them by the law of God. This law, I have formerly had occasion to observe, is unalterable. It is in itself perfect, and cannot be made better. God, the perfect and unchangeable being, cannot, without denying his perfection, consent to make it worse. Besides, he has declared, that the universe 'shall sooner pass away, than one jot or one tittle of the law shall pass, until all shall be fulfilled.' Yet if this sentence be universally executed, the reward promised to Christ in the covenant of redemption, viz. the immortal holiness and happiness of those who in that covenant were promised to him as his seed, must of necessity fail. This sentence, therefore, will not be universally executed; because such an execution would 'render the promise of God of none effect.'

Farther: All who are involved in the execution of this sentence will not only suffer, but also sin for ever. But no words are necessary to prove, that a collection of sinners continuing to sin for ever, could in no sense constitute a reward to Christ, for his labours and sufferings in the work of redemption. From them he could receive neither love, gratitude, nor praise. In their character he could see nothing amiable, nothing to excite his complacency. In his government of them, his goodness and mercy would find no employment, and achieve no glory. Nor could they ever be his, in the sense of the covenant of redemption.

Thus it is beyond a doubt evident, that with regard to all those who are thus promised to Christ, the sentence

* Isaiah liii. 10. Lowth.

of the divine law will not, and cannot be executed; and that when they appear at their final trial, they will be acquitted from the punishment due to their sins, and delivered from the moral turpitude of their character. All this is plainly indispensable to the fulfilment of the covenant of redemption. Accordingly, we find it all promised in the most definite manner, wherever the subject is mentioned in the gospel.

The first step, in the final fulfilment of the promises contained in this covenant, towards those who are the seed of Christ, is the pardon of their sins. Sin, until it is pardoned, is still charged to the sinner's account. Hence, he is in this situation exposed to the punishment which it has deserved. The pardon of sin is, of course, attended by the exemption of the sinner from punishment; so much of course, that these things are usually considered as but one. They are, however, separable, not only in thought, but in fact. We do not always nor necessarily punish offenders, whom we still do not forgive. The offender may have merited, and may continue to merit punishment, and yet sufficient reasons may exist, why he should not be punished, although they are not derived from his moral character. Forgiveness, in the full sense, supposes the offender penitent, and includes an approbation of his character as such, and a reconciliation to him of the person who forgives. But these things are not involved in a mere determination to exempt an offender from punishment. On the part of God, however, in his conduct towards returning sinners, these things are not, I confess, separable in fact.

But the sinner might be forgiven, and acquitted from the punishment due to his sins, and yet not be rendered the subject of future blessings, much less of the blessings promised in the covenant of redemption. He might be annihilated. He might be placed in a state of happiness imperfect and mixed, like that of the present world; or he might be placed in a state of happiness unmixed and perfect, and yet greatly inferior to that which will be actually enjoyed by the penitent children of Adam. Another step, therefore, indispensable to the complete fulfilment of the covenant of redemption, is entitling them to the very blessings which are here promised; viz. the blessings of heaven; the first blessings, as I may hereafter have occasion to show, in the kingdom of God.

These three things, which I have specified as being involved in the justification of mankind, are all clearly included and promised in the covenant of redemption; and the connexion of them, or of our justification with that work, as the only foundation on which our justification can rest, is, I think, too manifest, from what has been said, to be doubted.

Having thus stated what I intend by justification under the gospel, I shall inquire,

II. *In what sense we are said to be justified freely by the grace of God.*

From what has been said in a former Discourse, concerning the impossibility of justification by our own obedience, it is, I trust, evident that our justification can in no sense nor degree be said, with truth, to be merited by ourselves. In this respect, therefore, if it exist at all, it must of necessity be communicated freely. It will, however, be necessary to a satisfactory explanation of this subject, to examine it particularly, so as to prevent any misconception concerning its nature, and so as to obviate any objections which may arise in the minds of those who hear me. To this examination it will be indispensable that I settle, in the beginning, the meaning which I annex to the term, 'grace,' on which the import of the proposition depends.

The word 'grace' is used by the inspired writers in various senses. It denotes:

(1.) A free gift; which was, perhaps, its original meaning.

(2.) The free, sovereign love of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, the source of every such gift from God.

(3.) The efficacious power of the Holy Ghost on the hearts of mankind; 2 Cor. xii. 9.

(4.) That state of reconciliation with God, which is enjoyed by Christians; Rom. v. 2.

(5.) Any virtue of the Christian character.

(6.) Any particular favour communicated by God; Eph. iii. 8.

Besides these, in common use it denotes gracefulness of person, deportment, or character.

In the text, it is manifestly used in the second sense; and denotes the free, sovereign love of God; the source of all our benefits:

That we are 'justified freely by the grace of God,' thus understood, I will now attempt to show by the following considerations:

1. Under the influence, or in the indulgence of this love, God formed the original design of saving mankind.

The law of God is a perfectly just law. But by this law man was condemned, and finally cast off. Justice, therefore, in no sense demanded the deliverance of mankind from condemnation. Of course, this deliverance was proposed and planned by the mere sovereign mercy of God.

2. The covenant of redemption was the result of the same mercy.

In this covenant, God promised to Christ the eternal happiness of all his seed; that is, his followers. Now it is certain, that no one of these obeyed the law of God. This was certainly foreknown by God; and, with this foreknowledge, he was pleased to promise this glorious blessing concerning creatures who were only rebels and apostates, and who merited nothing but wrath and indignation. Sovereign love only could operate in favour of such beings as these.

3. The same divine disposition executed the work of redemption.

When Christ 'came to his own, his own received him not.' On the contrary, they hated, opposed, and persecuted him through his life, and, with a spirit still more malignant and furious, put him to death.

The very same spirit is inherent in the nature of all men. We ourselves, who condemn the Jews as murderers, still with the same pertinacity reject the Saviour. We neither believe, nor obey; we neither repent of our sins, not forsake them; we neither receive his instructions, nor walk in his ordinances. Opposed to him in our hearts, we are opposed to him also in our lives.

The same opposition prevails in the whole race of Adam. Nor is there recorded on the page of history, a single known instance in which it may be believed, even with remote probability, that man, from mere native propensity, or an original goodness of heart, has cordially accepted Christ. Certainly, nothing but the sovereign love of God could accomplish such a work as that of redemption, for beings of this character.

4. The mission and agency of the Divine Spirit were the result of this love only.

In the human character, there is nothing to merit the interference of this glorious person on the behalf of mankind. Christ 'came to seek, and to' redeem man, because he 'was lost.' The Divine Spirit came to sanctify him, because without sanctification he was undone. This, the very fact of his regeneration unanswerably proves. Regeneration is the commencement of virtue in the soul. 'Without' evangelical 'love,' says St Paul, 'I am nothing:' that is, I am nothing in the kingdom of God; I have no spiritual or virtuous existence. From the necessity of regeneration then to man, and the fact, that he is regenerated, it is certain, that there is nothing in his nature, except his miserable condition, which could be an inducement to the Spirit of grace to interfere in human concerns.

What is true of this act of the Divine Spirit is equally true of his agency in enlightening, quickening, purifying, and strengthening man in the Christian course, and conducting him finally to heaven.

5. As all these steps, so plainly necessary to the justification of man, are the result of the unmerited love of God; so his justification itself flows entirely from the same love.

Christ in his sufferings and death made a complete atonement for the sins of mankind. In other words, he rendered to the law, character, and government of God such peculiar honour, as to make it consistent with their unchangeable nature and glory, that sinners should, on the proper conditions, be forgiven. But the atonement inferred no obligation of justice on the part of God to forgive them. They were still sinners after the atonement, in the same sense and in the same degree as before. In no degree were they less guilty, or less deserving of punishment.

The supposition, incautiously admitted by some divines, that Christ satisfied the demands of the law by his active and passive obedience, in the same manner as the payment of a debt satisfied the demands of a creditor has, if I mistake not, been heretofore proved to be unfounded in the Scriptures. We owed God our obedience, and not our property; and obedience in its own nature is due from the subject himself, and can never be rendered by another. In refusing to render it, we are criminal; and for this criminality merit punishment. The guilt thus incurred is inherent in the criminal himself, and cannot in the nature of things be transferred to another. All that in this case can be done by a substitute, of whatever character, is to render it not improper for the lawgiver to pardon the transgressor. No substitute can by any possible effort make him cease to be guilty, or to deserve punishment. This (and I intend to say it with becoming reverence) is beyond the ability of omnipotence itself. The fact, that he is guilty, is past, and can never be recalled.

Thus it is evident, that the sinner, when he comes before God, comes in the character of a sinner only; and must, if strict justice be done, be therefore condemned. If he escape condemnation, then, he can derive these blessings from mercy only, and in no degree from justice. In other words, every blessing which he receives is a free gift. The pardon of his sins, his acquittal from condemnation, and his admission to the enjoyments of heaven, are all given to him freely and graciously, because God regards him with infinite compassion, and is therefore pleased to communicate to him these unspeakable favours.

Should it be said, that God has promised these blessings to the penitent, in the covenant of redemption made with Christ, and in the covenant of grace made with the penitent; and has thus brought himself under obligation to bestow them: I answer, that this is indeed true, but that it affects not the doctrine. The promise made in these covenants, is a gracious promise, originated by the divine compassion. Certainly, this procedure on the part of God is not the less free or gracious, because he was pleased to publish his own merciful design of accepting penitent sinners, and to confirm it to them by a voluntary promise. As I have already remarked, every part of the divine conduct towards the sinner, every spiritual blessing which the sinner receives antecedently to his justification, is the result of grace only, or sovereign love. These preceding acts, therefore, being themselves absolutely gracious, can never render the act of justifying the sinner the less gracious, or render him the meritorious object of that justification, to which he could never have been entitled but by means of these preceding acts of grace. The promise of justification was made, not to a meritorious being, but to a sinner; a guilty, miserable rebel, exposed by his rebellion to final perdition. The fulfilment of this promise is an act equally gracious with that of making the promise itself.

Should it be said, that the sinner is renewed antecedently to his justification; and, having thus become a holy or virtuous being, has also become, either wholly or partially, a meritorious object of justification; I answer, that the law of God condemns the sinner to death for the first transgression. Now, it will not be said, that the sanctified sinner is not chargeable with many transgressions, the guilt of which still lies at his door, and for which he may now be justly condemned, notwithstanding his repentance. This, it is believed, was made abundantly evident in a former Discourse, concerning the impossibility of justification by our own obedience. The sinner, therefore, although sanctified, still deserves the wrath of God for all his transgressions; and according to the sentence of the law must, if considered only as he is in himself, finally punished.

That the penitent is not partially justified on account of his own merit after he is sanctified, must, I think, be acknowledged, if we attend to the following considerations:—

(1.) It will be admitted, that all those who are sanctified, are also justified.

'Whom he called, them he also justified;' that is, he justified all those whom he 'called' effectually, or 'sanctified.' But it will not be denied, that some persons are sanctified on a dying bed, when they have no opportunity to perform any works of righteousness which might be the ground of their justification. The case of the penitent thief will, I suppose, be generally acknowledged to be substantially of this nature. It will not be denied, that some persons are 'sanctified from the womb,' as were Jeremiah and John the Baptist; nor that of these some die, antecedently to that period of life when they become capable of directs acts of moral good and evil. The children of believing parents, dedicated to God, and dying in their infancy, will, I suppose, be allowed to be, universally, instances of this kind. Concerning all the instances which exist of both

these classes, it must be acknowledged that, without exception, they are the subjects of justification; and that they are in no sense justified on account of their own righteousness, but solely by the free grace of God, on account of the righteousness of Christ. If, then, others are justified partially, on account of their own righteousness, justification is given to some of mankind on one ground, or procuring cause, and to others on another, and very different ground. But no such doctrine is any where taught, or even hinted at, in the Scriptures; and I presume, that no intelligent man, acquainted with them, will pretend that any such diversity exists in the justification of mankind.

(2.) The Scripture nowhere teaches us, that we are justified partly on account of our own righteousness, and partly on account of the righteousness of Christ.

St Paul, in the 27th verse of the context, pursuing the subject of justification by the free grace of God, says, 'Where is boasting, then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? Nay; but by the law of faith.' Here we are taught, that all boasting is absolutely excluded; and that it is excluded not by the law of works, but by the law of faith. But the same apostle says, that 'to him that worketh the reward is reckoned, not of grace, but of debt:' that is, the reward of justification and its consequences, would be due to him who received it on account of his works. He then certainly might boast: that is, he might truly say that he had merited justification by his own works. If he had merited justification partly by his own works, he can truly boast of having merited that part of his justification. 'Boasting,' therefore, cannot, on this plan of justification, 'be excluded.' Yet the apostle elsewhere teaches us, that it was one end of the system of redemption, as established by God, 'that no flesh should glory in his presence,' but that 'he who glorieth,' should 'glory only in Christ.' 1 Cor. i. 29—31.

Besides, it is incredible, if this doctrine be true, that no mention of it should be made in the Scriptures. I know of no passage in the Scriptures so much relied on by its abettors, as the discourse of St James, in the second chapter of his Epistle. In a future Discourse I design to examine the account given of this subject by St James, and expect to show that he furnishes no support to it. Should I succeed in this expectation, it will probably be admitted by those who hear me, that the doctrine finds no countenance in the Scriptures, and must therefore be given up.

(3.) The works of the best men never fulfill the demands of the law; and therefore cannot be the ground, either wholly or partially, of their justification.

In the conclusion of the seventh chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, St Paul describes his own state, as it was when he wrote this Epistle; or generally after his conversion. As this assertion has been doubted: and as respectable divines have supposed this discourse to be an account of St Paul's state before he was converted, I shall attempt to prove the truth of my assertion. This I shall do very summarily, in the three following remarks:—

[1.] St Paul observes, ver. 22, 'I delight in the law of God, after the inward man. This assertion was never true of any man, antecedently to his regeneration. St Paul does not say, that he approves of the law of God. This would have been a declaration concerning his reason, or his conscience. But he says, 'I delight in the law of God.' This is a declaration concerning his feelings, his heart. The heart of an unregenerate man never yet delighted in the divine law.

[2.] In the 24th verse, he exclaims, 'O wretched man, that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?'

From this exclamation it is certain, that the evil from which St Paul so passionately wished a deliverance, was existing at the time when the passage was written. But at the time when the passage was written, St Paul had been a convert many years. The evil existed, therefore, after his conversion.

[3.] In the 25th verse he says, 'So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God.'

This assertion could never be truly made concerning any unregenerate man. The mind of every such man, we know from the mouth of the same apostle, 'is enmity against God; not subject to his law, neither indeed can be.'

The account given by St Paul of himself in this chapter, is then an account of his moral state, at the time when the chapter was written. As St Paul, in all probability, was inferior to no other mere man in moral excellence, he may be justly considered as having given us here a description of Christians in their very best state.

But, if in this state there is 'a law in their members, warring against the law of their minds, and bringing them into captivity to the law of sin, which is in their members;' if, 'when they would do good, evil is present with them;' so that 'the good which they would, they do not; and the evil which they would not, they do;' how plain is it that, instead of meriting justification by their works, they daily violate the law of God, provoke his anger, expose themselves to condemnation and stand in infinite need of the intercession of Christ, and the pardon of their sins, in order to their salvation!

Besides, the very best actions of regenerated men are imperfect, and fall short of the demands of the law. This position is so rarely contested, that I need not here allege arguments to evince its truth. But it cannot be pretended, that an obedience, which does not even answer the demands of the law in any case, but is invariably defective, and therefore in some degree sinful, can be the ground of justification to any man.

I have now finished the observations which I intended concerning this subject. If I mistake not, they furnish ample proof, that we are 'justified freely by the grace of God, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.' A few remarks shall conclude the Discourse.

REMARKS.

1. From what has been said, it is evident that the salvation of mankind is a glorious exhibition of the character, and particularly of the benevolence, of God.

On this subject I cannot dwell; and shall only observe summarily, that the work of our salvation was contrived and accomplished, by God alone; that the means by which it was accomplished, viz. the mediation of Christ, and the mission and agency of the Holy Ghost, far from lessening, only enhance our conceptions of the divine benevolence displayed in this work; that the good-will manifested in doing any thing, is ever proportioned to the efforts which are made; that, in the present case, the efforts actually made are the most

wonderful which have been disclosed to the universe; and that they, therefore, discover the good-will of the Creator to mankind, in a manner, and in a degree wholly unexampled.

All this, at the same time, was done for beings entirely unnecessary to God. In himself, therefore, in his own compassion, must have existed the originating, powerful, and productive cause of this wonderful event. What must have been the good-will of him, who sent his Son 'to seek and to save that which was lost;' and to 'become obedient unto death, even the death of the cross,' that sinners and rebels might live!

2. The Socinian objection against the doctrine of the atonement, that it is opposed to the scriptural account of the exercise of grace in our justification, is here seen to be groundless.

If the observations made in this Discourse are true, the doctrine of the atonement, instead of lessening or destroying the exercise of grace in our justification, only renders this act of God more eminently gracious. If all these things which have been mentioned, particularly the atonement of Christ, were necessary to be done in order to the salvation of mankind, the mercy which resolved on them all is far more strongly displayed, than if nothing more had been necessary than barely to forgive the sinner.

3. If God be thus merciful, all the declarations of his mercy ought to be believed by us.

The disposition, which could contrive and execute these things of its own mere choice, without any reward, without any expectation of any reward, for beings equally undeserving and unnecessary, can do all things which are kind and proper to be done. Especially can this disposition carry the things which it has contrived and begun into complete execution. To do this is its own natural bent, the mere progress of its inherent propensities. The declarations, therefore, which manifest the determination of him in whom this disposition resides, to accomplish all things pertaining to this work, ought cordially as well as entirely to be believed. To distrust them is equally absurd and guilty; absurd, because they are supported by the most abundant evidence; guilty, because the distrust springs from the heart, and not from the understanding.

Why should God be disbelieved, when he declares, that 'he has no pleasure in the death of the sinner?' or when he proclaims, 'Whosoever will, let him come, and take the water of life freely?' If he had wished to punish mankind for the gratification of his own views or pleasure, could he not have done it with infinite ease? To him it was certainly unnecessary to announce the forgiveness of sin, to send his Son to die, or to give his Spirit and his word to sanctify and save. This immense preparation depended solely on his own mere pleasure. He might have suffered the law to take its course. He might have annihilated or punished for ever the whole race of Adam; and with a command have raised up a new and better world of beings in their stead. Men are in no sense necessary to God. He might have filled the universe with angels at once; perfect, obedient, excellent, and glorious beings; and been loved, praised, and obeyed by them for ever. Why, then, but because he was desirous to save poor, guilty, perishing men, did he enter upon the work of their salvation? Why did he give his Son to redeem them? Why did he send his Spirit to sanctify them? Why did he proclaim 'glad tidings of great joy' unto all people? Why does he wait with infinite patience; why has he always waited to be gracious, amid all the provocations and sins of this polluted world? Why are the calls of mercy, after being so long and so extensively rejected with scorn and insult, repeated through one age after another? Why, after all our unbelief, are they repeated to us? Why are we, after all our transgressions, assembled this day to hear them? The true, the only answer is, God is infinitely kind, merciful, and willing 'to save to the uttermost.'

Let, then, this glorious Being be believed without distrust, without delay. Let every sinner boldly come to the throne of grace, to the door of life; and be assured that, if he desires sincerely to enter, he will not be shut out.

SERMON LXV.

JUSTIFICATION.—THE DUTY OF BELIEVING.

Therefore we conclude, that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.

More correctly rendered;

Therefore we conclude, that man is justified by faith without works of law.—Rom. iii. 28.

In the last Discourse I attempted to show, that in consequence of the redemption of Christ, man is justified freely by the grace of God. The grace of God is the source, the moving cause, of this blessing to mankind. The next subject of consideration before us, is the means by which man, in the economy of redemption, becomes entitled to this blessing. These in the text are summed up in the single article, faith, which is here declared to be the instrument of justification. To elucidate this truth is the design with which I have selected the present theme of discourse.

But before I enter upon the doctrine in form, it will be necessary to remind you, that an objection is raised against it at the threshold, which if founded in truth, would seem to overthrow it at once. It is this: that faith is so far from being of a moral nature, as to be necessary, and unavoidable; man being absolutely passive in believing, and under a physical impossibility of doing otherwise than he actually does; whether in believing, or disbelieving. Of course, it is farther urged, an attribute, governed wholly by physical necessity, can never recommend us to God: much less become the ground of so important a blessing, as justification.'

It will be easily seen that, as long as this objection has

its hold on the mind, and is allowed its full import, the doctrine of justification by faith can never be received, unless in a very imperfect and unsatisfactory manner. If faith is a thing over which we have no control; if we believe only under the influence of a physical necessity, and, whether we believe or disbelieve, it is physically impossible for us to do otherwise; then it is plain, that faith is so far from being praiseworthy, amiable, and capable of recommending us to God, as to merit and sustain no moral character at all. According to this scheme, therefore, faith and unbelief being equally and absolutely involuntary and unavoidable, can never constitute a moral distinction between men. Faith can never be an object of the approbation, nor unbelief of the disapprobation of God. Much less can we be praiseworthy in believing, or blamable in disbelieving. Still less can we on one of these grounds be rewarded, and on the other punished. Least of all can we, in consequence of our faith, be accepted, and blessed for ever; and, in consequence of our unbelief, be rejected, and punished with endless misery.

All these things, however, are directly and palpably contradictory to the whole tenor of the gospel. In this, faith is approved, commanded, and promised an eternal reward. Unbelief, on the contrary, is censured, forbidden, and threatened with an everlasting punishment. Faith, therefore, is the hinge on which the whole evangelical system turns. 'If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.' 'He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not, shall not see life;' are declarations which, while they cannot be mistaken, teach us that all the future interests of man are suspended on this faith; and are, at the same time, declarations to which the whole evangelical system is exactly conformed. If then, our faith and disbelief are altogether involuntary, and the effect of mere physical necessity, God has annexed everlasting life and everlasting death, not to any moral character in man, but to the mere result of physical causes. A consequence so monstrous ought certainly not to be admitted. The Scriptures, therefore, must be given up, if this scheme is true.

I have now, I presume, shown it to be necessary that, before I enter upon the discussion of the doctrine contained in the text, this objection should be thoroughly examined and removed. To do this, will be the business of the present discourse.

In opposition to this objection, then, I assert, that faith, and its opposite, disbelief, are, in all moral cases, voluntary exercises of the mind; are proper objects of commands and prohibitions; and proper foundations of praise and blame, reward and punishment. This doctrine I shall endeavour to prove by the following arguments, derived both from reason and revelation; because the objection which I have been opposing has been incautiously admitted, at times, by Christians, as well as openly and triumphantly alleged by infidels.

1. Faith is everywhere commanded in the Scriptures. 'This is his commandment, that we believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ,' 1 John iii. 23. 'Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled; and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent ye and believe the gospel,' Mark i. 14, 15. In these two passages, we have the command to believe the gospel, delivered by Christ in form; and the declaration of the evangelist, that it is 'the commandment of God, that we believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ.' Whatever, then, we understand by faith, it is the object of a command, or law, which God has given to mankind; a thing which may be justly required, and, of course, a thing which they are able to render, as an act of obedience, at least in some circumstances. God cannot require what man is not physically able to perform. But all obedience to God is voluntary. Nothing is or can be demanded by him, which is not in its nature voluntary, nor can any thing but the will of intelligent beings be the object of moral law. No man will say, that a brute, a stone, or a stream, can be the object of such law. Faith, therefore, being in the most express terms required by a law or command of God, must of course be a voluntary exercise of the mind, in such a sense, that it can be rightfully required.

Farther: The language of the first of these passages most evidently denotes, that the command to 'believe on the name of Jesus Christ,' is one of peculiar and pre-eminent importance. 'This is his commandment:' as if there were no other; or no other which in its importance may be compared with this. Here St John teaches us, that faith is pre-eminently required by God in a manner distinct from that in which he requires other acts of obedience generally. Of course, faith is not only justly required of mankind by God, but is required in a manner more solemn than many other acts universally acknowledged to be voluntary.

Accordingly, a peculiar sanction is annexed to the law requiring our faith; 'He that believeth shall be saved; and he that believeth not shall be damned.'

The reward and the penalty here announced, are the highest which exist in the universe; and, therefore, directly indicate the obedience and the disobedience to be of supreme import. Nothing can be a stronger proof, that in the eye of God, faith and unbelief are voluntary, or moral exercises of man.

But it may be alleged, that the faith enjoined in these commands, is not a mere speculative belief; and, therefore, not the faith which, in the general objection opposed by me, is asserted to be physically necessary and involuntary. I readily agree, that the faith here enjoined is saving faith; and that this is not mere speculative belief. But such belief is an indispensable part of saving faith; and so absolutely inseparable from it, that without such belief saving faith cannot exist. Saving faith is always a speculative belief, joined with a cordial consent to the truth, and a cordial approbation of the object which that truth respects. When, therefore, saving faith is commanded, speculative belief, which is an inseparable part of it, is also commanded. It is not, indeed, required to exist by itself; or to be rendered without the accordance of the heart. But whenever saving faith is required, speculative belief is absolutely required. Of course speculative belief is, at least in some degree, in our power; and may be rendered as an act of obedience to God.

To him who believes in the inspiration of the Scriptures, these passages, and many others like them, furnish complete proof, that faith, whether saving or speculative, is an act of the mind, which is in such a sense voluntary, as to be the proper object of a command or law; that it may be justly required of mankind; and that it cannot be either refused or neglected, without guilt.

2. The universal consent of mankind furnishes ample

proof, that faith is, in many instances, a voluntary or moral exercise.

The evidence which I propose to derive from this source, lies in the following general truth: That in all cases, where mankind have sufficient opportunity thoroughly to understand any subject, and are under no inducement to judge with partiality, their universal judgment is right. As I presume this truth will not be doubted, I shall not attempt to illustrate it by any arguments. That the present case is included within this general truth is certain. Every man who thinks at all, knows by his own personal experience, and by his daily intercourse with other men, whether his own faith and theirs be voluntary in many instances, or not; I say, in many instances; because, if the assertion be admitted with this limitation, it will be sufficient for my purpose. If, then, mankind have determined, that faith is sometimes voluntary, the doctrine against which I contend must be given up.

The language of mankind very frequently expresses their real views in a manner much more exactly accordant with truth, than their philosophical discussions. Men make words only when they have ideas to be expressed by those words, and just such ideas as the words are formed to express. If, then, we find words in any language denoting any ideas whatever, we know with certainty that such ideas have existed in the minds of those by whom the words were used. Whenever these ideas have been derived from experience and observation, we also know that they were real, and not fantastical; and are founded, not in imagination, but in fact. In all languages are found words, denoting the same things with the English terms, *candour*, *fairness*, *reasonableness*, *impartiality*, and others, generally of the like import. The meaning of all these terms is clearly of this nature; that the persons to whom they are justly applied, use their faculties in collecting, weighing, and admitting evidence, in a manner equitable and praiseworthy. Accordingly, all persons who do this are highly esteemed and greatly commended, as exhibiting no small excellence of moral character.

In all languages, also, there are words answering to the English words, *prejudice*, *partiality*, *unreasonableness*, and *unfairness*. By these terms, when applied to this subject, we uniformly denote a voluntary employment of our faculties in collecting, weighing, and admitting evidence, conducted in a manner, inequitable and blameworthy. Accordingly, persons, to whom these terms are justly applied, that is, the very persons who employ their faculties in this manner, are universally disesteemed and condemned, as guilty and odious.

All these words were formed to express ideas really existing in the human mind, and ideas derived from experience and observation. Of course, these ideas have a real foundation in nature and fact, and the words express that which is real.

As the terms which I have mentioned are parts of the customary language of a great nation, and as other nations have, universally, corresponding terms, it is certain that these are the ideas of all men, everywhere presented by experience and observation, derived from facts, and grounded in reality. The common voice of mankind has, therefore, decided the question in a manner which, I apprehend, is incapable of error, and can never be impeached.

In perfect accordance with these observations, we know, that *voluntary blindness to evidence, argument, and truth*, is customary phraseology in the daily conversation of all men. In accordance with these observations also, the declaration, that 'none are so blind, as they who will not see,' is proverbial, and regarded as a maxim.

3. The mind is perfectly voluntary in the employment of collecting evidence, on every question which it discusses.

All questions are attended by more or less arguments, capable of being alleged on both sides. These arguments do not present themselves of course; but must be sought for, and assembled by the activity of the mind. In this case, the mind can either resolve or refuse to collect arguments, and in this conduct is wholly voluntary, and capable, therefore, of being either virtuous or sinful, praiseworthy or blameworthy, rewardable or punishable. Wherever its duty and interest, wherever the commands of God, or lawful human authority, or the well-being of ourselves, or our fellow men, demand that we collect such arguments, we are virtuous in obeying, and sinful in refusing.

Sometimes we obey, often we refuse. Most frequently, when we perform this duty at all, we perform it partially. Concerning almost every question which is before us, we assemble some arguments, and refuse or neglect to gather others. In this employment the mind usually leans to one side of the question; and labours not to find out truth or the means of illustrating it, but to possess itself of the arguments which will support the side to which it inclines, and weaken or overthrow that which it dislikes. Thus we collect all the arguments in our power, favourable to our own chosen doctrines, and oppose the contrary ones; and of design, or through negligence, avoid searching for those which will weaken our own doctrines, or strengthen such as oppose them. In all this our inclinations are solely and supremely active, and govern the whole process. For this conduct, therefore, we are deserving of blame; and as the case may be, of punishment.

4. The mind is equally voluntary in weighing, admitting, or rejecting evidence, after it is collected.

It is as easy, and as common, for the mind to turn its eye from the power of evidence, as from the evidence itself. I have already shown that we can at pleasure, either collect arguments, or refuse to collect them. With equal ease we can examine them after they are collected, or decline this examination; and after such examination as we chose to make is completed, we can with the same ease either admit, or reject them. The grounds on which we can render the admission or rejection satisfactory to ourselves, are numerous, and are always at hand. The arguments in question may oppose or coincide with some unquestioned maxim, principle, or doctrine, preconceived by us, and regarded as fundamental; and for these reasons may be at once admitted, or rejected. They may accord with the opinions of those whom we may think it pleasing, honourable, safe, or useful to follow. We may hastily conclude that they are all the arguments which favour the doctrine opposed to ours, and deem them wholly insufficient to evince its truth. We may suppose, whenever they seem to conclude against us, that there is some latent error in them, discernible by others, if not by ourselves; which, if discerned would destroy their force. We may determine, whenever the arguments in our

possession are apprehended to be inconclusive in favour of our opinions, that there are others which, although not now in our possession, would, if discovered by us, determine the question in our favour. We may believe, that the arguments before us will, if admitted, infer some remote consequence, in our apprehension grossly absurd, and on the ground of this distant consequence reject their immediate influence. Or the doctrine to be proved may be so odious to us, as to induce us to believe that no arguments whatever can evince its truth. For these and the like reasons, we can weigh or not weigh, admit or reject, any arguments whatever; and conclude in favour of either side of perhaps every moral question.

A judge, in any cause which comes before him, can admit, or refuse to admit, witnesses on either side. After they have testified, he can consider or neglect their testimony, and can give it what degree of credit he pleases, or no credit at all. In all this he acts voluntarily; so perfectly so, that another judge, of a different disposition, could and would, with the same means in his possession, draw up a directly opposite judgment concerning the cause. Facts of this nature are so frequent, as to be well known to mankind, acknowledged universally, and accounted a part of the ordinary course of things. The mind, in considering doctrines, is usually this partial judge; and conducts itself towards its arguments, as the judge towards his witnesses. In this conduct it is altogether voluntary, and altogether sinful.

In the contrary conduct of collecting arguments with a design to know the truth, in weighing them fairly, and in admitting readily their real import, it is equally voluntary; and possesses and exhibits the contrary character of virtue, as really as in any case whatever. Accordingly, all men, when employed in observing these two modes of acting in their fellow men, have pronounced the latter to be excellent and praiseworthy, and the former to be unjust, base, and deserving alike of their contempt and abhorrence.

5. The doctrine which I am opposing, if true, renders both virtue and vice, at least in a great proportion of instances, impossible.

All virtue is nothing else but voluntary obedience to truth; and all sin is nothing else but voluntary disobedience to truth, or voluntary obedience to error. Accordingly, God has required nothing of mankind, but that they 'should obey truth;' particularly, *the truth;* or evangelical truth. Voluntary conformity to truth is, therefore, virtue in every possible instance. But we cannot voluntarily conform to truth, unless we believe it. If our faith, then, is wholly involuntary, and necessary, it follows, of course, that we are never faulty nor punishable for not believing; since our faith, in every case where we do not believe, is physically impossible. For not believing, therefore, we are not, and cannot be, blamable; and as we cannot conform to truth, when we do not believe it to be truth, it follows that, whenever we do not believe, we are innocent in not obeying.

For the same reason, whenever we believe error to be truth, our belief, according to this scheme, is compelled by the same physical necessity; and we are guiltless in every such instance of faith. All our future conformity to such error is, of course, guiltless also. Thus he who believes in the existence and perfections, of Jehovah, in the rectitude of his law and government, and in the duty of obeying him, and he who believes in the deity of Beelzebub, or a calf, or a stock, or a stone, while they respectively worship and serve these infinitely different gods, are in the same degree virtuous, or in the same degree sinful. In other words, they are neither sinful nor virtuous. The faith of both is alike physically necessary; and the conformity of both to their respective tenets follows their faith, of course.

Should it be said that, although faith is thus necessary, our conformity or nonconformity to what we believe is still voluntary, and therefore is virtuous: I answer, that were I to allow this, as I am not very unwilling to do, to be true; still the objector must acknowledge that a vast proportion of those human actions which have universally been esteemed the most horrid crimes, are, according to his own plan, completely justified. He cannot deny, that the heathen have almost universally believed their idols to be gods, and their idolatry the true religion. He cannot deny, that a great part of the wars which have existed in the world, have by those who have carried them on, been believed to be just; that the persecutions of the Christians were, by the heathen, who were the authors of them, thought highly meritorious; that the horrid cruelties of the Popish inquisition were, to a great extent, considered by the Catholics as 'doing God service;' and that all the Mohammedan butcheries were regarded by the disciples of the Koran as directly required by God himself. Nay, it cannot be denied by the objector, nor by any man who has considered the subject, that the Jews, in very great numbers, believed themselves warranted in rejecting, persecuting, and crucifying Christ. This is undoubtedly indicated by that terrible prediction of the Saviour, 'If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.' Let the objector then, and all who hold his opinions on this subject, henceforth be for ever silent concerning the guilt usually attributed to these several classes of men, and acknowledge them to have been compelled by a physical necessity to all these actions, lamentable indeed, but wholly unstained by any criminality.

At the same time, let it be observed, that the determination of the will is always as the dictate of the understanding which precedes it. If then, this dictate of the understanding is produced by a physical necessity, how can the decision of the will, which follows it of course, be in any sense free? If faith be necessary in the physical sense, every other dictate of the understanding must be equally necessary, and, of course, that which precedes every determination of the will. In what manner, then, can the determination of the will fail of being the mere result of the same necessity?

But if the determinations of the will are physically necessary, they cannot be either virtuous or sinful. If, therefore, these things are true, there can be, according to this scheme, neither virtue nor vice in man.

6. This doctrine charges God with a great part, if not with all, the evil conduct of mankind.

Whatever the system of things in this world is, it was contrived and created, and is continually ordered, by God. If mankind believe only under the coercion of physical necessity, then God has so constituted them, as to render their faith in this sense, necessary and unavoidable. Whenever they err, therefore, they err thus necessarily by the ordinance and irresistible power of God. Of course, as the state of things in this, as well

as all other respects, is the result of his choice, he has chosen that they should err, and compelled them to err by the irresistible impulse of almighty power. In this case, we will suppose them to design faithfully to do their duty, or, in other words, to conform their conduct to the doctrines which they actually believe, and suppose to be truth. In thus acting, they either sin, or they do not. If they sin, God compels them to sin: if they do not, still all their conduct is productive of evil only: for conformity to error is, of course, productive only of evil. By this scheme, therefore, this mass of evil, immensely great and dreadful, is charged to God alone.

At the same time, if in the same manner they embrace truth, their reception of it is equally compelled. Their conformity to it is, of course, no more commendable than their conformity to error; and God has so constituted things, that they cannot conform to it of choice, or from love to truth, as such; but only from physical necessity. Or, if this should be questioned, they cannot conform to it from the apprehension that it is truth, because they have embraced it under the force of this necessity; and must conform to every thing which they have embraced in one manner only.

There are many other modes of disproving this doctrine, on which I cannot now dwell; and which cannot be necessary for the present purpose, if the arguments already advanced have the decisive influence which they appear to me to possess. I will only observe farther, that the scheme which I am opposing is directly at war with all the commands and exhortations given us to 'search the Scriptures,' to 'receive the truth,' to 'seek for wisdom,' to 'know God,' to 'believe in Christ,' and to 'believe his word;' and with the commendations and promises given to those who do, and the censures and threatenings denounced against those who do not, these things. Equally inconsistent are they with all our mutual exhortations to candour, to investigation, to impartial decision, and to all other conduct of the like nature: our commendation of those who pursue it, and our condemnation of those who do not. Both the Scriptures and common sense ought, if this scheme is well founded, to assume totally new language, if they would accord with truth.

Should any person suppose that I have annexed too much importance to truth, in asserting, that virtue in all instances is nothing else but a voluntary conformity to truth; and imagine that it ought to be defined, a voluntary conformity to the divine precepts: he may gain complete satisfaction on this point, by merely changing a precept into a proposition. For example: the precepts, 'Thou shalt have no other gods before me,' and 'Thou shalt honour thy father and thy mother,' become truths, when written in this manner:—It is right, or it is thy duty, to have no other gods before me; or to honour thy father and thy mother.

I have now, if I mistake not, clearly evinced the falsehood of the doctrine which I have opposed, and shown it to be equally contrary to the Scriptures, and to the common sense of mankind.

Whenever this doctrine has been honestly imbibed, it has, I presume, been imbibed from a misapprehension of the influence of that acknowledged principle of philosophy, that in receiving impressions from all objects, the mind is passive only; and, therefore, is necessitated to receive just such impressions as the objects presented to its view are fitted to make. No man, acquainted with the state of the human mind, will call this principle in question. But no man of this character can rationally imagine that it can at all affect the subject of this Discourse, so as to furnish any support to the scheme which I am opposing.

The amount of this principle is exactly this; that God has so constituted the mind, and has formed objects in such a manner, that they uniformily present to the mind their real state and nature, and not another. Were this not the structure of the mind, and the proper efficacy of the objects with which it is conversant, it would either be never able to see truly, or would never know when it saw in this manner. This constitution of things, then, is indispensable to our discernment of their true nature; and without it we could never be able, satisfactorily, to distinguish truth from falsehood.

But nothing is more evident than that this constitution of things in no degree affects the subject in debate. In no sense is it true that, because we have such optics, and the things with which we are conversant such a nature, we are, therefore, obliged to turn our eyes to any given object, to view it on any given side, to examine it in any given manner; nor to connect it in our investigation with any other particular set of objects. Truth is the real agreement or disagreement of ideas asserted in propositions. The relations of these ideas are its basis. Now we can compare and connect what ideas we please, in what manner we please, and by the aid of any other intervening ideas which we choose. In this manner we can unite and separate them at pleasure; and thus either come to the knowledge of truth, or the admission of falsehood, according to our inclinations. All these things, also, we can refuse to do; and in both cases we act in a manner perfectly voluntary. Were we not passive in the mere reception of ideas, we should see to no purpose. Were we not active in comparing and connecting them, we should see only under the influence of physical necessity.

From these considerations it is evident, unless I am deceived, that this principle, so much relied on by those with whom I am contending, has not the least influence towards the support of their scheme.

REMARKS.

From these observations we learn,

1. Why men in exactly the same circumstances, judge and believe very differently concerning the same objects.

When a question or doctrine is proposed to the consideration of several men, in the same terms, with the same arguments, and at the same time, we, almost of course, find them judging and deciding concerning it in different manners. Were our judgment, or, what is here the same thing, our faith, the result of mere physical necessity; this fact could never take place. But it is easily explained, as the natural course of things, where such judges as men are concerned. When a question is thus proposed, one declines or neglects to inquire altogether. Another listens only to the evidence on one side. A third, partially to that on both sides. A fourth, partially to that on one side, and wholly to that on the other. And a fifth, to all the evidence which he can find. One cares nothing about the question; another is predetermined to give his decision on one side; and another resolves to decide according to truth. One is too lazy, another too indifferent, another too biassed, and another too self-sufficient, to discover truth at all.

In all these, except the candid, thorough examiner, the conduct which they adopt on this subject is sin. Inclination, choice, bias of mind, prevents them from 'coming to the knowledge of the truth.' If they loved truth, as their duty demands, they would easily and certainly find it. Their indifference to it, or their hatred of it is the true reason why they find it not; and the real explanation of the strange manner in which they judge, and of their otherwise inexplicable faith in doctrines, not only absurd, but unsupported even by specious evidence.

(2.) From these observations also it is evident, that faith may be a virtuous, and unbelief a sinful affection of the mind.

Truth is the foundation of all good. On this, as their basis, rest the character, designs, government, and glory of the Creator, and all the happiness and virtue of the intelligent universe. But the only way in which truth can be useful to intelligent creatures, or the means of the divine glory, is by being believed. Every degree of happy influence which truth has, or can have, on the intelligent kingdom is, therefore, derived entirely from faith; so far as absolute knowledge is not attainable. On faith, then, all these amazing interests wholly rest. That which is not believed, cannot be obeyed. The influence of truth cannot commence in our minds, until our faith in it has commenced. Universal unbelief, therefore, would completely destroy the divine kingdom and the general happiness at once. Of course partial unbelief, the unbelief of many, a few, or one, aims directly at the same destruction.

Since, then, faith is a voluntary exercise of the mind, it follows that, whenever it is exercised towards moral objects, it is virtuous; is an effort of the mind directed to the promotion of this immense good which I have specified. To the degree in which it may be thus virtuous, no limits can be affixed; but it may rise to such a height as to occupy all the supposable powers of any intelligent creature.

On the contrary, unbelief, when directed towards moral objects, being always voluntary, is always sinful. Its efficacy, as opposed to the glory of God and the good of the universe, has been already mentioned. Its insolence towards the divine character is exhibited in the strongest terms by St John, in this memorable declaration, 'He that believeth not God, hath made him a liar.' What a reproach is this to the Creator! What an impious expression of contempt to the infinitely blessed Jehovah! The very insult offered to him by the old serpent in his seduction of our first parents! Them this unbelief destroyed; and, from that melancholy day, it has been the great instrument of perdition to their posterity. Faith is the only medium of our access to God. 'To come to him,' we 'must believe that he is;' for without such belief he would be to us a mere nihility. Atheism, therefore, cuts a man off from all access to God; and consequently from all love, and all obedience. Were the universe atheistical, it would cease from all moral connexion with its Creator. Deism, though an humbler degree of the same spirit, produces exactly the same effects. 'He that believeth not the Son, hath not life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.' Practical unbelief, the same spirit in a degree still inferior, is, however, followed by the same miserable consequences. A mere speculative belief leaves the heart and the life as it found them, opposed to God, and the objects of his indignation. The speculative believer, therefore, although advanced a step beyond the Deist, and two beyond the Atheist, is still disobedient and rebellious, 'without hope, and without God in the world.'

SERMON LXVI.

JUSTIFICATION.—THE NATURE OF FAITH.

Therefore we conclude, that a man is justified by faith, without works of law.—Rom. iii. 28.

In my last Discourse I attempted to show, that faith and unbelief are voluntary exercises of the mind, and may, therefore, be virtuous or sinful; and to refute the objections against this doctrine. This I did, without critically examining the nature of faith, which I purposely reserved for a separate discussion. This is evidently the next object of inquiry. I shall, therefore, endeavour in this Discourse to explain the faith of the gospel; or the faith by which we are justified.

I. *Faith in this sense respects God as its object.*

'Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness,' Gen. xv. 6, Rom. iv. 3, Gal. iii. 6, James ii. 23. 'Without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him,' Heb. xi. 6. 'Believe in the Lord your God; so shall ye be established,' 2 Chron. ii. 20. 'Who by him,' says St Peter to the Christians to whom he wrote, 'do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead and gave him glory, that your faith and hope might be in God,' 1 Peter i. 21. 'The jailer rejoiced, believing in God with all his house,' Acts xvi. 34. 'That they who have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works,' Tit. iii. 8. 'Jesus answering, saith unto them, Believe in God,' Mark xi. 29. 'He that believeth on him that sent me hath everlasting life,' John v. 24.

It will be unnecessary to multiply proofs any farther. I have made these numerous quotations to show that, in the common language of the Scriptures, faith in God is commanded; is the universal characteristic of Christians; is declared to be the object of divine approbation; is 'counted to them for righteousness;' and is entitled to an everlasting reward.

II. *The faith of the gospel especially respects Christ as its object.*

'Ye believe in God,' says our Saviour to his apostles, 'believe also in me,' John xiv. 1. 'If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins,' John viii. 24. 'He that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting life:' 'He that believeth not is condemned already,' John iii. 36, John iii. 18, and John vi. 40. 'But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness,' Rom. iv. 5. In these passages it is evident, that to all such as are acquainted with the gospel, it is indispensable that their faith respect Christ as its especial object; that wherever this is the fact, they are assured of 'everlasting life;' and wherever it is not, they will not 'see life, but the wrath of God abideth on them.'

III. *The faith of the gospel respects Christ particularly as the Son of God.*

'He that believeth on the Son hath life,' John vi. 40, John iii. 36. 'And he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life.' 'Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father,' 1 John ii. 23. 'He that believeth not is condemned already, because he believeth not on the name of the only-begotten Son of God,' John iii. 18.

IV. *The faith of the gospel respects Christ as its object, in all his offices, but especially in his priestly office.*

1. As a prophet, or the preacher of the gospel.

'Then said Jesus to those Jews who believed on him, If ye continue in my word, ye are my disciples indeed. And ye shall know the truth; and the truth shall make you free. He that receiveth not my words hath one that judgeth him,' John xii. 48. 'The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life,' John vi. 63. 'That they might all be damned, who believed not the truth,' 2 Thess. ii. 12. 'The gospel is the power of God unto salvation,' Rom. i. 16. 'In Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel,' 1 Cor. iv. 15.

2. As a priest.

'Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood,' Rom. iii. 25. 'My blood is drink indeed,' John vi. 55. 'Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life,' John vi. 54; see also 53, 56, and 57. 'So many of us, as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his death,' Rom. vi. 3. Generally, all those passages, which speak of mankind as justified and saved by the blood and by the death of Christ, indicate, in an unequivocal manner, that our faith especially respects this as its object; because his death is especially the means of our salvation; since by this he became 'a propitiation for the sins of the world.'

3. As a king.

'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, thou and thy house.' Acts xvi. 31. 'No man can say, that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost,' 1 Cor. xii. 3. 'And they stoned Stephen, invocating, and saying, Lord Jesus receive my spirit; and he cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge,' Acts vii. 59, 60. 'For I know in whom I have believed; and am persuaded, that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.' In all these instances the faith referred to is evidently faith in Christ, as the Lord, or 'King in Zion.' The two last passages exhibit very strong examples of faith in Christ, as the sovereign disposer of all things. To 'deny the Lord, who bought us,' St Peter declares to be the means of 'bringing upon ourselves swift destruction,' 2 Peter ii. 1.

V. *The faith of the gospel is an affection of the heart.*

'With the heart,' says St Paul, 'man believeth unto righteousness,' Rom. x. 10. This passage would be more literally translated, 'With the heart faith exists unto righteousness;' that is, the faith which is 'accounted to man for righteousness,' or which is productive of righteousness in the life, hath its seat in the heart; and the heart in this exercise co-operates with the understanding. In the former of these senses, the faith itself is called, Rom. iv. 13, 'the righteousness of faith;' the faith itself being a righteous or virtuous exercise. 'For the promise, that he should be heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through law, but through the righteousness of faith,' Rom. iv. 13. 'If thou believest with all thine heart,' said Philip to the eunuch, 'thou mayest be baptized,' Acts viii. 37. The faith of the heart, therefore, was indispensable to the eunuch, as the proper subject of baptism.

VI. *The faith of the gospel is the faith of Abraham.*

Both St Paul and St James have taught this doctrine so clearly and so abundantly, that I suppose no proof of this truth will be demanded. I shall only observe, therefore, that by St Paul the believing Gentiles are said to 'walk in the steps of the faith of Abraham;' and to be 'the seed, which is of the faith of Abraham;' and that on this account Abraham is called 'the father of all them that believe,' in reference to the promise, that he should be 'the father of many nations,' Rom. iv. 11, 12, 16.

Having established, as I hope, these several points by clear, unequivocal, scriptural decisions, I proceed to the main object of this Discourse, to which all that has been said will be found to be intimately related and highly important, by every person who wishes to understand this supremely interesting subject; viz. the nature of that exercise which thus respects God as its object; which peculiarly respects Christ as its object; which is an affection of the heart; and which is of the very same nature with that faith, which 'was counted to Abraham for righteousness.' I assert, then,

VII. *That the faith of the gospel is that emotion of the mind, which is called trust, or confidence, exercised towards the moral character of God, and particularly of the Saviour.*

All those of my audience who have been accustomed to read theological writings must know, that few moral subjects have been so much debated as faith. The controversy concerning it began in the days of the apostles, and has continued to the present time. Many writers have undoubtedly adopted views concerning this subject which are not warranted by the Scriptures. Many others, who have been sufficiently orthodox, have yet appeared to me to leave the subject less clear and distinct than I have wished. Few of their readers have, I suspect, left the persusal of what they have written with such satisfactory views concerning the nature of faith, as to leave their minds free from perplexity and doubt. Most of them would, I apprehend, wish to ask the writers a few questions at least, the answers to which would, in their view, probably remove several difficulties, and place the whole subject in a more distinct and obvious light. The difficulty which in my own researches

has appeared to attend many orthodox writings concerning it, has been this; it has been connected with various other things, which, although contributing perhaps to the writer's particular purpose, have yet distracted my attention, and prevented me from obtaining that clear and distinct view of faith which I wished. Like a man seen in a crowd, its appearance, although in many respects real and true, was yet obscure, indistinct, and unsatisfactory. I wished to see and survey it alone.

It will not, I suppose, be doubted, that evangelical faith, whatever is its object, is in all instances one single exercise of the mind. This being admitted, I proceed to show, that this exercise is the confidence mentioned above, by the following arguments:—

1. This confidence was the faith of Abraham.

This position I shall illustrate from two passages of Scripture.

The first is Heb. xi. 8, 'By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place, which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.' In this passage of Scripture it is declared, that Abraham was called to go into a distant land; and that, in obedience to this call, 'he went out, not knowing whither he went.' It is farther declared, that 'he went by faith,' that is, the faith so often mentioned in this chapter. That this was evangelical or justifying faith is certain; because, at the close of the preceding chapter, it is mentioned as the 'faith by which the just shall live' (see ver. 38); because it is styled the faith, 'without which it is impossible to please God;' the faith, with which 'Abraham offered up Isaac;'* with which 'Moses esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt;' with which believers are said 'to desire a better country, that is, an heavenly;' and on account of which, 'God is not ashamed to be called their God;' and to reward which he is said to have prepared for them a 'city;' or in other words, heaven.† The faith, then, with which Abraham went out to the land of Canaan, was the faith of the gospel.

The whole of the chapter is employed in unfolding the nature of this virtue. The manner in which this is done will, I am persuaded, be found upon a thorough examination to be singularly wise and happy. Faith is here described by its effects; and by effects which it has actually produced. These are chosen with great felicity and success. The persons selected, are persons who lived long before the appearance of Christ. Of course they knew very little concerning this glorious person, in the strict sense of the term, knowing. Their faith was, therefore, not at all confused and obscured by any real or apprehended mixture of knowledge. It existed simply, and by itself; and for that reason is seen apart from all other objects. In each of these persons it is seen in a new situation, and therefore, in some respects, in a new light. It appears in strong and efficacious exercise; and is therefore seen indubitably. It is exhibited as producing obedience in very many forms; and is thus exhibited as the source of obedience in every form. It is seen in many situations, and those highly interesting and difficult; and this therefore proved to be capable of producing obedience in every situation, and of enabling us to overcome every difficulty. In a word, it is here proved beyond debate, that faith is, in all instances, 'the victory which overcometh the world.'

The faith of Abraham exercised on this occasion was, then, the faith of the gospel. To understand its nature, as exhibited in this passage, it will be useful to consider the whole situation and conduct of Abraham, at the time specified.

When Abraham was called to go out of his own land, he knew not whither he was going; to what country, or to what kind of residence. He knew not whether the people would prove friends or enemies, kind or cruel, comfortable or uncomfortable neighbours to him; nor whether his own situation, and that of his family, would be happy or unhappy. Wholly uninfluenced by these considerations, and all others, by which men are usually governed in their enterprises, he still adventured upon an undertaking in which his own temporal interests and those of his family were finally embarked. Why did he thus adventure? The only answer to this question is, he was induced to go by a regard to the character of the person who called him. This regard was of a peculiar kind. It was not reverence, love, nor admiration. Neither of these is assigned by the apostle as the cause of his conduct. They might, they undoubtedly did, exist in his mind; but they did not govern his determination.

The emotion, by which he was compelled to leave his home, was confidence. God summoned him to this hazardous and important expedition, and he readily obeyed the summons. The true and only reason was, he confided entirely in the character and directions of God. God, in his view, was a being of such a character, that it was safe, and in all respects desirable, for Abraham to trust himself implicitly to his guidance. Such were his views of this glorious Being, that to commit himself, and all his concerns, to the direction of God was, in his estimation, the best thing in his power; best for him, and best for his family. He considered God as knowing better than he knew, and as choosing better than he could choose for himself. At the same time he experienced an exquisite pleasure in yielding himself to the direction of God. The divine character was, to his eye, beautiful, glorious, and lovely; and the emotion of confiding in it was delightful. Sweet in itself, it was approved by his conscience, approved by his Creator, and on both accounts doubly delightful.

The prime object of this confidence was the moral character of God; his goodness, mercy, faithfulness, and truth. Unpossessed of these attributes, he could never be trusted by us. His knowledge and power would, in this case, be merely objects of terror, and foundations of that dreadful suspense, which is finished misery. The confidence of Abraham therefore was, evidently confidence in the moral character of God.

It ought here to be observed, that the person, to whom Abraham's confidence was immediately directed, was the Lord Jesus Christ. 'No man hath seen God,' the Father, 'at any time.' The person appearing under the name of God to the patriarchs, was the Lord Jesus Christ. This is decisively proved in many ways: and, particularly, by the direct declaration of St Paul, 1 Cor. x. 9, 'Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents.' The passage here referred to, and the only one in which this event is recorded by Moses, is Numb. xxi. 5, 6: 'And the

* See Jam. ii. 21—23. † See Heb. xi. 6, 16, 17, 26.

people spake against God, and against Moses; Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt, to die in the wilderness? for there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loatheth this light bread. And Jehovah sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people, and much people of Israel died.' The God, the Jehovah, here mentioned, is unequivocally declared by St Paul to be Christ; and that it was the same God who destroyed the Israelites on this occasion, that appeared throughout the Old Testament to the patriarchs and their descendants, will not be questioned. Christ, therefore, was the immediate object of confidence to Abraham.

Let me endeavour to exhibit this subject with greater clearness by a familiar example. A parent sets out upon a journey, and takes with him one of his little children, always accustomed to receive benefits from his parental tenderness. The child plainly knows nothing of the destined journey; of the place to which he is going, of the people whom he will find, the entertainment which he will receive, the sufferings which he must undergo, or the pleasures which he may enjoy. Yet the child goes willingly, and with delight, Why? not because he is ignorant; for ignorance by itself is a source to him of nothing but doubt and fear. Were a stranger to propose to him the same journey in the same terms, he would decline it at once, and could not be induced to enter upon it without compulsion. Yet his ignorance here would be at least equally great. He is wholly governed, as a rational being ought to be, by rational considerations. Confidence in his parent, whom he knows by experience to be only a benefactor to him, and in whose affection and tenderness he has always found safety and pleasure, is the sole ground of his cheerful acceptance of the proposed journey, and of all his subsequent conduct. In his parent's company he feels delighted, in his care safe. Separated from him, he is at once alarmed, anxious, and miserable. Nothing can easily restore him to peace, or comfort, or hope, but the return of his parent. In his own obedience and filial affection, and in his father's approbation and tenderness, care and guidance, he finds sufficient enjoyment, and feels satisfied and secure. He looks for no other motive than his father's choice, and his own confidence. The way which his father points out, although perfectly unknown to him, the entertainment which he provides, the places at which he chooses to stop, and the measures, universally, which he is pleased to take, are, in the view of the child, all proper, right, and good. For his parent's pleasure, and for that only, he inquires; and to this single object are confined all his views, and all his affections.

No characteristic is by common sense esteemed more amiable or more useful in little children, more suited to their circumstances, their wants, and their character, than confidence. Nor is any parent ever better pleased with his own little children, than when they exhibit this characteristic. The pleasure of receiving it, and that of exercising it, are substantially the same.

In adult years, men of every description reciprocate the same pleasure in mutual confidence, whenever it is exercised. Friends, husbands and wives, rulers and subjects, demand, experience, and enjoy, this affection in a manner generally corresponding with that I have described.

The second passage, from which I propose to show that this confidence was the faith of Abraham, is Rom. iv. 20—22. 'He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully persuaded, that what he had promised he was also able to perform; and therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness.' The faith of Abraham here described, in which he was 'strong, giving glory to God,' and which was imputed to him for righteousness,' was faith in the promise of God concerning the future birth of Isaac, through whom he was to become the progenitor of Christ, and the father of many nations, especially of believers of all ages. This faith was built on the moral character of the promiser. But faith in a promise, when it is directed to the disposition of the promiser, as is plainly the case here, because the fulfilment of the promise must depend entirely on this disposition, is the very confidence of which I have been speaking.

2. This is the faith of the Old Testament.

'Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him,' says Job, chap. xiii. 15.—'I will trust in the mercy of God for ever and ever,' Psal. lii. 8.—'I will trust in the covert of thy wings,' Psal. lxi. 4.—'The righteous shall be glad in the Lord, and shall trust in him,' Psal. lxiv. 10.—'They that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever,' Psal. cxxv. 1.—'Who is among you that feareth the Lord?—let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God,' Isa. l. 10.—'Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord. Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is,' Jer. xvii. 5, 6.

No person acquainted with the Scriptures can, I think, hesitate to admit, that the exercise of mind mentioned in these passages under the name *trust*, is the same with that which in the New Testament is called *faith*. It is the character of the same persons, viz. the righteous, and their peculiar and pre-eminent character. The importance and the obligations assigned to it are the same; and the blessings promised to it are the same. All who possess and exercise it are pronounced 'blessed;' and all who do not possess it are declared 'cursed.'

In the verse following that last quoted from Jeremiah, the peculiar blessings of faith are declared to be the blessings of 'the man, who trusteth in the Lord. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh; but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit.' The peculiar character as well as peculiar blessing of faith is, that he who is the subject of it, shall 'abound in the work of the Lord.'

Such, precisely, is the glorious blessing here annexed to him who trusteth in the Lord; a blessing which is evidently the greatest of all blessings; for our Saviour informs us, that 'it is more blessed to give, than to receive;' to communicate good, than to gain it at the hands of others: a declaration which St Paul appears to make the sum of all that Christ taught concerning this interesting subject.

3. It is, I apprehend, the faith of the New Testament also.

In various places in the New Testament this exercise of the mind is directly called by the names *trust* and *confidence*.

'In his name shall the Gentiles trust,' quoted from Isa. xlii. 4, where it is rendered, 'the isles shall wait for his law:' in Matt. xii. 21, and Rom. xv. 12. That the word 'trust,' used here, denotes the faith of the Gentiles in the name of Christ, will not be questioned.

Eph. i. 12, St Paul says, 'that we' (that is, himself and his fellow Christians), 'should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.'

1 Tim. iv. 10, 'For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, especially of those that believe.'

2 Tim. i. 12, 'For I know whom I have believed.' The word πεπιστευκα is, by the translators, rendered 'trusted,' in the margin. It is rendered also in the same manner by Cruden, and, I think, correctly.

Heb. iii. 14, 'If we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end;' that is, our faith already begun.

Heb. xi. 1, 'Faith is the confidence of things hoped for.' This may, perhaps be regarded as a general definition. The word πιστευω, of which one of the meanings is *trust*, ought, I think, to be extensively rendered by this English term, in order to express the true sense of the original. The same thing may also be observed concerning its derivatives.

But the proof which I especially mean to allege at the present time, is contained in the following things:

(1.) The faith of Abraham is the faith of the New Testament: and this has, I flatter myself, been already proved to be the confidence above-mentioned.

(2.) In that extensive account of faith which is given us in the eleventh chapter of the Hebrews, we are taught, that the faith exercised by the saints of the Old Testament, is the same with the faith of the gospel; and this is not only generally called *trust* in the Old Testament itself; but, as has been already proved in several instances, and, were there time or necessity, might be proved in all, is no other than the confidence which I have specified. All these persons confided in the promise of God, and in the moral character of him by whom they were given.

4. The nature of the case, and the situation of the penitent, when he exercises faith in Christ, clearly evince the truth of the doctrine.

The sinner is condemned and ruined. By the law of God all hope of his recovery and salvation is precluded. Left to himself, therefore, in his present situation, he cannot be saved. While he is in this miserable condition, Christ declares that he is able, willing, and faithful to save him; and that to this end the sinner must, indispensably, surrender himself into his hands, or give himself up to him, and consent to be saved by him in his own way. Now, what can induce the sinner, in a case of this infinite magnitude, thus to give himself into the hands of Christ? Nothing but an entire confidence in his character, as thus able, willing, and faithful to save. But how shall the sinner know this? Or if he cannot know it, how shall he be persuaded of it? Know it in the proper sense of knowledge, he cannot; for it is plainly not an object of science. The word of Christ is the only ultimate evidence by which he must be governed; and this word depends, for all its veracity and convincing influence, on the moral character of Christ; on his goodness, faithfulness, and truth. Whenever the sinner, therefore, gives himself to Christ, according to his proposal, and in obedience to his commands, he does it merely because he places an entire confidence in his moral character, and in the declarations which he has made. In these he confides, because they are the declarations of just such a person, possessing just such a moral character. On this he trusts himself, his soul, his eternal well-being.

If he trusts in the instructions, precepts, and ordinances of Christ (for our faith is not unfrequently said to be exercised towards these), it is only because they are the instructions, precepts, and ordinances of such a person. Some of them, indeed, he may discern to be true and right in themselves; but for the truth of others, and the wisdom and safety of obeying them all, he relies, and must rely, only on Christ's character as their author. If he believes in the righteousness of Christ, and the acceptableness of it to God, as the foundation of pardon and peace to sinners, he believes or trusts in it only because it is the righteousness of just such a person.

The same things are true of his faith in the invitations, promises, resurrection, ascension, exaltation, government, intercession, presence, protection, and universal blessings of the Redeemer. The faith of the Christian is exercised towards all these things. But all of them, separated from his moral character, are nothing to the believer.

From these considerations it is, I think, sufficiently evident, that the faith of the gospel, whatever may be its immediate object, is no other than confidence in the moral character of God, especially of the Redeemer.

If I am asked, 'What is confidence in moral character?' I answer, look into your own bosoms, and examine what is that exercise of mind in which you trust a man for the sake of what he is; a parent, for example, or a friend. In this exercise you will find a strong illustration of the faith of the gospel.

Confidence, or trust, is a complex emotion of the mind, and involves good-will to its object. We cannot thus confide in any person, whom we do not love.

It involves, also, complacency in the object, or approbation of his character. We cannot thus trust any person whom we do not esteem.

It involves a conviction, that the attributes which awaken our confidence, really exist in the person whom we trust.

It involves a persuasion, that, in the case, and on the terms proposed, the person in whom we confide is ready to befriend us. Until this is admitted by us, there will be nothing about which our confidence can be exercised.

It involves a sincere delight in every exercise of it. No emotion yields higher enjoyment than confidence.

It involves a cheerful devotion to the interests and pleasure of the object trusted; a disposition to promote these interests, and to conform to that pleasure. Towards a superior, it is thus the foundation of constant and ready obedience.

Generally: It is the true and supreme attachment of a creature to his Creator; in which he surrenders himself entirely into his hands, to be disposed of by him at his pleasure, and to be made the instrument of his glory.

REMARKS.

1. This account of evangelical faith, if admitted, puts an end to all disputes concerning the question, Whether faith is a moral virtue.

So long as the nature of faith is unsettled, every question depending on it, must be unsettled also. If we do not determine what the faith of the gospel is, we are ill prepared to decide whether it is of a moral nature or not. If the faith of the gospel be a mere speculative assent to probable evidence, although we may indeed be virtuous in the disposition with which we at times exercise it, as was, I trust, proved in the preceding Discourse; yet, clearly, it is not necessarily virtuous, nor, if the mind stop here, can be virtuous at all. In mere speculative belief, existing by itself, that is, in merely yielding our assent to probable evidence, we are, as I observed in the same Discourse, entirely passive, and in no sense virtuous. But if faith is confidence in God, of the nature here exhibited, it is beyond dispute virtue; virtue of pre-eminent importance, and capable of existing in every possible degree. So far as I know, confidence in this sense, has ever been esteemed voluntary, and acknowledged, therefore, to be of a moral nature. Plainly, this is its true character. Accordingly, it is approved, loved, and commended by all mankind; and undoubtedly merits all the encomiums given to it, both in profane writings, and in revelation.

One of the principal reasons why the faith of the gospel has been supposed to be a mere speculative belief, is probably this: speculative belief is the thing intended by the term, faith, in its original sense. It is not very unnatural, therefore, when we begin to read the Scriptures, to consider this as the meaning of the word in these writings; nor is it very unnatural for men of a sanguine cast, men who have a system to defend, or men who change their opinions with reluctance, to retain an interpretation which they have once imbibed. We are not, therefore, to wonder that this opinion has been extensively spread, or pertinaciously retained.

But the Scriptures give no countenance to this doctrine. 'With the heart man believeth unto righteousness,' is the sum of their instructions concerning this subject. He who can believe that a speculative assent to probable evidence, such as that which we yield to ordinary historical testimony, produced the affects ascribed to faith in the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, can certainly believe any thing.

2. This doctrine explains to us the manner in which faith is spoken of in the Scriptures.

Particularly, we see abundant reason why it is spoken of as a virtue; and is accordingly commanded in many forms, on many occasions, and to all persons; and why it is promised a glorious and endless reward. At the same time we have explained to us, in the same satisfactory manner, the various scriptural accounts of its opposite, distrust, or unbelief; and the reasons why it is pronounced to be sinful, is everywhere forbidden, and is threatened with endless punishment. This exhibition of faith also explains to us, in the most satisfactory manner, why faith is strongly and universally commended in the Scriptures, and why unbelief is reprobated in a similar manner; why saints are called believers and faithful, these names being considered as equivalent to the names holy and virtuous; and why unbelievers and infidels are terms used in the Scriptures as equivalent to sinful, wicked, and ungodly. We learn, farther, why faith, directed to the word, ordinances, and providence of God; to the example, atonement, death, resurrection, and exaltation of Christ; or directly to the character of God and the Redeemer, is considered in the Scriptures as substantially of the same nature, and as the same thing: the faith exercised being always the same moral act, springing from the same spirit, terminating in the same object, and producing the same effects. If, therefore, it exists with reference to one of these objects, it exists also in successive acts, invariably towards them all. Finally, we see the reason why faith in God, in Christ, or in divine truth, is exhibited as being, in a sense, the sum of all duty, and the foundation of all present and future spiritual good; and why unbelief is presented to us as, in a sense, the sum of all disobedience, and the source of all spiritual evil both here and hereafter.

These and the like representations are easily explained, if by faith we intend confidence in the moral character of God and the Redeemer. This confidence is plainly the beginning and the continuance of union and attachment to our Creator; while, on the other hand, distrust is a complete separation of the soul from the author of its being. It is plainly impossible for him who distrusts God, to have any moral union to him, or any devotion to his pleasure.

Confidence is also the highest honour which an intelligent creature can render to his Creator. No act of such a creature can so clearly or so strongly declare his approbation of the divine character, or his devotion to the divine will, as committing ourselves entirely to him in this manner. In this act we declare, in the most decisive manner, the character of God to be formed of such attributes, as will secure our whole well-being, and fulfill all our vindicable desires. Whatever can be hoped for from supreme and infinite excellence, we declare ourselves to expect from the character of God; and pronounce his pleasure to be, in our view, the sum of all that is excellent and desirable. In distrusting God, we declare in the same forcible manner precisely the opposite things; and thus, so far as is in our power, dishonour his character, and impeach his designs.

3. This account of faith strongly evinces the divinity of Christ.

The faith which we are required to exercise in Christ, is as unqualified, as entire, and as extensive as that which we are required to exercise towards God. The blessings promised to it are the same, and the evils threatened to our refusal of it are also the same. No mark of difference with respect to these particulars is even hinted at in the Scriptures. This must, I think, be inexplicable, unless the attributes to which alone the faith is directed, and which alone render it our duty to exercise it, are in each case the same.

Besides, it is incredible that an intelligent being, rationally employed, should confide himself, his everlasting interests, his all, to any hands but those of infinite perfection. Stephen, 'full of the Holy Ghost,' could not, I think, as he was leaving the world, have said to any creature, 'Lord Jesus, into thy hands I commend my spirit.' No man in the possession of a sound mind, could, as it seems to me, say this even to Gabriel himself.

4. We learn from these observations, that the faith of the gospel will exist for ever.

We often speak of faith, as hereafter to be swallowed up in vision, and intend by this that it will cease to exist in the future world. In a qualified sense it is undoubtedly true; for many things which we now believe only, we shall hereafter know with certainty. But confidence in God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, will exist for ever. Moral character seems not in its nature to be an object of science, properly so called. Spirits by every eye, except the omniscient, are discerned only through the medium of their actions, which are proofs of their natural attributes, and expressions of their moral character. Moral character is the amount of all the volitions of a moral agent. As these are free and independent, they are incapable of being known, but by the voluntary manifestations of the agent himself. United, they form and exhibit the whole moral character. In parts, though they denote it truly, they denote it imperfectly.

In every age of eternity it will be true that, in the physical sense, it is possible for God to oppress or destroy even his obedient creatures. The proofs that he will not, are found only in the disclosure of his moral character; and on these disclosures his virtuous creatures will for ever rely with undoubting confidence, and with the utmost propriety and wisdom. Knowledge, or science, in the strict sense, they will not I think be ever able to obtain of this immensely important subject, nor would they be benefited, were they able. Science is in no degree of a moral nature, nor of course attended by virtuous affections, nor followed by virtuous conduct. But confidence is in itself moral and virtuous, and capable of being the highest virtue of a rational creature. Amiable and excellent in itself, it is approved and loved by God; the foundation of delight in his character, the source of uninterrupted obedience to his will, an endearing and immovable union to him, a similar union to the virtuous universe, and the basis of everlasting friendship and beneficence, in all their mutual intercourse.

It will therefore revive beyond the grave, and with new vigour and perfection. With every new display of divine excellence and created worth, it will rise higher and higher without end. The mind in which it exists, will in every stage of its progress become wiser, nobler, better, and happier. Heaven in all its concerns, its inhabitants, and dispensations, will from its influence assume without intermission a brighter aspect, and the immense, eternal kingdom of Jehovah continually become a more and more perfect mirror, reflecting with increasing splendour his supreme excellence and glory.

SERMON LXVII.

JUSTIFICATION.—THE INFLUENCE OF FAITH IN OUR JUSTIFICATION.

Therefore we conclude, that man is justified by faith without works of law.—Rom. iii. 28.

Having shown that we are justified freely by the grace of God, proved the duty of believing, and explained the nature of evangelical faith, in the three preceding Discourses; I shall now proceed to examine the connexion of faith with our justification. The first of these Discourses was employed in discussing that which is done in our justification on the part of God; in this Discourse I shall examine the nature and influence of that which is done on the part of man, towards the accomplishment of this important event. We are justified freely, or gratuitously. Yet we are justified conditionally; not in our natural, corrupt, and universal state; but in consequence of a new and peculiar state, denoted by the word *faith*.

In discussing this subject, I shall include the observations which I think it necessary to make under the following heads:

I. *The manner, in which faith becomes;* and,

II. *The propriety with which it is constituted the means of our justification.*

I. *I shall attempt to describe the manner in which faith becomes the means of our justification.*

To exhibit this subject in the clearest light, it will be useful to return again to the covenant of redemption, in which the justification of mankind was originally promised. You will perhaps remember, that there are, as was formerly stated, three distinct promises contained in this covenant, beside the general one, which involves them all; that 'Christ shall see (or possess) a seed;' that 'this seed shall prolong their days' (or endure, or be happy, for ever); and that 'the throne (or dominion) of Christ' over them 'shall be as the days of heaven' (or, in other words, eternal). The first of these promises, on which the other two are founded, is, 'that Christ shall see (or possess) a seed:' that is, he shall have a number, elsewhere said to be very great, of children, disciples or followers, in consequence of 'making his soul an offering for sin:' or 'a propitiatory sacrifice.'

The great question naturally arising in this place is, In what manner do apostate men, of whom his followers were to consist, become his seed? To this question I answer, By faith. In explaining the true and full import of this answer, every thing may be said which is necessary to the object under consideration. To this end, it will be proper to observe,

1. That mankind do not become the children of Christ by creation.

By creation all men are equally his children. But all men are not his children in the sense of this covenant. In this sense, those only are his seed, who are his disciples. But we know from innumerable passages of Scripture, that all men are not his disciples.

2. Men do not become the children of Christ by their obedience to the law.

No man has obeyed the law; and, therefore, 'by works of law no flesh can be justified.'

3. Men do not become the children of Christ merely by his atonement.

Christ was 'a propitiation for the sins of the whole world,' as well as for his disciples. But the whole world is not included in the number of his disciples.

4. Mankind do not become the children of Christ by their obedience wrought after they believe in him.

No man ever obeys, in the scriptural sense, until after he has believed. But men are children of Christ whenever they believe, and that, whether they live to perform acts of obedience, or not. Multitudes, there is every reason to suppose, die so soon after believing, as to render it impossible for them to perform any acts of obedience whatever. All these are disciples of Christ. Men, therefore, 'are justified by faith, without works of law.'

As these are all the modes in which mankind have ever been supposed to become disciples of Christ, beside that which is the main subject of this Discourse, the necessary conclusion from these observations will be, that men become his children by faith, according to the meaning of this covenant.

At the same time, the nature of the case furnishes the most conclusive evidence to this position. Men in their original state are ruined and helpless. In this state Christ offers himself to them as a Saviour, on the condition that they will become his; or that they will 'come to him;' or that they will give themselves up to him; or, in other words, voluntarily become his. In the seventeenth chapter of John, ver. 2, Christ says, in his intercessory prayer to God, 'As thou hast given him.' (that is Christ) 'power over all flesh; that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.' In the ninth verse he says, 'I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine. And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them.' In these passages we learn that the Father gave to Christ, originally, some of the human race; that all these are Christ's; that he is glorified in them; and that he gives them eternal life.

The covenant of grace made between God and mankind, is contained in these words, 'I will be your God, and ye shall be my people.' In this covenant God is pleased to engage on his part, to be the God of all who will be his; and man, on his part, gives himself up to God, engaging to be his. Accordingly mankind are commanded to yield themselves to God. 'Yield yourselves,' says St Paul to the Romans, 'unto God, as those that are alive from the dead,' Rom. vi. 13. 'Be ye not stiff-necked,' says Hezekiah to the Israelites, 'as your fathers were; but yield yourselves unto the Lord; and serve the Lord, that the fierceness of his wrath may turn away from you.'

According to this scheme, which is everywhere the scheme of the Scriptures, those who are children of Christ, become such first, by being given to him of the Father; next, by giving themselves to him; and then by being received by him. 'Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out,' John vi. 37. Thus it is evident, that that which on the part of mankind makes them Christ's children, is their own voluntary gift of themselves to him. Accordingly St Paul, speaking in the Second Epistle to the Corinthians, of the Macedonian Christians, says, that 'they first gave their own-selves to the Lord,' chap. viii. 5.

The act by which this voluntary surrender of ourselves to Christ is accomplished, is the faith or confidence of the gospel. When Christ proposes himself to us as a Saviour, it is plain that we have no other security of the salvation which he promises, beside the promise itself, and this furnishes no security beside what is contained in his character. Confidence then, in his character, and in his promise as founded on it, is that act of the mind by which alone it renders itself to Christ, and becomes his; one of his children, his disciple, his follower. Unless the soul confide in him, it is plainly impossible that it should confide or yield itself to him; and, unless it yield itself to him, it cannot become his. But the act of confiding in him is, in the case specified, the act also of confiding itself to him.

When the soul thus renders itself into the hands of Christ, it does it on his own terms. It casts off all former dependence on its own righteousness, whether apprehended or real, for acceptance with God, for forgiveness and justification. Conscious of its entire unworthiness, and desert of the divine anger, the reality and greatness of its guilt, the justice of its condemnation, and the impossibility of expiating its own sins, it casts itself at the footstool of his mercy, as a suppliant for mere pardon, and welcomes him as the glorious, efficacious, and all-sufficient atonement for sins, and intercessor for sinners. With these views and affections, it yields itself up to him as a free will offering, with an entire confidence in all that he hath taught, and done, and suffered in the divine character of Mediator between God and man. In this manner it becomes his, here and for ever.

As his it is acknowledged, in accordance with that glorious promise, 'Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out.' As his, its 'name is written in the Lamb's book of life;' and it is invested with a sure, indefeasible title to all the promises of the gospel; particularly to those recorded in the second and third chapters of the Apocalypse; and to 'the inheritance which is undefiled, and fadeth not away.'

It has been often debated, whether mankind are justified, in the full and proper sense, in this world, or in that which is to come. To the great question, concerning the manner of our justification, this point appears to me to be of little importance. Whenever a man thus gives himself into the hands of Christ, he becomes his, in the sense of the covenant of redemption; and his title to justification in this character is complete. Whenever, therefore, he enters into the future world, and appears before the judge of the quick and the dead, he comes in a character acknowledged in the covenant of redemption, with a title to acceptance founded on the promise of the Father contained in that covenant; and pleads, with certain prevalence, his own performance of the condition on his part; viz. faith in the Redeemer, as having brought him within the limits of that promise. As Christ's then, and as Christ's alone, as one of his seed, he is acknowledged, forgiven, acquitted, and received to the heavenly inheritance.

It is here to be observed, and always to be remembered, that the believer is not thus accepted on account of his faith, considered as merit; or as furnishing a claim, in the nature of a work of righteousness, sufficiently excellent to deserve justification, either wholly or partially. Considered in every other light, except that of being one of Christ's children, or, in other words, considered merely as a moral being, he merits nothing at the hand of God but anger and punishment.

If he were to be 'judged according to his works,' in this sense, he would be ruined. For although many of his actions are, in a greater or less degree, really virtuous, yet his sins also are many and very great; enhanced by all the light which he has enjoyed, the grace which he has received, and the covenant which he has made. In this case, he would come before God as a mere subject of law; no 'jot or tittle' of which has ceased to bind him with its original obligatory force, or to demand from him, with all its original authority, exact obedience. Such obedience can here be the only possible ground of justification; and this obedience was never rendered by any child of Adam.

II. *I will endeavour to show the propriety with which faith is constituted the means of our justification.*

It has been already shown, that we are not justified by faith because it renders us deserving of this favour at the hand of God. Still there is, I apprehend, an evident propriety in constituting faith the means of our justification. If returning sinners are to be justified at all, it will, I suppose, be acknowledged, that it must be proper for God to justify them, in such a manner as shall most contribute to his glory, and their good. This I shall endeavour to prove to be the real consequence of the manner in which they are actually justified.

It contributes peculiarly to the glory of God, in the following, among other particulars.

1. It is a dispensation of grace merely.

Every thing pertaining to this dispensation on the part of God, is the result of mere sovereign, unmerited love. This attribute, thus considered, is by the divine writers everywhere spoken of as the peculiar glory of the divine character. Whenever they have occasion to mention it, they rise above themselves, utter their sentiments with a kind of rapture, and adopt the style of exclamation, rather than that of sober description, 'Who art thou,' says Zechariah, 'O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain; and he shall bring forth the head stone thereof with shoutings; crying, Grace, grace unto it.'—'Behold, what manner of love,' says St John, 'the Father hath bestowed on us, that we should be called the sons of God!'—'For this cause,' says St Paul, 'I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ—that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend, with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge.'—'Having predestinated us,' says the same apostle, 'unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace; wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved: in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.'—'Praise the Lord,' says David, 'for he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever!' In this manner the subject is always considered, and always spoken of, by the divine writers. I shall only add, that the angels themselves appear to entertain similar thoughts concerning it; as was abundantly manifested when, at the birth of the Saviour, they sang, 'Glory to God in the highest; and on earth peace: good-will towards men.'

All men will probably agree, that love exercised towards enemies is the fairest and most illustrious specimen of good-will, of which we have any knowledge. Exercised by God towards sinners, not only his enemies, not only lost and ruined, but eminently vile and guilty enemies, it is certainly seen in its consummation. In justifying mankind through faith in the Redeemer, this manifestation of love is seen in its fairest and most finished form. All the previous steps, indispensable to its accomplishment, and beyond measure wonderful, were dictated and carried into execution by mere grace. By mere grace, when all these things are done, is the sinner accepted, without any merit of his own, and only in the character of one who has confidentially given himself to Christ. In this dispensation, then, this most glorious attribute of God is seen in the fairest light.

2. It is fitted to produce the greatest degree of gratitude in man.

In Luke vii. 40, we are told that Simon the Pharisee, at whose house our Saviour was sitting at meat, censured him for suffering a poor sinful woman to anoint him with precious ointment; and that Christ said unto him, 'Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on. There was a certain creditor, who had two debtors; the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me, therefore, which of them will love him most. Simon answered and said, I suppose, that he to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged.'

From this passage of Scripture it is evident, that forgiveness confers a peculiar obligation and inspires peculiar gratitude; and that this obligation and gratitude are great, in proportion to the number and guilt of the sins which are forgiven. But the scheme of justification by faith, being a scheme of mere forgiveness, without any consideration of merit on the part of those who are justified, and the number and guilt of the sins forgiven being very great, the fairest foundation is laid here for the highest possible gratitude. This emotion, and its effects, will extend through eternity; and constitute no small part of the character, usefulness, and felicity of the redeemed; and no small part of their loveliness in the sight of their Creator. Had mankind been justified by works, either wholly or partially, this affection, and its consequences, could not have existed in the same manner, nor in the same degree.

3. This dispensation is eminently honourable to Christ.

St Paul, in 1 Cor. chap. i. quoting from Jer. ix. delivers it as a precept intended universally to regulate the conduct of mankind, that 'he who glorieth should glory only in the Lord;' because 'he is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.' In conformity to this rule of conduct, we find it asserted, in the fifth of the Revelation, that the four living ones, and the four-and-twenty elders, fell down before the Lamb, and sang a new song; saying, 'Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof; for thou wast slain; and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.' Immediately upon this, the whole host of heaven exclaimed with a loud voice, 'Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.' Finally, both heaven and earth are exhibited as uniting with one voice in this sublime ascription, 'Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever.' At the close of this act of

celestial worship, the four living ones subjoin their solemn 'Amen!' This passage needs no comment.

In the scheme of justification by faith, it is evident that all the glory of saving sinners from endless guilt and misery, and of raising them to immortal happiness and virtue, centres in the Redeemer; and that, according to his own declaration, he is eminently glorified in this manner, in those who are given to him by the Father as his children. John xvii. 10.

4. It is honourable to God that he should annex justification to virtue, and not to any thing of a different nature.

Faith is virtue. But the works of mankind, wrought before the existence of faith in the soul, are in no sense virtuous. Faith is also the commencement of virtue in man. It is highly honourable to God that he should annex justification to the first appearance of virtue in the human character. In this manner he exhibits, in the strongest degree, his readiness to forgive, accept, and save the returning sinner; the greatness of his mercy which, at the sight of the returning prodigal, hastens to meet and welcome him, guilty as he has been, in all his rags, and dirt, and shame, merely because he has set his face in earnest towards his father's house; and the sublime and glorious pleasure which he enjoys in 'finding' a son who 'was lost' to all good, and in seeing him, once 'dead, alive again' to useful and divine purposes.

5. It is honourable to God, that he should annex our justification to that attribute which is the true source of virtuous obedience.

That faith is the true source of such obedience, in all its forms and degrees, is so completely proved by St Paul in the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, as to admit of no debate, and to demand no farther illustration. He declares directly and universally, that 'without faith it is impossible to please God' in any act whatever; and that 'by faith Enoch' in his obedience 'pleased God.' By necessary consequence, all the other worthies mentioned in that chapter pleased him also, for the same reason. On account of their faith he teaches us, that 'God is not ashamed to be called their God;' and 'has prepared them a city,' an everlasting residence, a final home in the heavenly world. Finally, he shows that faith is the real and only source of that obedience which is the most arduous, self-denying, honourable to the human character, and eminently pleasing to God. In a word, every thing truly glorious which can be achieved by man, he declares, in the latter part of the chapter, to be achieved by faith alone.

St John also assures us, that 'faith is the victory, which overcometh the world;' the real power by which, on our part, temptations are effectually resisted, snares escaped, enemies overthrown, and heaven with all its blessings, finally won.

While this scheme of justification therefore strips man of all pretensions to merit, and gives the whole glory of his salvation to his Maker, it furnishes the most efficacious means and the most absolute assurance of his future obedience, his perpetual improvement in holiness, and his certain advancement towards the best character which he will ever be capable of sustaining. The obedience springing from faith is voluntary, filial, and lovely. All other obedience is mercenary, and of no moral worth. It will not be denied, that a dispensation of which these are the consequences, is highly honourable to the character of its author.

Every person who has attended to these observations must clearly see that they illustrate, in various particulars, the usefulness of this dispensation to man: all of them plainly involving personal advantages, and those very great, to the justified; as well as peculiar glory to the justifier. Two additional observations will contain all that is necessary to the farther illustration of this part of the subject.

(1.) This dispensation is profitable to mankind, as it renders their justification easy and certain.

Had our justification been made to depend on a course of obedience, it is not difficult to see that we should have been involved in many perplexities and dangers. Repentance at late periods of life would, particularly, have been exceedingly discouraged. It will not be denied that such repentance exists, nor, however rare we may suppose it, that it exists upon the whole in many instances. Nor can any man of common humanity avoid wishing, that the number of these instances may be greatly increased. Such instances exist even on a dying bed, and, as there is good reason to believe, in considerable numbers. But how discouraging to such persons would it be, to know that their justification was dependent on their own obedience! Is there not every reason to believe that most, if not all, persons in these circumstances would be discouraged from every effort, and lay aside the attempt as hopeless? What, in this case also, would become of children dying in their infancy? and what of persons perishing by shipwreck, the sword, and innumerable other causes, which terminate life by a sudden, unexpected dissolution?

Farther: If justification were annexed to our obedience, how should the nature and degree of obedience be estimated? How pure must it be? What degree of contamination might it admit, and still answer the end? With what degree of uniformity must it be continued? With what proportion of lapses, and in what degree existing, might it be intermixed? These questions seem not to have been answered in the Scriptures. Who is able to answer them?

Again: From what principle in man shall this obedience spring? From the mere wish to gain heaven by it? or from a virtuous principle? From a virtuous principle, it will probably be answered. In reply, it may be asked, from what virtuous principle? I presume it will be said, From love to God. But it ought to be remembered that, where there is no confidence, there is no love, and therefore, no virtue. Consequently, there is in this case nothing from which virtuous obedience can spring. How then can man be justified by his obedience?

But by the annexing justification to faith, God has removed all these difficulties and dangers. It is rendered as easy as possible to our attainment. For the first act of virtuous regard to God which is exercised, or can be exercised, by a returning sinner, is faith. If then, he can do any thing which is praise-worthy or virtuous, he can exercise faith. As his justification is inseparably annexed to this exercise by the promise of God, it is as certain as that promise is sure.

(2.) This scheme provides most effectually for the happiness of man. Evangelical faith is an emotion of the mind, delightful in itself, and delightful in all its consequences. Faith is a 'well-spring of water' flowing out 'unto everlasting life.' All the streams which proceed from it in the soul of the believer

are sweet, refreshing, and life-giving. Faith, fixing its eye on the unmerited and boundless goodness of God, sees in the great act of justification, faithfulness, truth, and mercy displayed, to which it neither finds nor wishes to find limits. The soul, in the contemplation of what itself has been, and what it has received, becomes fitted through this confidence for every thing excellent, and every thing desirable. Peace, and hope, and love, and joy rise up spontaneously under its happy influence; and flourish, unfavourable as the climate and soil are, with a verdure and strength unwithering and unfading. All the gratitude which can exist in such a soul is awakened by the strong consciousness of immense and undeserved blessings, and all the obedience prompted which can be found in such a life. Good of a celestial kind, and superior to every thing which this world can give, is really and at times delightfully enjoyed, and supporting anticipations are acquired of more perfect good beyond the grave.

This extensive and all-important subject is the principal theme of St Paul's discourse in the seven first chapters of the Epistle to the Romans. In the eighth chapter he derives from it a train of more sublime and interesting reflections than can be found in any other passage of Scripture of equal extent. He commences them with this triumphant conclusion from what he had before said: 'There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit.' He then goes on to display, in a series of delightful consequences, the remedial influence of the gospel upon a world ruined by sin, and condemned by the law of God; marks the immense difference between the native character of man, as a disobedient subject of law, and his renewed character, as an immediate subject of grace; and discloses particularly the agency of the Spirit of truth in regenerating, quickening, purifying, and guiding the soul in its progress towards heaven. The consequences of this agency he then describes with unrivalled felicity and splendour; and animates the universe with anxious expectation to see the day in which these blessed consequences shall be completely discovered. On the consequences themselves he expatiates in language wonderfully lofty, and with images superlatively magnificent. 'What shall we then say to these things?' he exclaims; 'If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died; yea, rather that is risen again; who is even at the right hand of God; who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things, we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.'

Such ought to be the thoughts of all who read, and peculiarly of all who have embraced, the Gospel. Here we find the true application of this doctrine, the proper inferences to which it conducts us. We could not have originated them, but we can imbibe and apply them. A scene is here opened without limits, and without end. On all the blessings here disclosed, eternity is inscribed by the divine hand. We are here assured an eternal residence of immortal virtue, immortal happiness, and immortal glory; of intelligence for ever enlarging, of affections for ever rising, and of conduct for ever refining towards perfection. Whatever the thoughts can comprehend, whatever the heart can wish, nay, abundantly 'more than we can ask or think,' is here by the voice of God promised to every man who possesses the faith of the gospel. When we remember that all these blessings were purchased by the humiliation, life, and death of the Son of God, can we fail to exclaim in the language of Heaven, 'Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing! Amen.'

SERMON LXVIII.

JUSTIFICATION.—RECONCILIATION OF PAUL AND JAMES.—IN WHAT SENSE MANKIND ARE JUSTIFIED BY WORKS.

Ye see then how that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only.— James ii. 24.

This passage of Scripture, together with a part of the context, is directly opposed, in terms, to the doctrine which has been derived, in several preceding Discourses, from St Paul's Epistle to the Romans. Infidels, and particularly Voltaire, have seized the occasion which they have supposed themselves to find here, to sneer against the Scriptures; and have triumphantly asserted that St James and St Paul contradict each other in their doctrine, as well as their phraseology. Nor are infidels the only persons to whom this passage has been a stumbling-block. Divines, in a multitude of instances, have found in it difficulties which they have plainly felt, and have differed not a little concerning the manner in which it is to be interpreted.

Some divines, among whom was the first President Edwards, have taught, that St James speaks of justification in the sight of men only; while St Paul speaks of justification in the sight of God. This, I think, cannot be a just opinion. It is plain from the 21—23d verses, that St James speaks of the same justification which Abraham received, and in which 'his faith was counted unto him for righteousness.' It is also evident from the 14th verse, in the question, 'Can faith save him?' From this it is plain that St James had his

eye upon the justification to which salvation is annexed.

Another class of divines have supposed, that St James teaches here, a legal or meritorious justification; and that this is the true doctrine of the gospel concerning this subject. St Paul, they therefore conclude, is to be so understood as to be reconcilable with St James in this doctrine.

Others, among whom are the late Bishop Horne and Dr Macknight, suppose, that St James speaks of our justification, as accomplished in part by those good works which are produced by faith; and this they maintain also to be the doctrine of St Paul. It is believed that this scheme has been already proved to be unsound; but as it is true that St James really speaks of such works, it will be necessary to consider the manner in which he speaks of them more particularly hereafter.

Others, and among them Poole (whose comment on this chapter is excellent), suppose, that St Paul speaks of justification properly so called; and St James of the manifestation, or proof, of that justification. That in this sense the apostles are perfectly reconcilable, I am ready to admit; but am inclined to doubt whether this is the sense in which St James is really to be understood.

By this time it must be evident to those who hear me, that there is some real difficulty in a comparison of this passage of St James with the writings of St Paul. By a real difficulty I do not intend that there is any inconsistency between these two apostles; for, I apprehend, there is none; but I intend, that there is so much obscurity in this discourse of St James, as to have led divines of great respectability and worth to understand his words in very different manners; and prevented them from agreeing, even when harmonious enough as to their general systems, in any one interpretation of the apostle's expressions. Even this is not all. Luther went so far as, on account of this very chapter, to deny the inspiration of St James; and one of Luther's followers was so displeased with it, as to charge this apostle with willful falsehood.

St James has been called, with more boldness than accuracy, a writer of paradoxes. This character was, I presume, given of him from the pithy, sententious, and figurative manner in which he delivers his thoughts. This manner of writing, very common among the Asiatics, seems to have been originally derived from their poetry. The most perfect example of it, in the poetical form, found in the Scriptures, is a part of the book of Proverbs, commencing with the tenth chapter, and ending with the twenty-ninth. Here, except in a few instances, there is no connexion intended nor formed between the successive sentences. The nine first chapters, the Book of Job, and Ecclesiastes, are examples of the nearest approximation to this unconnected manner of writing in continued discourses, which the Scriptures exhibit. In all these, although a particular subject is pursued through a considerable length, yet the connexion will be found, almost invariably, to lie in the thought only. The transitions are, accordingly, bold and abrupt; and frequently demand no small degree of attention, in order to understand them. Probably, they are more obscure to us than they were to the Asiatic nations, to whom this mode of writing was familiar; since we have learned from the Greeks to exhibit the connexions and transitions of thought, universally, in words; and to indicate them clearly in the forms of expression. The wisdom of the Son of Sirach is another example of the same nature, which may be fairly classed with those already mentioned; as may also the prophecy of Hosea. Every person, in reading these writings, must perceive a degree of obscurity, arising not only from the concise and figurative language, but from the abruptness of the transitions also, which at times renders it extremely difficult to trace the connexion of the thoughts.

St James approaches nearer to this manner of writing, than any other prosaic writer in the Old or New Testament. He is bolder, more figurative, more concise, and more abrupt. That there should be some difficulty in understanding him satisfactorily, ought to be expected as a thing of course. We cannot wonder then, that different meanings should be annexed to the writings of this apostle; and from this source only, as I believe, are these different interpretations derived.

Having premised these observations, of which the use may easily be perceived, I now assert, that both apostles speak of the same justification, that which is before God; and that they are perfectly harmonious in holding the doctrine of justification by faith without works.

To elucidate the truth of this assertion, it will be necessary to remark, that there are two totally different kinds of faith spoken of in the Scriptures: one, a speculative belief or mere assent to probable evidence; the other, the confidence which has been already described in these Discourses. From the former of these obedience to God never sprang, and cannot spring. The latter is the source of all obedience. As both, however, are called by the same name, each has, in its turn, been declared to be the faith to which justification is annexed. To both, this character was challenged in the days of the apostles. That doctrine of antinomianism, from which the name is derived, began in the days of the apostles: viz. that we are released by the gospel from obedience to the law. Of course, whoever embraced this doctrine believed his faith to be sufficient for his justification, without any works of righteousness. Against this error, I believe with Doddridge and others, the apostle James directed this discourse. The question which he discusses, was not whether we were justified by evangelical faith only; or, partially by that faith, and partially by the works which it produces; but whether we are justified by a faith in its nature unproductive of works; viz. mere speculative belief; or whether we are justified by the faith of the gospel, from which all works of righteousness flow of course. That this account of this subject is true, I shall now attempt to prove.

St James introduces his discussion of this subject with these questions: 'What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith save him?' In the original it is ἡ πιστις; *the* faith, which the man declares himself to have; or, as it is correctly rendered by Macknight, and various other commentators, *this faith*. 'Can this faith save him?' Undoubtedly it can, if it can justify him; but this is nowhere asserted in the Scriptures. The justifying faith of St Paul is 'the faith which worketh by love;' the faith of 'the heart,' with which alone 'man believed unto righteousness.'

The uselessness of this faith St James then elucidates by an allusion to that inactive and worthless benevolence, so celebrated in modern times by Godwin and

other philosophers. 'If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace; be ye warmed and be ye filled: notwithstanding, ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?' As this philanthropy is not only of no use, and therefore of no value, but a reproach to him who professes it, because his conduct gives the lie to his professions; so the faith of him who believes the gospel, and whose life is not governed by the all-important doctrines and precepts which it contains, is equally destitute of worth, and equally reproachful to his character. In the words of the apostle in the following verse, 'it is dead, being alone;' or, as in the Greek, 'by itself.'

In the eighteenth verse, he proves in the strongest manner, that such a faith is not the faith of Christians. 'Yea, a man' (that is, a Christian,) 'may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works.' Christ taught the great doctrine, that Christians were to 'be known by their fruits' only; and that these were the true, regular, and invariable proofs of that faith by which they were constituted Christians. But the faith which is without works is incapable of having its existence proved at all. This, therefore, cannot be the faith of Christians.

In the twentieth verse he exhibits this subject in a manner which puts the account here given beyond all reasonable controversy. 'Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe and tremble.' The devils (*τα δαιμονια*, the demons) are, and by St James are declared to be, the subjects of speculative belief; but it will not be pretended that they can be the subjects of justifying faith. But St James teaches us, that the faith of which he is speaking is the same with that of the devils.

With the same precision he exhibits the same thing, under a different form, in the twentieth verse. 'But wilt thou know, O vain man! that faith without works is dead?' The Greek words for 'vain man' are *ανθρωπε κενε*, properly rendered *false man*, or hypocrite. But surely the faith of a hypocrite is not the faith of the gospel. The last part of this verse would be better translated, 'a faith without works is dead,' that is, a faith which is without works.

In the four following verses, St James illustrates this subject by a comparison of this faith of the hypocrite with that of Abraham. 'Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? And the Scripture was fulfilled, which saith, Abraham believed God; and it was imputed unto him for righteousness. And he was called the friend of God. Ye see, then, how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.'

In this part of the chapter all the real difficulty lies. To explain the true import of it, let St James be his own commentator. After having given us the declaration, that Abraham was justified by works, when he 'offered,' or, as in the original, *lifted up*, 'Isaac upon the altar,' and taught us, that 'faith co-operated with his works;' and that 'by works his faith was perfected; he says, in the twenty-third verse, that 'the Scripture was fulfilled,' that is, confirmed, 'which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness: and he was called the friend of God.' This passage of Scripture is found in Genesis xv. 6. That which he believed was these two declarations: 'This shall not be thine heir;' viz. Eliezer of Damascus; 'but he who shall come forth out of thine own bowels, shall be thine heir.' And again; 'Look now towards heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them; and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be.' Confiding in these promises was that act of Abraham concerning which it is said in the following verse, 'He believed in Jehovah, and he counted it to him for righteousness.' The act of lifting up Isaac upon the altar, by which St James says, 'the Scripture was fulfilled,' that is, confirmed, existed more than twenty years afterward. In what sense, then, did that act confirm this declaration of Scripture? Plainly in this; it showed that the faith of Abraham was the genuine faith of the gospel; a real, operative confidence in the promises of God. This it showed in a very forcible light, because the obedience was singularly great and self-denying. Exclusively of this, it will be difficult to find any sense in which the declaration can be true. That Abraham was justified by faith, and by that very act of faith here recited, is expressly declared by St Paul, Rom. iv. and Gal. iii.; and therefore cannot be disputed. It is of no significance, here, to say, that Abraham's justification was not completed in this world, but will be completed at the final trial; or that it was completed, when he entered the future world. It is sufficient for the present purpose, that his title to justification was complete and certain, when 'his faith was counted to him for righteousness.' Had he then died, he would have been accepted of God, his sins would have been forgiven, and his soul made happy for ever. He to whom all things are present, makes no new determinations concerning this subject. It is plain, then, that an act of obedience existing a long time afterward, could not alter that which was past; nor affect in any manner the justification of Abraham, which was already made certain.

From these observations it is, I trust, sufficiently evident, that this very case put by St James is a clear proof, unless we are willing to deny an express declaration of Scripture as quoted by him, and written by Moses, that we are not justified, either partially or wholly, by works, in the common meaning of that phraseology; and that the true doctrine of St James is no other, than that we are not justified by a speculative belief which is without works, but by the faith of the gospel 'which worketh by love.'

This is farther evident from the last clause of the 23d verse; 'And he was called the friend of God.' That which made him the friend of God, was his faith, his confidence in God. The act of offering Isaac could in no sense make him the friend of God; but was merely a signal and glorious proof of his confidence, and the friendship which it involved and produced.

If these observations be admitted as just, it will be unnecessary to dwell on the two remaining verses. The case of Rahab, in the following verse, is perfectly explained by that of Abraham. In the conluding verse St James solemnly repeats the great doctrine of this passage, which, by repeating it in three different instances, he clearly proves to be the main thing on which he meant to insist in these concise and emphatical words; 'For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also;' or, as I should render it, 'a faith without works;' that is, such a faith as is without

works. The meaning of St James is, not that evangelical faith when it is without works is dead, for it cannot exist without producing good works; but that such a faith as is unproductive of good works, viz. a mere speculative belief, is dead; and, like a corpse from which the soul has fled, is absolutely useless and loathsome to every beholder.

Having finished the remarks which I proposed to make on this passage of St James, I shall now proceed to show the real influence of good works on the justification of mankind.

1. When we confide ourselves to Christ, we do it according to his own terms.

Among these he has required us to 'do all things whatsoever he hath commanded us;' and 'to walk as he also walked.' But his commands involve every good work, and his example has presented to us a universal system of good works actually done by himself. To obey him, and to be like him, is therefore to perform every good work.

All this also he has required us to do voluntarily, faithfully, and alway. When, therefore, we confide in Christ, we surrender ourselves into his hands with a fixed intention, a cordial choice of universal obedience, as our whole future conduct.

2. The faith of the gospel cannot exist without good works.

To the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews I appeal as a complete proof of this position. That principle in the soul which produced the many various, difficult, and exalted acts of obedience recorded in this chapter, is beyond a debate the well-spring of all obedience. The connexion between these things is inseparable; and where the one does not exist, the other cannot. In this sense, then, a man is truly said to be justified by works; that he who has the good works which spring from the faith of the gospel will be justified, and he who has them not will not be justified. The title of the believer to justification is certain and complete so soon as he believes, because he will never cease to believe, and his faith will never cease to operate in universal obedience. But were we to suppose a case which never existed, and cannot exist, viz. that a man should believe with the faith of the gospel, and should afterward cease to perform good works, that man, undoubtedly, would never obtain justification. On the contrary, he would become a final apostate, and an outcast from the kingdom of God. Thus have I expressed my own views of the doctrine contained in this discourse of St James, and shall only add, that this is equally the doctrine of St Paul, of Christ, and of the whole Bible.

The observations made in this Discourse naturally suggest the following

REMARKS.

1. It is evident, from this discourse of St James, that no attribute or principle is of any value, except as it produces good works.

By good works I intend here, and throughout this Sermon, all acts of piety, benevolence, and self-government. Two of these, faith and benevolence, are examined in form by St James: viz. the faith of Antinomians, and the philanthropy of modern infidels; and both are proved, irresistibly, to be useless and worthless. What is true of these, is true of all other principles and opinions sustaining the same general character. The end of all thinking and feeling is action. Whatever terminates not in this is a mere cheat, a mass of rubbish, a nuisance to ourselves, and to mankind. All the good done in the universe is done by action. The most perfect and glorious principles which belong to the intelligent character; those which constituted the bliss of paradise; those which constitute the superior bliss of heaven, would be shorn of almost all their radiance, were they to cease from their activity. There is, I acknowledge, in the reception of truth, and the indulgence of virtuous affections, an inherent value, a delightfulness interwoven in their own nature. The subject of them, if he were prevented by accidental circumstances from doing good, would, I acknowledge, still find real delight in the things themselves. But, were he to cease from doing good when it was in his power, he would be stripped of all his virtue and glory, and of almost all his enjoyment. 'To him,' says St James, 'that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.' Good actions only are blessings to the kingdom of God, and the only proofs of excellence of character.

In this great particular the Scriptures differ boundlessly from the favourite philosophy of modern times. Philosophy is satisfied with good words, and good wishes. The Scriptures, while they require these, demand with infinite authority, as indispensable to our acceptance with God, what is inestimably more valuable, good actions. Philosophy is satisfied to say, with coolness and composure, to the naked, starving wretch, 'Depart in peace: be thou warmed; and be thou filled.' The Scriptures, with a divine compassion for the sufferer, and with an equal concern for the true interest of him who possesses the means of relief, compel us by infinite authority and an infinite example, to clothe, to feed, and to bless, so far as is within our power, all the children of want and woe. Beyond this, they require all useful conduct, whether it immediately respects God, our fellow-creatures, or ourselves; and in this manner provide effectually for the happiness of mankind in the present world, and for their immortal good in the world to come.

2. We here see that the Scriptures, and the Scriptures only, furnish us with an effectual source of good works.

No obedience is of any worth in the sight of God or man, except that which is voluntary. 'God loveth the cheerful giver; and with his views those of mankind perfectly coincide. No obedience of our children or servants, no offices of our friends or neighbours, are of any value in our estimation, besides those which spring from the heart.

Of this obedience the Scriptures inform us, evangelical faith is the genuine spring, and the only spring in the present world. The faith of the gospel, as I have frequently had occasion to observe, is an affectionate confidence in the character of Christ, in which it surrenders itself to him on his own conditions, to be his, and to be employed wholly and for ever in his service. To the mind, under the influence of this spirit, Christ together with all his pleasure, commands, ordinances, and instructions, becomes supremely delightful. Obedience to his commands is to such a mind, of course, voluntary, cheerful, and perpetual. Its faith is the commencement, and in a fallen creature the only commencement, as well as the future support and soul of the virtuous character.

In the experience of mankind, this great truth has been abundantly proved. The faith of the gospel, and

that alone, transformed the first Christians from idolaters into saints; beautified their minds with every grace, and adorned their lives with every amiable action. Faith alone induced them boldly to renounce idols, and to worship the only living and eternal God. Faith withdrew them from impiety, deceit, fraud, cruelty, revenge, intemperance, and impurity, and rendered them pious, sincere, just, kind, forgiving, temperate, and chaste. Faith, finally, enabled them to overcome all worldly considerations and affections, and to meet the rack, the faggot, and the cross, in the lively hope, the supporting assurance, of being approved by their Maker, and receiving from his hand a crown of immortal glory. In faith and its effects all real goodness of character in the race of man, all that is pleasing in the sight of God, has from that time, nay, from the beginning of the world to the present hour, been found. Nor is there any other entrance upon a life of virtue, nor any other foundation of persevering in real excellence.

In this all-important particular the Scriptures differ infinitely from the efforts of philosophy. Philosophy never made a single man really virtuous, or really amiable in the sight of God. Cicero, who was himself one of the greatest and most learned of the heathen philosophers, declares in an unqualified manner, that they, so far as he knew, had never, even in a single instance, reformed either themselves or their disciples. Those who are extensively acquainted with modern infidels, perfectly know that their principles have been equally unproductive of any proofs of a virtuous character.

But the Scriptures in the hands of the Spirit of God have, in an endless multitude of instances, effectuated this glorious reformation of man. Long before the canon was begun by Moses, a vast number of the human race, by embracing the doctrines and precepts now published in the Scriptures, and then communicated by occasional revelations, became the subjects of holiness, and the heirs of endless life. In all these, through every age and every country, the same faith was the sole source of all their excellent and honourable conduct towards God and towards mankind. 'By faith,' saith St Paul, 'Abel offered a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain. By faith Enoch was translated, that he should not see death. By faith Noah, moved with fear, prepared an ark. By faith Abraham, being called to God to go out into a place, which he should after receive as an inheritance, went out, not knowing whither he went.' This is a testimony of God himself concerning these worthies; and they in this respect are representatives of all the good men whom the world has ever seen. Their faith was the faith of all such men; and all the virtuous conduct of such men sprang from the same source, whence theirs was derived.

3. From these things it is evident, that no religion except Christianity is of any value.

The end of all doctrines and systems which profess to be useful, is no other than to make men virtuous. This end Christianity accomplishes; but it has been accomplished by no religion beside. While the religion of the Old Testament continued to be the only religion established by God, it was in substance and, as understood by the saints of that period, the same with the religion of the New. The chief difference was, that they believed in a Messiah then future, and Christians believe in a Messiah who has actually appeared. To them 'the gospel was preached, as well as to' Abraham; and they all believed in the Lord, who appeared unto Abraham; 'and it was counted to' them 'for righteousness.' With Abraham, they 'rejoiced to see the day of Christ afar off;' and 'saw it, and were glad.' With Job, they knew, that their 'Redeemer lived, and that he would stand at the latter day upon the earth: and that though after their skin, worms would destroy their bodies, yet in their flesh they should see God.'

But there is not the least reason to believe, that any other religion has contributed at all to make men virtuous. Some truths have been found in every religion; but they have universally so abounded in falsehoods, and those falsehoods have been so absolutely believed and obeyed, that no moral good appears to have been produced by them. On the contrary, they have warranted and effectuated evils which cannot be measured, sins without bounds, and miseries without number. Those who believed them most sincerely, and obeyed them with the greatest zeal, were among the most profligate of their votaries.

4. It is evident from this discourse of St James's, that the religious character of all men is to be estimated by their works.

'Show me thy faith without thy works,' that is, if thou canst: and 'I will show thee my faith by my works.' A faith without works is nothing in the Christian scheme, and can be shown neither to ourselves nor to others. Let us, then, be just to ourselves, and try ourselves as God will try us hereafter. Let us place no confidence, no hope, in a faith which is without works, nor ever dream that it is the faith of the gospel. By our fruits, he 'who searcheth the hearts and trieth the reins' has declared our characters are to be known. By this great rule of decision, then, ought every one to examine himself. If our 'faith worketh by love;' if it 'hath its fruit unto holiness, its end will be everlasting life;' if not, it will only become 'the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death.' In what a dreadful manner will the speculative believer be disappointed, to find that the foundation on which he built was nothing but sand; and how will he feel when he sees that building swept away by the final tempest! How will it embitter even perdition itself, to have been in this world secure of eternal life, to have gone to the grave with peace and hope, believing ourselves to be true disciples of Christ, children of the covenant, and heirs of a blessed immortality; and to be first awakened out of this pleasing, flattering, delusive dream by the condemning voice of the Judge! Oh that we were wise, that we understood these things, that we would consider our latter end!

SERMON LXIX.

JUSTIFICATION.—JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH DOES NOT LESSEN THE OBLIGATIONS OR THE MOTIVES TO OBEDIENCE.

Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.—Rom. iii. 31.

In a series of Discourses I have endeavoured to explain and prove the doctrine of Justification by faith, without works.

Beside the direct opposition made to this doctrine, it has been opposed on account of its apprehended consequences, particularly, on account of this important consequence, that it renders the law of God useless, as a rule of obedience. This objection St Paul foresaw, and thought proper to anticipate in this passage of Scripture; 'Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.' As if he had said, from the doctrine of justification by faith without works, which I have here asserted to be the true doctrine of the gospel, I foresee it will be objected, that I render the law of God, as a rule of obedience, useless. This, however, is so far from being true, that the doctrine which I have taught in reality establishes the law.

So peremptory a declaration of the apostle might, one would think, have been amply sufficient to silence the objectors, and to have persuaded them that this opinion of theirs was totally unfounded, and precluded the necessity of any future effort to establish the doctrine. The fact, however, has been otherwise. The objection has been maintained ever since the apostle wrote. Even at the present time, it is a favourite and popular objection in the mouths of multitudes, and is alleged with triumphant confidence, in defiance, as I apprehend, of both reason and revelation.

It is remarkable, that the doctrine contained in the objection, has been strenuously holden by men of totally opposite principles; those who assert, and those who deny, justification by faith. The former class are called Antinomians, the latter Arminians; with whom are united in this particular, Arians, Socinians, Pelagians, and many others. It ought, however, to be observed, that Arminius himself, and many of his followers, have agreed in admitting without hesitation the doctrine of justification by faith.

As the scheme opposed in the text has been adopted by these two opposite classes of men, so it has been adopted with precisely contrary views. The former admit the doctrine that the law is made void by faith, as true; and yet hold that we are justified by faith. Of course, they consider it is a part of the design of God to make the law void, and hold themselves to be under no obligations to obey its precepts. In their view, the fact, that the doctrine of justification by faith makes void the law, is so far from being an objection to it, that it is an original part of the evangelical system; a thing in itself proper, right, and good. The latter class bring this consequence as a direct and formidable objection against the doctrine of justification by faith, from which they suppose the consequence certainly and necessarily flows. Were they right in this supposition, I cannot, I confess, answer the objection; nor should I know how, consistently with the Scriptures, to admit any doctrine which renders the law of God useless, or in the least degree impairs its authority.

These two different modes of considering this subject demand different answers. These I shall give under the following scheme; viz. that the doctrine of justification by faith lessens not in any degree, but establishes in the most effectual manner,

I. *The obligations*, and

II. *The motives to obedience.*

Under the first of these heads I shall direct my arguments against the Antinomian, and under the second against the Arminian scheme concerning this subject.

I. *This doctrine does not lessen, but establishes the obligations which mankind are under to obey the law of God.*

In proof of this position I observe,

1. The law is a transcript of the divine character.

By this I intend, that to 'love God with all the heart, and our neighbour as ourselves,' is to love God and our neighbour in the very manner in which he loves both; that is, so far as creatures are capable of resembling their Creator. In other words, it is to be perfectly benevolent. 'Beloved,' says the apostle John, 'let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.' In this passage St John refers, as he does also in the 12th and 13th verses of the first chapter of his Gospel, to two observations of Christ: 'Except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.' 'And this is life eternal; that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.' 'Every one that loveth,' he here informs us, is thus 'born of God, and knows God,' in such a sense as is 'life eternal.' On the other hand, he farther declares, that 'he who loveth not knows not God,' in this sense. Hence it is plain, that he who is not the subject of this love, is not a child of God, nor an heir of eternal life. Of course, he is not the subject of justification, nor of the faith to which it is annexed. Finally, St John asserts that 'God is love;' or that love is his whole moral character and essence. He, therefore, who is not the subject of this love, is not like God, has not the same moral character, or, in other words, is not 'renewed after the image of God.'

Again, the apostle observes in the 16th verse, 'He who dwelleth,' or continueth, 'in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him.' Of course, he who does not dwell or continue in love, does not dwell in God, nor God in him.

But 'love, is the fulfilling of the law.' To fulfill the law, then, is to be 'born of God,' to 'know God,' to 'dwell in God,' and to have 'God dwell in us.' Not to fulfill the law is, of course, to be destitute of all these characteristics and blessings. Thus the law expresses to us, and requires in us the very same moral character

which is the essence and glory of God. That such a law should cease from any part of its obligatory force is plainly impossible.

2. The law is a perfect rule of righteousness.

It is perfect, as it requires nothing but righteousness. To love God with all the heart, and our neighbour as ourselves, can never be in any degree or manner wrong. This will not be disputed.

It is perfect, as it requires all possible acts of righteousness. However high, however low, any moral being is, the law of God reaches, and controls all his possible moral conduct. Angels, on the one hand, and little children on the other, can do nothing which is good, which at the same time is not required by this boundless rule of rectitude.

It is perfect, as it prohibits everything sinful; that is, everything of the nature of moral evil. 'Sin,' says the apostle, 'is a transgression of the law.' In this declaration is involved, not only that every transgression of the law is sin, but that the 'commandment is so exceedingly broad,' as to prohibit everything which is of the nature of moral evil. But we need no testimonies on this subject. A little consideration will make it evident, that to 'love God with all the heart, and our neighbour as ourselves,' is necessarily incompatible with the existence of sin in the heart or life of him in whom this love is found; and that, as 'love worketh no ill to his neighbour,' so it works no ill towards God.

If, then, we are released by the doctrine of justification by faith from our obligations to obey the law, we are released from our obligations to conform to a perfect rule of righteousness, to a law, 'a commandment,' which is absolutely 'holy, just, and good.' Can God be supposed to consent to this release? Can it be rationally wished by man? Must it not be regarded as a dreadful calamity by every good man? To what would it amount? To nothing more nor less than being released from all obligations to be virtuous.

3. This doctrine is completely disproved by Christ.

He denied it to be any part of the end of his mission. 'Think not, that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets. I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.' That there may be no doubt concerning the connexion between the phrase, 'the law and the prophets,' and the object here in view, let it be observed, that Christ, having recited the two great commands which I have mentioned, says, 'On these two hang all the law and the prophets.' If, then, he came not to destroy the law and the prophets, but to fulfil them, it was certainly no part of the end of his mission to destroy in any degree the two commands on which they are entirely suspended. He has declared the thing to be impossible. 'Sooner,' saith he, 'shall heaven and earth pass away, than one jot or one tittle of the law shall pass, until all be fulfilled.' This is no other than a declaration that God will sooner annihilate the whole creation, than consent to give up his law. Nor is this doctrine at all unbecoming the divine character. To create new heavens and a new earth is a thing easy to him, and can be accomplished by a command. But were he to give up his law in any instance, and with respect to any being, he must recede from governing the universe by a perfect rule and in a perfect manner. This would be to deny himself, for it would be no other than declaring, by a most solemn act, that he was willing that the universe should no longer be governed by a perfect rule; and that he would henceforth, either not govern it at all, or govern it by an imperfect rule. The injury thus done to his character would be infinite; nor can any bounds be set to the mischiefs which in such a case would accrue to the universe.

4. This doctrine is everywhere denied by St Paul.

In the sixth chapter of the epistle to the Romans, St Paul declares that Christians 'are not under law, but under grace.' The Antinomians, totally mistaking the meaning of this declaration, have supposed, that Christians are not under the law as a rule of obedience; whereas the apostle meant only that they are not under the law as a sentence of condemnation. In the very next verse he says, 'What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid.' But not to obey the law is to sin. Again, in the first verse of the same chapter, he asks, 'What shall we say then? shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein? Let not sin, therefore, reign in your mortal body.' Of himself he says, 'I delight in the law of God after the inward man; and with the mind I myself serve the law of God.' He also declares it to be the great end for which 'God sent his own Son in the likeness of human flesh and as a sin-offering, to condemn sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in' Christians, who 'walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.' If, then, Christians do not fulfil the righteousness of the law, that is, obey it, this great end of Christ's mediation must be frustrated. The same apostle declares, that 'circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing; but keeping the commandments of God:' and that 'circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing; but faith which worketh by love:' and that 'circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing; but a new creature.' From these three passages it is evident, among other things, that he who 'keepeth the commandments of God,' is the same person in all instances with him who is possessed of the 'faith which worketh by love,' and who is 'a new creature.' So far, then, is faith from making void the law, that it is exhibited by the apostle as the very spirit with which its commandments are kept, and which thus becomes the means of establishing the law.

Finally: The same apostle says, 'Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.' Holiness, every person at all acquainted with the Scriptures knows, is nothing but obedience to the law. Without this obedience, then, a person who is the subject of faith, and of consequent justification, if we were to suppose such a case, would never 'see the Lord.' These passages, which I have selected without any labour, are ample proof of the falsity of this doctrine. Without any labour also many more might be easily added, which are equally explicit and unambiguous, from every part of the New Testament. The decision of St James has been heretofore recited, as it exists in one passage; but his whole Epistle, and the whole united voice of the Scriptures, is against this scheme. In truth, I am astonished that it should have been adopted by any sober man, who has read his Bible.

Let me ask the Antinomian, from which part of the law he considers himself as released; or whether from the whole. Is he released from his obligation to love God? or to love mankind? or from restraining those

passions which, if indulged, will prevent him from loving either? Or is he released from them all? In the former case he is released from being virtuous in part. In the latter he is released from all virtue. In other words, the doctrine of justification by faith has become to him a license to hate or forget the God that made him, to hate or disregard his neighbour, and to give the reins to those passions which thus indulged will conduct him to absolute profligacy.

II. *The doctrine of justification by faith does not destroy or lessen the motives to obedience.*

Those with whom we have hitherto contended, it will be remembered, hold the doctrine of justification by faith, and admit this objection in its full force; while they believe that, instead of lessening the evidence of the doctrine, the objection as well as the doctrine is an original part of the evangelical system. Those with whom we are now to contend, on the contrary, deny the doctrine of justification by faith; and allege this objection as primary evidence of its falsehood. The argumentation, therefore, must now take a different course from that which has been already adopted, and in most respects proceed on different principles. The chief design hitherto has been, to take the doctrine of justification by faith as granted, because it is in fact granted by our antagonists; and with this admission to show that the law remains in full force, as an obligatory rule of obedience. The design will now be to show that the objection against the doctrine, that it lessens the motives to obedience, is destitute of validity, because it is destitute of truth. For this purpose, I observe,

1. That the obedience which precedes the existence of faith is destitute of any virtuous character.

'Without faith it is impossible to please God.' The external acts of conformity to the law of God are frequently called by the name of obedience; and for this reason only have I given them that name. But, in my own view, the gospel considers them as utterly undeserving of such a title. They are there always exhibited as proceeding from 'an evil heart of unbelief;' and we are decisively taught, that 'out of the evil treasure' of such a heart 'evil things only proceed.'

It is undoubtedly our duty 'to lay hold on eternal life,' and a gross sin to be negligent of this duty. But it cannot be pretended, that the mere pursuit of this good, without any relish for its moral nature, and without any voluntary conformity to the will of God concerning it, is virtuous. In this case, it is pursued with the same spirit and the same views with which we labour to obtain property, office, or reputation; and the mind is no less selfish in the one case, than in the other. No man is more scrupulous or more exact in external religious observances, than the superstitious man. Yet no other person beside himself dreams that his observances are virtuous. The Pharisees with great care 'tithed mint, anise, and cummin;' and this they did with an intention to procure immortal life by what they esteemed obedience. For the same end they washed their hands, cups, pots, and other vessels; 'made long prayers, gave alms, fasted often, and did many other things of an external nature with great care and exactness. So exact, so scrupulous were they in their outward religious conduct, that they were highly respected by the people at large, as good men. Still, they are pronounced by our Lord to be 'a generation of vipers,' and 'children of hell.' All their external offices of religion then, though directed, generally at least, to the attainment of eternal life, and performed with a strong expectation of securing it to themselves, were utterly destitute of virtue, and failed altogether of rendering them acceptable to God.

The young man who came to Christ to know 'what good thing he should do to inherit eternal life,' appears, in his original character, to have been more than usually amiable: for 'Jesus, beholding him, loved him.' The account which he gave of his own external obedience, appears to me to have been sincerely given. There is good reason to believe, that he really and with uncommon care had, in the external sense, obeyed the commands of the decalogue. Still, he 'lacked one thing;' and that was 'the one thing needful;' viz. real or evangelical virtue.

From these examples, thus considered, it is evident that men may proceed far (it is difficult to say how far), in external obedience, and yet be destitute of the evangelical character, and of every recommendation to God. Hence it cannot but be seen that external religious observances, existing in the highest degree, and performed primarily for the purpose of obtaining eternal life, are not in themselves, nor for this reason, virtuous, nor recommendations to the divine favour. If, then, the doctrine of justification by faith should in fact lessen the motives to this kind of obedience, as performed merely with these views, it cannot therefore with any truth be said to 'make void the law;' or to lessen the motives to evangelical obedience.

The dictates of reason perfectly accord with those of the Scriptures concerning this subject. That service, which is emphatically called mercenary, or which, in other words, is performed solely for the sake of a personal reward, is never considered by mankind as being virtuous, however exactly performed. Hence the very term mercenary, though originally indicating nothing immoral, has in the most common use acquired a bad signification, and is customarily used and regarded as a term of reproach. Voluntary service only, in which good-will is exercised about the employment and towards the object which it respects, is acknowledged by mankind to be virtuous. Those who love us, merely because we love them, and who do good to us, merely because we do good to them, are considered by common sense, as well as by Christ, as no better than 'publicans and sinners.' They may be, they usually are, convenient to us, and we may love them with the same spirit with which they love us; but it is impossible for us rationally to esteem them virtuous in this conduct.

2. The obligations of the law are not lessened by this doctrine; and therefore, the motives to obedience derived from this source continue the same.

The nature of the law, its rewards and penalties, and the character and authority of the lawgiver, the relations which we sustain towards him, as creatures, and as subjects of law, are certainly in no respect changed by the scheme of evangelical justification. If there is a hint of this nature contained in the gospel, I have never been able to find it. Until such a hint shall be produced, I shall take it for granted that there is none.

I know of nothing of this nature which can be alleged, even with plausibility, unless it is this; that the believer, being justified by faith, and having his title to justification secured, from the commencement of faith

in his mind, the penalty of the law becomes to him a nullity. As I suppose this to be the chief thing aimed at by those who make the objection under consideration, and that in which the real difficulty is supposed to lie, I shall examine it with some degree of attention.

1. The penalty of the law exists as truly against the Christian as against the sinner; although in a different sense.

The law denounces its penalty against 'every soul of man that doeth evil.'—'Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.'

But it will be said, that those who hold the doctrine of justification by faith, hold also that of the final perseverance of the saints; and by consequence deny that the penalty of the law will ever be executed on any of those who become the subjects of faith. As this is fairly said, because it is said with truth, particularly so far as I am concerned, I feel myself bound to give it a fair consideration.

Let it be observed, then, that the security which those who are the subjects of faith possess of eternal life, is not, in my view, connected with the first act of faith in this manner; that they are the subjects of this single act of faith, and will afterward be the subjects of habitual and characteristical disobedience: but in this manner; that, having once exercised faith, they will continue henceforth to practise an habitual and characteristical obedience to the end of life. 'If a man abide not in me,' saith our Saviour, 'he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire; and they are burned. If ye keep my commandments ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.'—'He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved.'—'For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end.' In every one of these passages the doctrine which I have specified is declared in terms so plain and unequivocal as to need no comment. I shall only add one more, although multitudes might be easily added. 'But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection; lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast away.' If St Paul, whose words these are, felt himself in any manner exposed to be finally cast away, and considered it as absolutely necessary to make these efforts in order to avoid this dreadful evil, and the Spirit of Truth dictated to him this doctrine and this conduct, nothing can be necessary to prove that all other Christians are, at least in an equal degree, exposed to the same evil, and need the same means to ensure their escape.

The perseverance of Christians is, in my own view, completely secured by the promise of God; but it is not secured by any compulsory or coercive act of almighty power. It is accomplished by means and motives employed for this purpose, and rendered effectual by their own efforts, and the sanctifying energy of the Divine Spirit. If they were not to act, means would be furnished and motives addressed to them in vain. If they were not aided by the energy of the Divine Spirit, their efforts would be ineffectual.

The providence, word, and ordinances of God, are these means. Among the motives addressed to them for this purpose, are the promises of the gospel, and the threatenings of the law; by which I intend every thing contained in the word of God, calculated either to encourage, or to alarm. The promises assure the Christian, that he shall persevere; but they do not assure him of this blessing on the supposition, that he ceases to obey, and yields himself again 'a servant to corruption.' On the contrary, they make it secure to him conditionally in this sense, that he never turns back, and refuses or neglects to 'walk any more with Christ:' that, on the contrary, he 'yields himself a living sacrifice to God,' and thenceforth 'walks in newness of life,' not perfectly, but habitually and perseveringly unto the end. At the same time, they give him certain assurance that, by the grace of God, he will be enabled thus to persevere. The threatenings, on the other hand, continually hold out to him the most awful denunciations against apostasy; the most solemn alarms concerning sloth, worldliness, and backsliding; and the most terrifying assurance that, if he does not endure in his duty unto the end, in the manner specified, he cannot be saved. Thus, while the event is made certain on the one hand, the means are made indispensable to it on the other. A well known passage of Scripture will sufficiently illustrate this position. The angel of the Lord assured Paul that not one of his companions in the ship should perish. Yet Paul afterwards declared to the centurion, and to the soldiers, that 'except' the seamen 'abode in the ship, they could not be saved.' In this part of the subject thus explained, it will, I think, be impossible to find any thing which lessens in the view of a Christian his motives to obedience.

In the mean time, it is to be remembered, the Christian is very rarely assured of his own salvation, because he is very rarely assured that he is a Christian. Did he know from the commencement of his Christianity that he was certainly a Christian, I freely confess that, in my own view, he would in ordinary cases be in no small danger of the evils intended in this objection. In the infant state of Christianity in the mind, there is usually so little religious knowledge, so little strength of affection, so infirm a state of virtuous habits, and consequently so little stability of religious character, while there is also so much remaining sin, so riveted a predominance of evil habits, and so imperfect a prevalence of divine grace over them, that this interesting discovery might, in my own view, prove in no small degree detrimental to him, by producing in his mind a dangerous quiet, and a mischievous if not a fatal security.

Such, however, is not the fact. The state of the Christian, either by the nature of things, or by the divine constitution, or by both, is such, that in ordinary cases, though I acknowledge not always, the evidence which he possesses of being a Christian is in a good measure proportioned to the degree of his Christianity. When religion is feeble in the mind, when it is interrupted, when it is intruded upon by passion, appetite, temptation, care, error, or perplexity, its proofs become of course few, scattered, dim, and doubtful, and not unfrequently disappear. In the contrary circumstance, luminous seasons are enjoyed, evidences of grace multiply, and the soul is refreshed with alternations of hope, and peace, and joy. In his ordinary state, the utmost of which the Christian can boast, if I may rely upon the testimony of such Christians as I have conversed with, is a prevailing hope, or a comfortable persuasion that he is a disciple of Christ. In this situation the hope which he enjoys, allures and encourages him to obedi-

ence, while it also prevents him from despondency. Numerous fears at the same time intervene, alarm him concerning the uncertainty of his condition, and compel him to new and more vigorous exertions for the performance of his duty. Thus he is preserved alike from the dangers of both despondency and security; and is kept, so far as such a being can be supposed to be kept, in a progressive and improving course of obedience. His 'path is like the shining light,' which, however dim and dusky, still 'shines more and more unto the perfect day.'

Whenever a Christian becomes possessed of the faith or hope of assurance, he is also so far advanced in virtue, that he is prepared to feel the influence of virtuous motives, to realize the glory and excellency of his Creator and Redeemer, the loveliness of virtuous affections and conduct, and the hatefulness of sin, sufficiently to need little assistance from the influence of fear. 'Perfect love casteth out fear;' and in this state a moral being is perfectly safe, without the aid of fear; perfectly inclined to do his duty, and perfectly guarded against the danger of backsliding. The assured Christian approximates towards this state, and is proportionally safe from the moral dangers of the present life.

In the like manner the inhabitants of heaven are unalterably assured of their eternal perseverance in obedience, and in the same general manner are enabled to persevere. They love God too intensely, they delight too absolutely in virtuous conduct, they hate sin too cordially, and are too efficaciously influenced by the Spirit of grace, ever to forsake holiness and relapse into sin. The assured Christian is chiefly kept alive in his obedience in the same manner, and differs from them principally in the degree of his sanctification.

3. The scheme of justification by faith in Christ furnishes new, peculiar, and very powerful motives to obedience.

This position will not be questioned. The whole purpose for which man is redeemed is, so far as himself is concerned, that he should 'walk in newness of life;' or that he should obey anew the law of God. To this great end he is now urged by motives of which the law knew nothing. God, unasked and undesired, has sent his Son into the world to redeem him. That glorious person became incarnate, lived, died, rose again, and ascended to heaven, where he reigns and intercedes, to accomplish his salvation. The Spirit of grace has sanctified him; the Father of all mercies has forgiven his sins. He has become a child of mercy, an heir of the divine favour, a member of the family which is named after Christ, has his 'name written in the Lamb's book of life,' and is entitled to a glorious immortality. When he remembers what he was, and to what he was doomed, considers what he now is, and to what he is destined, and realizes these wonderful efforts by which the infinitely happy change made both in his character and in his destiny is accomplished, he cannot as a Christian, the subject of an ingenuous, virtuous, and grateful disposition, fail to feel that motives wholly new, entirely peculiar, and wonderfully great, demand of him the most constant and exact obedience to the law of God. In this great particular, 'the law,' instead of being 'made void,' is, according to the language of the apostle, 'established' by the scheme of justification by faith.

4. The faith of the Christian is the real source of evangelical obedience.

The truth of this assertion has been already sufficiently proved, and can never be rationally questioned, while the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews remains a part of the word of God. There it is shown that faith is the direct source of obedience in all its forms, and all its degrees; of great attainments in Christian excellence, and of all attainments of this nature; of working righteousness, and inheriting promises; of pleasing God, and securing a title to the heavenly country. It is exhibited as the energy by which we vigorously act in the service of God, patiently submit, and firmly endure. It is exhibited as 'the victory, by which we overcome the world;' and 'the shield,' with which we become able to 'quench all the fiery darts of the adversary.'

Faith, then, is the spirit, the disposition, with which the Christian feels, and without which he cannot feel the various motives to obedience furnished by the law of God; motives presented by the excellence of the law itself, and of the government founded on it, the greatness of its sanction, and the glory of its Author. In an eminent degree, also, is it the spirit which feels the peculiar motives presented by the evangelical scheme of justification, and mentioned under the last head. These, it hardly needs to be observed, can be realized by no other disposition. The mind, under the expectation of meriting justification, either wholly or partially, by its own righteousness, proportionally recedes from just and affecting views of the excellency of Christ's righteousness, and its infinite importance to itself. Its sense of obligation, and its motives to gratitude, are proportionally lessened, and in the same proportion are diminished its inducements to obey, and its actual obedience. In this all-important sense also faith is the only real establishment of the law.

5. Those who have holden this doctrine have been the most exact and exemplary observers of the law.

If this be admitted, it must be allowed to put the question out of debate; for it cannot be denied that the scheme of those who obey the law most faithfully in their lives, is the scheme which most influences and ensures obedience. It is my business then, to prove this position. For this purpose I refer you generally to those discourses in which I impeached the doctrine and the conduct of the Unitarians, and to the Letters of the Rev. Andrew Fuller on the moral tendency of the Calvinistic and Socinian systems. Your attention, at the present time, is requested particularly to the following arguments, which I shall only state, and leave to your consideration.

(1.) Their antagonists have extensively acknowledged this position to be true. The confession of an adversary, in a practical case, may be usually assumed as decisive evidence.

(2.) Those who have held this doctrine, have by the same adversaries been censured, despised, and ridiculed, as being unnecessarily exact and rigidly scrupulous in their observance of the duties of a religious life: while their adversaries have styled themselves, by way of distinction, liberal and rational Christians. This could not have existed, had not these people thus censured been really exact, so far as the human eye could judge, in obeying the commands of God.

(3.) The sermons of ministers holding this doctrine have, with scarcely any exception, urged stricter morality on their hearers, than those of their adversaries. This

any man may know who will read both, even to a moderate extent. But this could not have taken place, had not the doctrine itself been peculiarly favourable to obedience.

(4.) Those who have holden this doctrine have much more generally and punctiliously frequented the house of God, and observed the duties of the sabbath, than their adversaries. This fact is acknowledged by both parties; and therefore cannot be mistaken.

(5.) Those who have holden this doctrine have, among Protestants, been almost the only persons who have originated, supported, and executed missions for the purpose of spreading the gospel among mankind. This fact cannot be questioned. I shall leave you to judge of the evidence which it contains; and shall only observe that the Papists have, indeed, prosecuted missions with great zeal; but that any one who will read the histories of them, will readily discern the end of their efforts to have been the extension of power, and the accumulation of wealth; not the diffusion of religion.

(6.) The Papists have very generally holden the doctrine of justification by works; while the Reformers, almost to a man, hold that of justification by faith. The comparative morality of these two classes of men cannot here need any illustration.

SERMON LXX.

REGENERATION.—THE AGENT IN EFFECTING IT.—THE HOLY GHOST: HIS CHARACTER.

Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost.—Tit. iii. 5.

In the six preceding Sermons, I have considered the manner in which we become interested in the redemption of Christ; through free grace on the part of God, and on our part by evangelical faith. The manner in which we become possessed of this faith, is the next great subject of investigation in a System of Theology.

The text, after denying that we are saved by works of righteousness, and declaring that our salvation is according to the mercy of God, or through his free grace, asserts, that this salvation is accomplished by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost.

There has been no small dispute among divines about the meaning of the third phrase in this passage; 'the washing of regeneration.' Some have supposed it to denote baptism; and some to denote the same thing with the following phrase, 'the renewing of the Holy Ghost.' Others have interpreted it in other manners. The second interpretation which I have mentioned is, in my apprehension, the true one. If baptism be intended, the passage is equivalent to the declaration of our Saviour to Nicodemus, 'Except a man be born of water, and of the spirit, he cannot see the kingdom of God.' He is 'born of water,' or baptised, indispensably, in order to his admission into the visible kingdom of God; and 'of the Spirit,' indispensably also, in order to his admission into the invisible and eternal kingdom of God. As his admission into the former is a symbol of his admission into the latter, so baptism, the means of his admission into the former, is a symbol of regeneration, the means of his admission into the latter. The difference between the two interpretations which I have specified, will therefore be found ultimately to be immaterial; the one referring the phrase to the type, and the other to the thing typified. On either scheme it must be admitted that the apostle declares mankind to be saved by regeneration. Regeneration is therefore that event in the gracious providence of God, by which we become the subjects of faith, entitled to justification, and consequently heirs of salvation.

In the consideration of this subject, two things are in the text presented to our inquiry:

I. *The agent in this work.*

II. *The work itself.*

The agent in the work of renewing the human mind, is declared in this passage to be the Holy Ghost. Two things are naturally presented to us by the mention of a person sustaining so important a part in the economy of salvation; a part, without which all that has preceded would be wholly defective, and exist to no valuable purpose.

I. *His character.*

II. *His agency.*

The former of these shall now engage our attention; and my own views concerning it will be sufficiently expressed in this position:

THE HOLY GHOST IS A DIVINE PERSON.

It is well known to those who hear me, that various classes of men, who profess to receive the Bible as the rule of their faith, have denied this proposition; viz. those who deny the Deity of our Saviour. The scheme of denial, however, has in this case been materially different from that in the other. In that, Deity was the object denied; in this, personality. On all hands it is agreed, that the Holy Ghost is acknowledged by Trinitarians to be a divine person; but by Unitarians only a divine attribute, asserted some times to be the wisdom, but usually the power of God. The chief subject of debate, therefore, between us and the Unitarians, that is, those with whom we have the chief concern, viz. the Arians and Socinians, is whether the Holy Ghost be a person, or an attribute. In support of the Trinitarian doctrine concerning this subject, I observe,

1. The supposition that the Spirit of God is an attribute, renders the language of the Scriptures unintelligible and unmeaning.

I have had occasion to take some notice of this fact formerly; it will be proper, however, to bring it up to view at this time. For example, then, it is said in Acts x. 38, 'God anointed Jesus with the Holy Ghost, and with power.' This passage, read according to its real meaning as interpreted by the Unitarians, would stand thus: 'God anointed Jesus with the holy power of God, and with power.' Rom. xv. 13, 'Now the God of peace fill you with all joy and peace, in believing; that ye may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost;' that is, that ye may abound in hope through the power of the holy power of God! Ver. 19. 'Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God;' that is, mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the power of God! 1 Cor. ii. 4, 'In demonstration of the Spirit and of power;' that is, in demonstration of power and of power!

I will not intrude upon your patience by repeating similar passages any farther, as these are abundantly sufficient for my purpose. It cannot be necessary to bring proofs that the infinitely wise God can never have directed his own word to be written in this manner. No sober man ever wrote in this manner. Nay, it may be confidently asserted, that such a mode of writing was never adopted by any man of any character whatever.

2. This scheme renders our Saviour's account of the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost unmeaning and incredible.

This account is given us in various places; particularly Matt. xii. 31, 'All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men; but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men.' Concerning this I observe,

(1.) That blasphemy cannot be directed against an attribute. Evil-speaking, or speaking in a manner derogatory to character, can be directed only against a percipient being; because such a being only is capable of perceiving, or being in any way affected by the evil intended. When mankind speak evil against the word, sabbaths, ordinances, works, names, or titles of God, the evil is nothing, except as it is directed against God himself; because he alone, and not the things immediately blasphemed, can perceive or be affected with the evil which is spoken. In this manner all men have understood the subject.

It cannot be therefore that the Unitarians, when they read this passage, suppose the blasphemy in question to be directed against the power of God. They undoubtedly consider it as directed against God himself, through the medium of this attribute. I observe, therefore,

(2.) It is inconceivable that blasphemy against God, universally and in all other forms should be forgiven, while the blasphemy against his power can never be forgiven.

In the attribute of power there is plainly nothing which is peculiarly sacred. It is shared alike by good and evil beings: and does not contribute at all to distinguish their character, as moral beings, or to render them either good or evil. It is in no sense the foundation, nor an ingredient, of worth or moral excellence. It is not, and cannot be, the object of love, nor praise. It is therefore incredible, and certainly inexplicable, that 'all manner of blasphemy' against the whole character of God, particularly against his moral character, should be forgiven; and yet the blasphemy against this single natural attribute should never be forgiven. So far as the human understanding can discern, blasphemy against the holiness, faithfulness, truth, goodness, and mercy of God would be more expressive of malignant opposition and of guilt in the blasphemer, than blasphemy merely against his power. St John has declared, that 'God is love.' That is, love is the essence, sum, and glory of his moral character, and of himself. Blasphemy against this perfection, we should, I think, irresistibly conclude to be more heinous than against any other attribute. But according to this scheme, blasphemy against the power of God, a natural attribute, is so much more heinous than that which is directed against all the other divine attributes, nay, than that which is directed against God himself, and his whole character, including this very attribute of power, together with all others, as to be absolutely unpardonable; while all other blasphemy can and will be forgiven. This, to say the least, is incredible.

If the Holy Ghost be a divine person, it would seem probable that, if any sin is incapable of being forgiven, blasphemy against the Holy Ghost would be that sin. The Holy Ghost is God employed in his most benevolent and wonderful work, that of restoring holiness to the soul of man; in his most glorious character, that of the sanctifier; in a work, demanding the supreme gratitude of mankind; in a character, demanding their supreme reverence and love.

3. That the Holy Ghost is not an attribute, is evident from Acts v. 3. 'But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thy heart, to lie unto the Holy Ghost?'

A lie is a wilful deception, and can be told only to intelligent beings; because such beings only can perceive the meaning of the declaration with which the liar intends to deceive; or, in other words, because such beings only can receive the lie at his mouth. A child perfectly knows that he cannot lie to a tree or an ox, because they must be unconscious of what he says. But an attribute is as unconscious as a tree, or an ox; and although God perceives all things, yet his power perceives nothing. A lie therefore cannot, in the physical sense of possibility, be told to the power of God.

4. All the attributes and actions of a person are ascribed to the Holy Spirit.

These are so numerous, and the varieties in which they are mentioned are so numerous also, that I shall only specify them in the most summary manner.

The Spirit of God is said to strive. 'My Spirit shall not always strive with man,' Gen. vi. 3.

To be sent forth. 'Thou sendest forth thy Spirit, and they are created,' Psal. civ. 30. 'God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son,' Gal. iv. 6. 'The Comforter, whom I will send unto you from the Father,' John xv. 26.

To move. 'The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters,' Gen. i. 2.

To know. 'The Spirit searcheth all things, even the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of a man which is within him? Even so the things of God knoweth no one, but the Spirit of God,' 1 Cor. ii. 10, 11.

Here let me ask, whether any man can conceive, that knowledge, one essential attribute of God, can with any meaning be said to be an attribute of power, which is another? Or whether power can, in any words that have meaning, be said to know any thing?

The Spirit of God is said to speak. 'He shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak,' John xvi. 13. 'Then the Spirit said to Peter,' Acts x. 19. 'The Spirit said to Philip,' Acts viii. 20. 'Let him that hath an ear hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches,' Rev. ii. 7. 'The Spirit and the bride say, come,' Rev. xxii. 17.

To guide. 'He will guide you into all truth,' John xvi. 13.

To lead. 'For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God,' Rom. viii. 14.

To help. 'The Spirit helpeth our infirmities,' Rom. viii. 26.

To testify. 'The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God,' Rom. viii. 16. 'But when the Comforter is come, even the Spirit of truth, he shall testify of me,' John xv. 26.

To reveal. 'As it is now revealed unto his holy prophets and apostles by the Spirit,' Eph. iii. 5. 'But the Comforter shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you,' John xiv. 26.

To search. 'The Spirit searcheth all things,' 1 Cor. ii. 10.

To have a mind, or pleasure. 'He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit,' Rom. viii. 27.

To prophesy. 'He shall show you things to come,' John xvi. 13. 'Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith,' 1 Tim. iv. 1.

To intercede. 'The Spirit maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered,' Rom. viii. 26.

To give gifts. 'For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another, the word of knowledge; to another, faith; to another, the gifts of healing; to another, the working of miracles,' &c. 1 Cor. xii. 8—10.

To work in the soul of man. 'All these worketh one and the same Spirit, dividing to every man as he will,' 1 Cor. xii. 11.

To work miracles. 'Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God,' Rom. xv. 19.

To sanctify. 'Ye are sanctified by the Spirit of our God,' 1 Cor. vi. 11.

To quicken, or give life. 'It is the Spirit that quickeneth,' John vi. 63. 'Put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit.' This is spoken of Christ, 1 Peter iii. 18.

To be pleased. 'It seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us,' Acts xv. 28.

To be vexed. 'They rebelled, and vexed his Holy Spirit,' Isa. lxiii. 10.

To be provoked, to be resisted, and to be grieved.

That all these things should be said of an attribute, particularly of the attribute of power, will I believe be acknowledged to be incredible. That they should be dictated by God himself, and be the common language in which this attribute, or any attribute, is described in his word, is I think impossible. The language of the Scriptures is in all other cases, except those in which it involves the Deity of the Son and the Spirit, the language of common sense, the plain, artless language of nature. Why should it not be so here? Why should these two cases be, uniformly and solely, exceptions to that law by which all the remaining language of Scripture is governed? Why should the scriptural writers, whenever these subjects come before them, and then only, desert their native style, that which alone they use on all other occasions, and adopt one totally new and singular? Why should this be done by any writer? Such a case, it is presumed, cannot be found in the world, except in these two instances. Why should it be found in so many of these writers? Why should it be found in every scriptural writer? Why, above all, should it be found in the language of Christ himself? Still more; whence could these writers be induced to depart from their customary style whenever they had occasion to speak of these two subjects, and adopt such language as renders their real meaning obscure, and not only obscure, but unintelligible; and not only unintelligible, but so utterly lost in the strangeness of their phraseology, that almost all their readers, and among them the great body of the wisest and best, have totally mistaken the real meaning, and derived from this very phraseology a meaning infinitely different? Can this be supposed to have been accomplished by the immediate providence of God himself, when disclosing his will to mankind concerning subjects of infinite importance? Yet the Unitarians must suppose all this, or give up their scheme.

But, it is replied, 'The language of the Scriptures is highly figurative; and among the figures used, bold personifications hold a distinguished place. Among these we find the attributes of God personified. For example, in the Proverbs of Solomon, particularly in the eighth chapter, we find the divine wisdom represented as a living agent, possessing a variety of other attributes, and performing such actions as are elsewhere ascribed to the Spirit of God,

This answer is the only specious one which has been, or, it is presumed, can be made to the arguments alleged above. I shall therefore consider it particularly; and reply,

(1.) This personification of wisdom is exhibited in animated and sublime poetry.

In such poetry, and in the loftier strains of eloquence, we are to look, if any where, for bold, figurative language. The whole tenor of the discourse here proceeds from an enkindled imagination and ardent feelings. In this state of mind nature instinctively adopts figurative language and bold images, and readily imparts life, thought, and action to those objects, the contemplation of which has excited the peculiar elevation. With the writer, the reader in all such cases readily coincides. The dullest man in the dullest frame easily catches the inspiration, and not only admits without hesitation the propriety of this language and these images, but regards them as the only things which are proper, natural, and suited to the strain of thought.

But on ordinary occasions, which furnish nothing to raise the mind above its common cool level, such a mode of writing is perfectly unnatural, is at war with the whole tenor of thought, and can be the result of nothing but an inexplicable determination to write extravagance, and produce wonder. Not an example of this nature can be found in the Scriptures, unless it be this which is now in debate.

Here this language and these images are adopted, if they are in fact adopted at all, on the most ordinary occasions; inferring the most tranquil, even, uninterested state of the writer; in the simplest narratives

and the most quiet discussions. Who would look for a personification in such instances as the following? 'The Spirit said unto Peter'—'The Spirit said unto Philip'—'The Spirit caught away Philip'—'Now the Spirit speaketh expressly'—'It seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us;' together with a vast multitude of others, exactly resembling these in their nature? If personifications are to be used in such cases, in what cases are they not to be used? And in what cases are we to use simple language?

To complete the strangeness of this representation, the Greek masculine pronouns and relatives are, in a multitude of instances, made to agree with the neuter substantive, Πνευμα, *Spirit;* a mode of personification in all other cases absurd, and here, to say the least, inexplicable.

(2.) The wisdom spoken of in the Proverbs is also a real person, and not an attribute; viz. the Lord Jesus Christ.

This has been the unwavering opinion of the great body of divines; of most, I believe, if not all, who are not Unitarians. Christ, as I apprehend, challenges this character to himself, Matt. xi. 19, 'Wisdom is justified of her children.' St Paul, in 1 Cor. i. 24, attributes it to him directly, when he says, 'Christ the wisdom of God;' and in ver. 30, when he says, 'Who of God is become unto us wisdom;' and in Col. ii. 3, where he says of Christ, 'In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom.'

That the attribute wisdom is not meant by Solomon in this chapter, is completely evident from the 14th verse; 'Counsel is mine, and sound wisdom.' Now, it is impossible that wisdom should possess wisdom; the possessor, and the thing possessed, being, by physical necessity, two things distinct from each other. It is also evident from the whole tenor of this chapter, as well as from several other parts of the discourse in the beginning of this book, particularly chap. i. 20—33, on which, however, I can dwell no longer at the present time.

(3.) Should it be still supposed, that the attribute of wisdom, and not Christ, is intended by Solomon; the passage, even if it were not poetical, would not involve such absurdities and difficulties as are involved in the supposition that the Holy Ghost is an attribute personified. As extensive comparison of these two subjects cannot be expected on the present occasion. Suffice it to say, that wisdom is not said to appear 'in a bodily shape;' is not introduced in form, as an agent in the common concerns of life; is not spoken of by one living being, when discoursing of another living being, as a third living being, united with the other two in the transaction of real business; is never introduced in the Scriptures, in plain prose, as speaking, hearing, commanding, guiding, sanctifying, and universally doing such things as can be attributed only to a living person. Yet it must strike every person that, as wisdom is an attribute, involving consciousness and perception, all these things, and others like them, might be attributed to it with much more propriety than to the attribute of power.

5. The Holy Ghost is a divine person.

There will probably be little dispute concerning this declaration among those who acknowledge that the Holy Ghost is a person. The things which are said concerning the Spirit of God are so plainly such as evince infinite perfection, that few persons, probably none, who admit the personality of the Spirit, will deny his Deity. Still, it will be useful on this occasion to exhibit several proofs of this truth.

(1.) The names of God are given to the Holy Ghost in the Scriptures. 'Now the Lord is that Spirit,' 2 Cor. viii. 17. This is a direct affirmation of St Paul, that the Spirit is God.

'For who hath known the mind of the Lord? and who has been his counsellor?' Rom. xi. 34. 'For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him?' 1 Cor. ii. 16. Both these passages are quoted from Isaiah xl. 13, 'Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord? or, being his counsellor, hath taught him?'

'And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ,' 2 Thess. iii. 5. Here the person addressed in prayer, is plainly a distinct person from those mentioned by the names God and Christ, and of course is the Spirit of God; to whom throughout the Scriptures the office of directing the hearts of Christians to their duty, is everywhere ascribed.

Peter says to Ananias, Acts v. 3, 4, 'Why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie unto the Holy Ghost? Why hast thou conceived this in thine heart? Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.' Here the Holy Ghost is called God by the apostles, in as direct terms as are conceivable.

Acts iv. 24, 25, 'They lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou art God, who hast made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is. Who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?'

Acts i. 16, Peter says, 'This Scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost spake by the mouth of David.' The Holy Ghost is, therefore, the Lord God who spoke by the mouth of David.

(2.) The attributes of God are ascribed to the Holy Ghost.

Eternity.—'Christ, who through the eternal Spirit once offered himself to God.' Heb. ix. 14.

Omnipresence.—'Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? Whither shall I flee from thy presence?' Psalm cxxxix. 7. 'Your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost;' that is, the bodies of all Christians, 1 Cor. vi. 9.

Omniscience.—'The Spirit searcheth all things, even the deep things of God,' 1 Cor. ii. 10. 'Even so, the things of God knoweth no one, but the Spirit of God,' 1 Cor. ii. 11.

Holiness.—'The Holy Ghost,' 'the Holy Spirit;' 'the Spirit of holiness.' *Passim.*

Grace.—'Hath done despite to the Spirit of grace,' Heb. ix. 29; see also Zech. xii. 10.

Truth.—'The Comforter, the Spirit of truth,' John xiv. 17.

Glory—'The Spirit of glory and of God resteth on you,' 1 Pet. iv. 14.

Goodness.—'Thy good Spirit,' Neh. ix. 20. 'Thy Spirit is good,' Psalm cxliii. 10.

Power.—'The power of God,' as exerted in working signs and wonders, is ascribed to the Holy Ghost throughout the New Testament.

(3.) The actions of God are ascribed to the Holy Ghost.

Creation.—'By his Spirit he garnished the heavens.' Job xxvi. 13. 'The Spirit of God hath made me,' Job xxxiii. 4: see also Acts i. 24, 25, compared with Acts i. 16.

Working miracles,—which, as you know, is either a suspension or counteraction of the laws of nature, or of the divine agency operating conformably to these laws, and is therefore, with peculiar evidence, an act of God himself. This, as I have already remarked concerning the power exerted in it, is throughout the New Testament ascribed to the Holy Ghost.

Inspiration.—'Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost,' 2 Pet. i. 21.

Giving life.—'It is the Spirit that quickeneth,' John vi. 63. 'Put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit,' 1 Pet. iii. 18. 'He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies, by his Spirit that dwelleth in you,' Rom. viii. 11.

Sanctification.—This also is ascribed to the Holy Ghost appropriately, throughout the New Testament.

Instances of the same general nature might be easily increased in numbers, and the proofs might be easily multiplied to a great extent; but as discourses so extensively made up of detached passages of Scripture are apt to be less interesting than could be wished, I shall desist.

(4.) The Holy Ghost is a divine person, because he is united with the Father and the Son in the baptismal service, and in the blessing pronounced upon Christians by St Paul.

I have mentioned these subjects together, because they have some things in common. Yet there are also some things in which they differ. 'Go and teach all nations,' said our Saviour to his apostles, 'baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.'

'The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,' says St Paul, to the Corinthian church, and through them to all Christians, 'and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen.'

In the commission here given by Christ to his apostles, it is impossible that an attribute should with propriety or meaning be joined with persons, or a creature with one or more divine persons. No absurdity can strike the mind with more force, than that Christ should direct the apostles to baptize in the name of God the Father, and of the Son, and of the divine power! Nothing but impiety can, so far as I see, be contained in a direction to baptize in the name of God and of the creature. What creature would dare to associate himself with God in such an act of authority, and thus presume to ascend the throne of his Maker? The same things are equally true concerning the form of blessing above recited. Can St Paul be supposed to have united either a creature or an attribute with the eternal God in this solemn service? What blessings could either of these bestow? Both the creature and the attribute, considered by themselves, are in this view nothing.

But this form of blessing is a prayer, and is addressed equally to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Can St Paul have addressed a prayer, either to an attribute or to a creature?

Farther: the blessing prayed for from the Holy Ghost is communion, or fellowship. The request for this blessing involves therefore the declaration, that the Holy Ghost will, if the prayer be granted, be present with all those for whom this communion is supplicated, and present with that influence which is the source of spiritual and immortal life. In other words, the Holy Ghost is here exhibited as omnipresent: and as every where possessing, and at his pleasure communicating, life here, as the commencement of life hereafter.

I shall conclude this discourse with observing, that the divinity of the Spirit of truth furnishes Christians with the most solid foundation for gratitude and joy. It will be seen, in the progress of these Discourses, that he is the sum of all the moral blessings introduced into this world by the mediation of Christ. He sanctifies the soul; 'brings it out of darkness into marvellous light; improves it in holiness; conducts it through the temptations and dangers of this life; furnishes it with every gift and grace; prompts it to all virtue and excellence; and fills it with all spiritual enjoyment. For this great work he is abundantly qualified by the possession of infinite perfection; of all that is great, and all that is good. In this world he commences and carries it on. In the future world he advances it to absolute perfection. Through the ages of eternity he will supply, enrich, and adorn the soul with endless virtue, as the means of endless happiness and glory.

SERMON LXXI.

TESTIMONIES TO THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY, FROM THE ANCIENT CHRISTIANS, JEWS, AND HEATHENS.

Come ye near unto me; here ye this: I have not spoken in secret from the beginning: from the time that it was, there am I; and now the Lord God and his Spirit hath sent me.—Isa. xlviii. 16.

In the last Discourse, I considered the personality and divinity of the Spirit of God. In a series of Discourses formerly delivered, I considered the divinity of Christ. If the arguments alleged in those Discourses are as conclusive as they appear to me, they prove the existence of a trinity, or three persons and one God.

The proof of this doctrine must unquestionably be derived from the Scriptures alone. But when a doctrine of this extraordinary nature is presented to the mind, we naturally feel a strong curiosity to know the manner in which the same doctrine has been regarded by others; particularly by such as have lived before us:

and peculiarly by the ancient members of the Jewish and Christian churches. Nor is this a matter of mere curiosity. If the doctrine of the Trinity were now first discovered by mankind to be contained in the Scriptures, the words being supposed to have remained always the same, we should undoubtedly be surprised to find, that those passages which in our view clearly contain this doctrine, had never been understood by others in the same manner as by ourselves. Particularly, we should be inclined to doubt the soundness of our own interpretations, if we found the Jews construing such passages in the Old Testament, and the early Christians in the New, in a manner totally different from ours. Were such the fact, we should, I think, very naturally suspect our own mode of constructing; for we could not easily believe that the Jewish Church was always ignorant of this doctrine, if it was really taught by the prophets, nor the early Christian Church, if it was decisively communicated by the apostles. It will be easily seen, that the time in which those lived, to whom an appeal of this nature is made, must be important, as well as the character of the witnesses. The more ancient the witnesses are, other things being equal, the more valuable must be their testimony; and such testimony, if really ancient, and at the same time explicit and decisive, cannot fail of yielding material satisfaction to every rational inquirer.

Nor is the testimony even of heathens concerning this subject to be disregarded. If we find that the ancient heathen nations generally, or in most or all instances, independently of any acquaintance with the Scriptures, have holden the doctrine of a *triad* constituting a *monad*, that is, a supreme God, who was one in one sense, and three in another, we cannot easily avoid the conclusion, that they derived this doctrine from a single source, and that that source was revelation. The doctrine plainly lies wholly out of the course, I think I may say out of the reach, of human thought. There is, therefore, no reason why we should believe it to have been invented by man. Much less is there any reason to suppose it invented by men in so many different nations, and in such circumstances of barbarism as almost preclude the invention of any philosophical doctrine. The source of the doctrine must, therefore, have been one, and that a revelation, existing before these nations were separated from each other.

In the text a person declares concerning himself, 'I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; from the time that it was, there am I: and now the Lord God (in the original the Lord Jehovah), and his Spirit hath sent me.' The person speaking in this verse, is in the 2nd verse called 'Jehovah of Hosts,' or 'Jehovah God of hosts.' And in the 12th verse he says, 'I am he; I am the first: I also am the last. Mine hand also hath laid the foundation of the earth; my right hand hath spanned the heavens. When I call unto them they stand up together.' The person speaking in the text is then 'Jehovah of Hosts;'—'the first and the last;'—'the Creator of the earth and the heavens. And this person says, 'And now the Lord Jehovah and his Spirit hath sent me:' or, more properly, 'The Lord Jehovah hath sent me and his Spirit.' Origen, as quoted by Bishop Lowth, comments on this passage in this manner: "Who is it, that saith in Isaiah, 'And now the Lord hath sent me and his Spirit?' in which, as the expression is ambiguous, is it the Father and the Holy Spirit, who hath sent Jesus? or the Father, who hath sent both Christ and the Holy Spirit? The latter is the true interpretation." This opinion of Origen appears to be just: because we nowhere read in the Scriptures, that Christ was sent by the Spirit: but, every where, that both Christ and the Spirit were sent by the Father, called in the text 'the Lord God.' To the present purpose, however, this difference of interpretation is wholly immaterial. Whether the Spirit send, or be sent, he is equally determined to be a living agent; since in the physical sense it is impossible that any other being should either send, or be sent. In the text, then, the doctrine of a Trinity is directly declared by a person styled 'Jehovah of Hosts.' Let us now see what countenance this doctrine receives from the sources which I have specified above.

It will not be imagined, that in the compass of such a discourse, any thing more can be done, than merely to make a moderate selection of the testimonies referred to. For those, which I shall mention, I am chiefly indebted to Bishop Bull, Dr Jamieson, Mr Maurice, and the Asiatic Researches: and it is believed that they will be sufficiently numerous, and sufficiently explicit, to satisfy a mind willing to receive the truth.

1. To the pre-existence of Christ the following testimonies must, I think, be regarded as complete.

1. Justin Martyr, who flourished in the year 140, and was born about the close of the first century, declares Christ to have been the person who appeared to Abraham under the oak of Mamre; and asserts that the person here called Lord, or Jehovah, to whom Abraham prays for Sodom, and who, in the next chapter, is said to rain fire and brimstone on the cities of the plain, was no other than Christ. He also asserts that Christ appeared to Moses in the bush.

2. Irenæus, who flourished in the year 178, declares that Christ, as God, was adored by the prophets; was 'the God of the living; and the living God;' that he spoke to Moses in the bush; and that afterward the same person refuted the doctrine of the Sadducees concerning the resurrection of the dead. He farther says, that Abraham learned divine truth from the *Logos*, or Word of God.

3. Theophilus of Antioch, who flourished in the year 181, declares that Christ, assuming το προσωπον του πατρος, the character of the Father, that is, the divine character, came to paradise in the appearance of God, and conversed with Adam.

4. Clemens Alexandrinus, who flourished in the year 194, exhibits Christ as the author of the former precepts, and of the latter; that is, of the Scriptures of the Old Testament, and of the New; deriving both from one fountain.

5. Tertullian declares that it was the Son of God who spoke to Moses, and who appeared (that is, as God) at all times; that he overthrew the tower of Babel; confounded the languages of men; and rained fire and brimstone on Sodom and Gomorrah. He calls him '*Dominus a domino*;' and says, that 'he only, and always, conversed with men, from Adam down to the patriarchs and prophets, in visions and dreams; and that no other God conversed with men beside the Word, who was afterward to be made flesh.'

II. *That Christ was the Creator of the world, in the view of the ancient church, the following testimonies satisfactorily prove.*

1. Barnabas, who, as you well know, was a companion of the apostles, and could not but know their views of this subject, says, in an epistle of his, yet remaining, 'The sun in the heavens was the work of the Son of God.'

2. Hermas, also a companion of the apostles, says, 'The Son of God was more ancient than any creature; seeing he was present with the Father at the creation of the world.'

3. Athenagoras, who flourished in the year 178, says, 'By Christ, and through Christ, all things were created; since the Father and the Son are ἓν, one thing;—one substance.'

4. Justin Martyr declares, that "More than one divine person are denoted by the phrase, 'The man is become as one of us;' and that one of these is Christ."

5. Clemens Alexandrinus says, 'The *Logos* is the universal architect;' that is, the Maker of all things. He farther says, 'The *Logos* is the Creator of all men, and of the world.' He also speaks of the *Logos*, as the universal ruler and instructor.

III. *That Christ was truly God, in the view of the ancient church, will fully appear from the following testimonies.*

1. Clement of Rome, who was a companion of the apostles, calls Christ 'the sceptre of the greatness of God;' and says, 'He had it in his power to have come with pomp and magnificence, but would not.'

2. Polycarp, a disciple of St John, when at the stake, addressed a prayer to God, which he concluded in this manner; 'For all things I praise thee; I bless thee; I glorify thee; together with the eternal and heavenly Jesus Christ; with whom, unto thee, and the Holy Spirit, be glory, both now and for ever, world without end. Amen.'

3. Justin Martyr declares, that 'Christ, the first-born Word of God, exists as God; that he is Lord and God, as being the Son of God; and that he was the God of Israel.'

He also says, 'We adore and love the Word of the unbegotten and invisible God.' And again, 'Him (the Father of righteousness), and that Son who hath proceeded from him, and the prophetical Spirit (that is, the Spirit of inspiration), we worship and adore.'

This doctrine also Trypho, his Jewish antagonist, admits as the doctrine of the Gentile Christians generally.

4. The church of Symrna, in their epistle to the other churches concerning the martyrdom of Polycarp, in which the above-mentioned doxology is quoted, says, 'We can never forsake Christ, nor worship any other: for we worship him as being the Son of God.'

5. Athenagoras says, 'The Νους και Λογος (Mind and Word of God,) is the Son of God;' and, 'We who preach God, preach God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost; and the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost are one.'

6. Tatian, bishop of Antioch, who flourished in the year 172, says, 'We declare,' that God was born in human form.'

7. Melito, bishop of Sardis, who flourished in the year 177, says, 'We are worshippers of one God, who is before all, and in all, in his Christ, who is truly God, the eternal Word.'

8. Theophilus, bishop of Antioch, says, 'The three days before the creation of the heavenly luminaries, represent the Trinity; God, and his Word, and his Wisdom.'

9. Clemens Alexandrinus prays to Christ to be propitious, and says, 'Son and Father, both one Lord, grant that we may praise the Son, and the Father, with the Holy Ghost, all in one; in whom are all things, through whom are all things in one, through him is eternity, of whom we are all members, to him, who is in all things good, in all things beautiful, universally wise and just; to whom be glory, both now and for ever. Amen.' He also says, 'Gather together thy children, to praise in a holy manner, to celebrate without guile, Christ, eternal *Logos*, infinite age, eternal light, fountain of mercy.'

10. Tertullian says, 'The name of Christ is everywhere believed, and everywhere worshiped, by all the nations mentioned above. He reigns everywhere, and is everywhere adored. He is alike to all a King, and to all a Judge, and to all a God and a Lord.'

Again: 'Behold all nations henceforth emerging from the gulf of error, to the Lord God the Creator, and to God his Christ.'

Tertullian also declares, that 'Tiberius received accounts from Palestine, of the things which manifested the truth of Christ's divinity.'

To these Christian testimonies, all of the two first centuries, I shall subjoin a few others, out of multitudes, which belong to a later period.

The testimony of Origen, in his comment on the text, has been already seen. He also says, 'We (Christians) worship one God, the Father, and the Son.'

He farther says, "Now, that you may know the omnipotence of the Father and the Son to be one and the same, as he is one and the same God and Lord with the Father; hear what St John hath said, in the Revelation: 'These things saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.' For who is the Almighty that is to come, but Christ?"

He also mentions the Christians, as saying, 'The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, are one God;' and speaks of this as a difficult and perplexing doctrine to such as hear not with faith, or are not Christians.

Again, he says, 'When we come to the grace of baptism we acknowledge one God only, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.'

Origen flourished in the year 230.

Cyprian, bishop of Carthage, who flourished in the year 248, says, 'Christ is our God; that is, not of all; but of the faithful and believing.'

The council of Antioch, which sat about the year 264, in their epistle say, 'In the whole church he is believed to be God; who emptied himself indeed of a state of equality with God, and man, of the seed of David according to the flesh.'

Eusebius, the celebrated ecclesiastical historian, who flourished in the year 315, declares that Pilate, in his letter to Tiberius concerning the miracles of Christ, says, that 'he was raised from the dead; and that he was already believed by the body of the people to be God.'

This part of the subject I shall conclude with the following heathen testimonies.

Pliny the younger, in his letter to the emperor Trajan, from the province of Bithynia, whither he went with proconsular authority, writes, that 'Certain Christians whom he had examined, affirmed that they were

wont to meet together on a stated day, before it was light, and sing among themselves, alternately, a hymn to Christ, as to some God.' This letter is, with the highest probability, placed in year 107.

Celsus, an eminent Epicurean philosopher, and adversary of the Christians, charges them with worshipping Christ, 'who,' he says, 'has appeared of late; and whom he calls, 'The minister of God.' Celsus flourished in the year 176.

At the same time flourished Lucian, the celebrated writer of Dialogues, and a philosopher of the same sect. In the 'Philopatris,' a dialogue frequently attributed to him, Tryphon represents the Christians as 'swearing by the most high God; the great, immortal, celestial Son of the Father; the Spirit, proceeding from the Father; one of three, and three of one.'

Hierocles, who flourished about the year 303, a heathen philosopher also, says, that 'the Christians, on account of a few miracles, proclaim Christ to be God.'

On these testimonies I shall only ask a single question. Can any person who has them before him, doubt for a moment, that the Christian church in its earliest ages acknowledged and worshiped the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, as the only living and true God?

To the testimony of the Christian church I shall now add that of the Jewish church.

Philo, the celebrated Jew of Alexandria, who lived before the birth of our Saviour, calls the *Logos* the eternal *Logos*, or Word; and says, that 'he is necessarily eternal, and the image of the invisible God.'

Farther, he says, 'He who is, on each side attended by his nearest powers; of which one is creative, and the other kingly. The creative is God, by which he founded and adorned the universe. The kingly is Lord. He who is in the middle, being thus attended by both his powers, exhibits to the discerning mind the appearance sometimes of one, and sometimes of three.'

Of the *Logos* he says, 'He who is the begotten, imitating the ways of his Father, and observing his archetypal patterns, produces forms;' that is, material things. He often calls the *Logos, the Divine Logos*; and represents him as the manager, or ruler of the world. He farther says, that 'God governs all things according to the strictest justice, having set over them his righteous *Logos*, his first begotten Son.' The duration of created things he ascribes to this cause; 'that they were framed by him who remains, and who is never in any respect changed—the *Divine Logos*.' Finally, he calls the *Logos* 'an Angel; the Name of God; a man; the Beginning; the Eternal Image; the most ancient Angel; the Archangel of many names; and the High Priest of his world;' and says, 'His head is anointed with oil.'

The Chaldee paraphrasts, and other Jewish commentators, speak of this subject in a similar manner.

They speak of the *Mimra*, the Hebrew term rendered in the Greek Λογος, and in the English *Word*, as 'the Word from before the Lord,' or which is before the Lord; as a Redeemer, as only-begotten, as the Creator. They say, The Word of the Lord said, 'Behold Adam, whom I have created, as the only begotten in the world, as I am the only begotten in the highest heavens.' They paraphrased the text, Gen. iii. 8. 'And they heard the voice of the Lord God, walking in the garden,' thus: 'They heard the Word of the Lord God,' &c.

Several Jewish commentators say, that 'it was the *Voice* which was walking.'

One of them says, that 'Our first parents before their sin, saw the Glory of God speaking to them; but after their sin, they only heard the Voice walking.'

Philo and Jonathan both say, 'that it was the Word of God which appeared unto Hagar.'

Jonathan says, 'God will receive the prayer of Israel by his Word.' Paraphrasing Jer. xxix. 14, he says, 'I will be sought by you in my Word.'

The Jerusalem Targum, or Paraphrase, says, 'Abraham prayed in the name of the Word of the Lord, the God of the world.'

Jonathan says also, 'God will atone by his Word for his land, and for his people; even a people saved by the Word of the Lord.'

Psalm cx. 1. They paraphrase, 'The Lord said unto his Word,' instead of *my Lord*, as in the original.

The Jewish commentators say, 'there are three degrees in the mystery of Aleim, or Elohim;' and these degrees they call Persons. They say, 'They are all one, and cannot be separated.'

Deut. vi. 4. 'Hear, O Israel! Jehovah, or Aleim, is one Jehovah,' is thus rendered by the author of the Jewish book Zohar; 'The Lord, and our God, and the Lord, are one.' In his comment on this passage the author says, "The Lord, or Jehovah, is the beginning of all things, and perfection of all things, and he is called the Father. The other, or our God, is the depth or the fountain of sciences; and is called the Son. The other, or Lord, he is the Holy Ghost, who proceeds from them both, &c. Therefore he says, 'Hear, O Israel!' that is, join together this Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, and make them one essence, one substance: for whatever is in the one is in the other. He hath been the whole; he is the whole; and he will be the whole."

Again: "What is the name of King Messiah? Rabbi Akiba hath said, Jehovah is his name. As it is declared, Jer. xxiii. 6, 'And this is his name by which they shall call him, Jehovah, our righteousness.'"

These commentators also call him the Branch; the Comforter; Gracious; Luminous, &c.

And again; "The Holy God calls the King Messiah by his name: Jehovah is his name; for it is said, Exod. vii. 1, 'The Lord is a man of war; Jehovah is his name.'"

To these explicit and unquestionable testimonies I shall now add a collection of others, of a different nature, but scarcely less decisive.

In the concise history of the creation Moses says, more than thirty times, 'Aleim (that is, *Gods*) created;' the noun being plural, and the verb singular, in every instance. These the Jewish paraphrasts explain by Jehovah; his Word, that is, his Son; and his Wisdom or Holy Spirit, which they call three degrees. These three, they assert, are one; and declare them to be one inseparable Jehovah. This doctrine the Jews have exhibited in a variety of methods, clear, convincing, and impressive. These I shall now proceed to exhibit, after having premised a remarkable sentence from Rabbi Judah Hakkadosh, or Judah the Holy, in which the doctrine of the Jewish church is declared in the most explicit manner. 'God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, three in unity, one in trinity.' This Rabbi flourished in the second century.

With this preface I observe,

(1.) That the form of blessing used by the Jewish priests, and the mode of administering it, when they blessed the congregation, strongly exhibited the doctrine of the Trinity.

This form of blessing is prescribed in Numb. vi. 24—26. 'Jehovah bless thee, and keep thee. Jehovah make his face to shine upon thee, and be gracious to thee. Jehovah lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.'

This blessing, according to Rabbi Menachen, was pronounced in a different accent, during the utterance of each part; and, according to the account given by two other Rabbies, with the hand lifted up, and the three first fingers of the hand extended; the little finger being at the same time closed. This, they say, was done to express a triad, or trinity, in the Godhead.

(2.) The Jews anciently used a solemn symbol of the Deity, which they called Sephiroth; a word commonly signifying enumerations, but used by their learned men to denote splendours. These are sometimes exhibited in the form of a tree with its branches extended, and sometimes by ten concentric circles, that figure being the symbol of perfection. All these splendours are represented as issuing from the supreme and infinite Source, as light from the sun.

Of this tree Rabbi Schabte says, 'There are three degrees; the root, the stem, and the branches; and these three are one.' By this he intends, that the infinite source, and the other two degrees, are one and inseparable.

In the symbol of the circles, the three superior circles are called the Crown, Wisdom, and Understanding. 'These,' Rabbi Isaac, a famous and learned Jew, says, 'are the highest numerations, which possess one throne, on which sits the holy, holy, holy Lord God of Hosts.' Two other celebrated Jewish doctors say, 'These are the Voice, the Spirit, and the Word; and these are one.' And Rambam, the most celebrated of them all, says, 'The crown is the primordial Spirit of the living Aleim; and his Wisdom is a Spirit from the Spirit; and the Understanding, Waters from the Spirit; and between these, though thus distinguished, there is no distinction in essence; because the end is annexed to the beginning, and the beginning to the end, and the middle is comprehended by them.'

The remaining Sephiroth denoted the attributes of God.

The ancient Jews applied the three first letters of the incommunicable name Jehovah, to denote the three superior splendours, viz. *jod, he, vau;* and the second *he*, or the last letter, denoted, according to them, the two natures of the second splendour, or person.

(3.) The ancient Jews wrote the name of God symbolically, by including three *jods* within a circle, and subscribing under the *jods* and within the circle, the vowel *kametz.*

The circle was the figure denoting perfection. The three *jods* were the beginning letter of the word Jehovah, thrice repeated, to denote the three persons in the Godhead. The *kametz* was the point of perfection, and denoted the same thing with the circle, and the unity of the divine essence.

(4.) Another method, used by the Jews to denote God, was to include in a square three radii, or points, disposed in the form of a crown. The crown seems to have denoted the dignity and supremacy of the object designed, and the number three, the three persons of the Godhead.

(5.) The letter *schin* was another emblem of the Most High, in use among the Jews.

This letter, which is the first in the word *Shaddai*, the Almighty, one of the scriptural names of God, is formed of three branches, alike in size and figure, especially as written in the ancient or Samaritan character, and united in one stem. This letter was distinctly written on those phylacteries which the Jews wore upon their heads.

(6.) The equilateral triangle, with three small circles at the angles, and the letter *jod* inscribed over against the upper angle, was another Jewish symbol of the Deity. The three signs indicated the three persons of the Godhead; and the equal length of the sides their equality; while the *jod* was a direct proof that Jehovah was intended by the emblem. The three circles probably denoted the perfection of the three Persons.

(7.) The Jews also delineated the sphere, or representation of the universe, as holden by three hands; two at the sides and one at the bottom. Near the hands were inscribed the three Hebrew letters, *aleph, daleth,* and *schin*; the initials of the three Hebrew words for truth, judgment, and peace. The same letters were also inscribed immediately above the sphere.

Such is the testimony of the Jewish church concerning this subject, composed on the one hand of direct declarations, and on the other of symbols equally definite and certain; especially as explained by their own commentators. These prove beyond a reasonable debate, that the ancient Jewish church held uniformly the doctrine of the Trinity. The later Jews have indeed denied it; but to this denial they have been led merely by their hatred to Christianity.

I shall now proceed to mention the opinion of the heathen nations concerning this subject.

(1.) The Hindoos have, from the most remote antiquity, holden a triad in the divine nature.

The name of the Godhead among these people is Brahme. The names of the three persons in the Godhead are Brahma, Veeshnu, and Seeva. Brahma they considered as the Father, or supreme Source; Veeshnu as the Mediator, whom they assert to have been incarnate; and Seeva as the Destroyer and Regenerator: destruction being in their view nothing but the dissolution of preceding forms, for the purpose of reviving the same being in new ones.

The three faces of Brahma, Veeshnu, and Seeva, they always formed on one body, having six hands, or two to each person. This method of delineating the Godhead is ancient beyond tradition, universal, uncontroverted, and carved everywhere in their places of worship; particularly in the celebrated cavern in the island of Elephanta.

(2.) Equally well known is the Persian triad; the names of which were Ormusd, Mithr, and Ahriman; called by the Greeks, Oromasdes, Mithras, and Arimanius. Mithras was commonly styled Τριπλασιος. Among them, as well as among the Hindoos, the second person in the triad was called, The Mediator, and regarded as the great agent in the present world.

In the Oracles ascribed to Zerdusht, or Zoroaster, the famous Persian philosopher, are the following declarations:

'Where the eternal monad is, it amplifies itself, and generates a duality.'

'A triad of Deity shines forth throughout the whole world, of which a monad is the head.'

'For the mind of the Father said, that all things should be divided into three; whose will assented, and all things were divided.'

'And there appeared in this triad, Virtue, Wisdom, and Truth, who knew all things.'

'The Father performed all things, and delivered them over to the second mind, whom the nations of men commonly suppose to be the first.'

The third person, speaking of himself says, 'I Psyche, or Soul, dwell next to the paternal mind, animating all things.'

(3.) The Egyptians also acknowledged a triad, from the earliest antiquity, whom they named originally Osiris, Cneph, and Phtha; and afterward Osiris, Isis, and Typhon. These persons they denoted by the symbols light, fire, and spirit. They represented them also on the doors and other parts of their sacred buildings, in the three figures of a globe, a wing, and a serpent. Abenephius, an Arabian writer, says that 'by these the Egyptians shadowed Θεου τριμορφον, or God in three forms.'

One of the Egyptian fundamental axioms of theology, as given by Damascius, and cited by Cudworth, is, 'There is one principle of all things, praised under the name of the Unknown Darkness, and this thrice repeated.'

In the books attributed to Hermes Trismegistus, is the following passage:

'There hath ever been one great intelligent light, which has always illumined the mind; and their union is nothing else but the Spirit, which is the bond of all things.'

Here light and mind are spoken of as *two* persons, and the spirit as the *third;* all declared to be eternal.

Jamblichus, a platonic philosopher, styled by Proclus, the Divine, declares, that 'Hermes speaks of Eicton as the first of intelligences, and the first intelligible; and of Cneph, or Emeph, as the prince of the celestial gods; and of the demiurgic, or creating mind, as a third to these.' Jamblichus calls these the demiurgic mind, the guardian of truth, and wisdom.

(4.) The Orphic theology, the most ancient recorded in Grecian history, taught the same doctrine.

In the abridgment of this theology by Timotheus, the Chronographer, are found its most important and characteristical doctrines. Of these the fundamental one is, that an eternal, incomprehensible being exists, who is the creator of all things. This supreme and eternal being is styled in this theology, Φως, Βουλη, Ζωη, light, counsel, life.

Suidas speaking of these three, says, 'they express only one and the same power.' Timotheus says farther, that Orpheus declared 'All things to have been made by one Godhead in three names; or rather by these names of one Godhead; and that this Godhead is all things.'

Proclus, a platonic philosopher already mentioned, says, that Orpheus taught 'the existence of one God, who is the ruler over all things; and that this one God is three minds, three kings; he who is; he who has, or possesses; and he who beholds.' These three minds he declares to be the same with the triad of Orpheus; viz. Phanes, Uranus, and Chronus.

(5.) The Greek philosophers also extensively acknowledged a triad.

Particularly, Pythagoras styled God το ἑν or, The Unity; and μοναϛ, or, That which is alone; and also το Αγαθον, or, The Good.

'From this eternal monad,' says Pythagoras, 'there sprang an infinite duality; that is, from him who existed alone, two proceeded, who were infinite.'

Plato also held a triad; and named them το Αγαθον, *the Good;* Νους, or Λογος, *Mind,* or *Word;* and ψυχη κοσμου, *the Soul of the world.* The το Αγαθον he also calls πρωτος Θεος, and μεγιστος Θεος.

Parmenides, the founder of the Eleatic philosophy, says, The Deity is ἑν και πολλα, *one and many.* Simplicius, commenting on Plato's exhibition of the doctrines of Parmenides, says, that 'these words were a description of the αυτου Οντος,' the true or original existence; and Plotinus says, that Parmenides acknowledged three divine unities subordinated. The first unity he calls the most perfectly and properly One; the second, One many; and the third, One and many. Plotinus farther says, that Parmenides acknowledged a triad of original persons. Plotinus speaks of God as being 'The One, the Mind, and the Soul;' which he calls, the original or principal persons. Amelius calls these persons three Kings, and three Creators.

Numenius, a famous Pythagorean, acknowledged a triad.

The second person he calls the Son of the first; and the third he speaks of as proceeding also from the first.

(6.) In the empires of Thibet and Tangut, a triune God is constantly acknowledged in the popular religion. Medals, having the image of such a God stamped on them, are given to the people by the Delai Lama, to be suspended as holy around their necks, or otherwise used in their worship. These people also worshiped an idol which was the representation of a threefold God.

(7.) A medal, now in the cabinet of the Emperor of Russia, was found near the river Kemptschyk, a branch of the Jenisea, in Siberia, of the following description: A human figure is formed on one side, having one body and three heads. This person sits upon the cup of the lotus; the common accompaniment of the Godhead in various eastern countries; and on a sofa, in the manner of eastern kings. On the other side is the following inscription: 'The bright and sacred image of the Deity, conspicuous in three figures. Gather the holy purpose of God from them; love him.' A heathen could not more justly or strongly describe a trinity.

(8.) The ancient Scandinavians acknowledged a triad; whom they styled Odin, Frea, and Thor. In the Edda, the most remarkable monument of Scandinavian theology, Gangler, a prince of Sweden, is exhibited as being introduced into the hall or palace of the gods. Here he saw three thrones raised one above another, and on each throne a sacred person. These persons were thus described to him by his guide: 'He, who sits on the lowest throne, is Har, or the Lofty One. The second is Jafn Har, or Equal to the Lofty One. He who sits on the highest throne is Thridi, or the Third.'

(9.) The Romans, Germans, and Gauls, acknowledged a triad, amd worshiped a triad in various manners.

The Romans and Germans worshiped the Mairiæ; three goddesses inseparable, and always united in their worship, temples, and honours.

The Romans also, together with the Greeks and Egyptians, worshiped the Cabiri, or three Mighty ones.

The Diana of the Romans, is stamped on a medal as having three faces on three distinct heads, united to one form. On the reverse is the image of a man, holding his hand to his lips; under whom is this inscription: 'Be silent; it is a mystery.'

The German goddess, Trygla, was drawn in the same manner.

The Gauls also united their gods in triple groups, in a manner generally similar, as is evident from sculptures either now or lately remaining.

(10.) The Japanese and Chinese anciently acknowledged a triad.

The great image of the Japanese is one form, with three heads; generally resembling that of Brahma, Veeshnu, and Seeva, already described as worshiped by the Hindoos. The Chinese worshiped in ancient times one supreme God without images, or symbols of any kind. This worship lasted until after the death of Confucius, about five hundred years before the birth of Christ.

Lao Kiun, the celebrated founder of one of the philosophical or religious sects in China, delivered this as the great leading doctrine of his philosophy, 'That the eternal Reason produced one; one produced two; two produced three; and three produced all things.'

(11.) The American nations also have in several instances acknowledged a triad.

The Iroquois hold, that before the creation three spirits existed, all of whom were employed in creating mankind.

The Peruvians adored a triad, whom they styled, The Father and lord Sun, the son Sun and the brother Sun.

In Cuquisaco, a province of Peru, the inhabitants worshiped an image named Tangatanga, which in their language signifies, One in three, and three in one.

Thus have I finished this numerous collection of testimonies to the great Scriptural doctrine of the Trinity. The labour employed in making it has, I hope, not been useless. In a serious mind it cannot, I think, fail to produce, not conviction only, but astonishment and delight, to see the wonderful manner in which God has diffused and perpetuated the evidence of this doctrine throughout the successive periods of time. The testimonies of the Jewish and Christian churches are complete and irresistible. We are not to expect that, amid all the ignorance of heathenism, correct and unobjectionable ideas of God should be found in any nation.

But when we consider that the doctrine of a triad has been so evidently received without a question in all the four quarters of the globe, and by so many different nations; that it was received among almost all those who were ancient; that it was received independently of the Scriptures; that it was expressed in so many forms, and those completely decisive as to the real meaning; that the scheme in all these forms was unanswerably the union of three divine beings (or persons) in one; and that this scheme was so often and so definitely explained in multiplied and very various modes of expression, modes of expression too which are incapable of being misconstrued; we cannot, I think, fail to determine, that the doctrine of the Trinity was originally revealed to the human race; and has almost everywhere been conveyed down, both in their worship and their sacred traditions.

SERMON LXXII.

REGENERATION.—THE AGENT: HIS AGENCY.

Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost.—Titus iii. 5.

In a preceding Discourse, I proposed to enter upon an inquiry into the great subject of Regeneration under two principal heads:—

The agent in this work.

I. *The work itself.*

The former of these subjects I proposed to discuss under these heads:—

I. *The character of the Agent.*

II. *His agency.*

The character of the agent I have already examined.

In investigating his agency I propose to consider,

I. *The fact.*

II. *Its nature.*

III. *Its necessity.*

IV. *The objections to it.*

It will be observed that I here take it for granted, that mankind are, in some instances, really regenerated; reserving the proof of this doctrine to a future occasion, when I shall come to the discussion of the second thing originally proposed: viz. The work of regeneration. In discoursing on collateral subjects of theology, or of any other science, it is, not very unfrequently, necessary to suppose one or more of them for the time allowed, to preclude useless embarrassment in the discussion of the others. This, however, is to be done only for the time, and only for the purpose which has been specified. It is no part of my design in this system to take any point in theology for granted: nor to expect the belief of any doctrine alleged by me, unless the arguments adduced to support it shall be found solid and convincing. Nor do I ever intend to consider any thing as granted by those who differ from me, unless I suppose it to be really granted by them. If there be found in this system of discourses any thing contrary to these principles, I hope it will be considered as the result of inattention and error on my own part; for no departure from them will receive any justification from me.

With these things premised, I shall now proceed to a consideration of—

The fact, that the Holy Ghost is the agent in the regeneration of man.

It will be easily seen that the proof of this position

must be derived from the Scriptures; and that all the evidence concerning it furnished by reason and experience must be merely auxiliary, and cannot, in the nature of the case, be decisive. From the Scriptures then I shall proceed to allege such proofs of this doctrine, as to me appear satisfactory.

1. I argue this doctrine from declarations of the Scriptures.

The text is one of these declarations.

In this passage we are said to be 'saved by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost.' The word 'renewing' is an exact translation of the original word in this place. To renew signifies, as you well know, to make new, or to make over again. This operation is here ascribed to the Holy Ghost in as simple and unambiguous terms as are possible.

John i. 12, 13, is another example of the same nature. 'But to as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the Sons of God; even to them that believe on his name. Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.'

In this passage of Scripture it is asserted, that the birth by which mankind become the sons of God, is derived 'not from blood,' or natural descent; 'nor from the will of the flesh; nor from the will of man;' that is, not from human contrivance and determination in any form; 'but from God.' It is difficult to conceive how this doctrine could be more clearly asserted. But if those who sustain this character are born of God, they are born of the Spirit of God. For our Saviour, discoursing on this subject in chap. iii. ver. 5, 6, says, 'Except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot see the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh, is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit, is spirit.' Here the persons said in the former passage to be born of God, are declared by our Saviour to be born of the Spirit; and that which is born of the Spirit is declared alone to be spiritual. So far as I can see, these passages in the most decisive manner assert regeneration to be exclusively the work of the Spirit of God.

In this passage also, 'that which is born of the flesh is' declared to be 'flesh;' that is, whatever proceeds from a fleshly source partakes of its fleshly nature. The word 'flesh' is customarily used in the Scriptures to denote the native character of man. In this sense 'the carnal,' or fleshly 'mind' is declared by St Paul to be 'enmity against God, not subject to his law, neither indeed capable of being subject to it.' In the same sense, the same apostle says, 'In me, that is, in my flesh,' or natural character, 'dwelleth no good thing.'

A contrast is studiously run between that which proceeds from the Spirit, and that which proceeds from the flesh; or, to use the words of our Saviour, in the passage above quoted, between that which is flesh, and that which is spirit, in several passages of Scripture. 'To be carnally minded,' says St Paul, 'is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace,' Rom. viii. 6. In the original, 'The minding of the flesh is death; but the minding of the Spirit is life and peace.' And again, Gal. v. 19—23, 'Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revelings, and such like; of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.' In these passages, the different natures of the fleshly and spiritual character are too strongly marked to need a comment. All that is sinful, odious to God, and the object of his wrath, plainly belongs to the former; and all that is holy, lovely in the sight of God, and the object of his favour, belongs to the latter. But 'that which is born of the flesh is flesh;' is of this odious, guilty nature; while 'that which is born of the Spirit is' alone 'spirit.' In other words, whatever is good and acceptable before God in the character of man is produced by the Holy Ghost.

In 2 Thess. ii. 13, St Paul says, 'God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through the sanctification of the Holy Ghost.' The Thessalonian church then was chosen to salvation: How? Through the sanctification of the Holy Ghost. The sanctification of these persons then was a part of the original purpose of God, and a pre-requisite to their salvation. The Thessalonians, therefore, were renewed or regenerated by the Holy Ghost; and, by necessary conclusion, all others who become the subjects of regeneration.

1 Cor. vi. 11, 'But ye are sanctified by the Spirit of God.' In the two preceding verses, St Paul mentions several classes of men, who, he declares 'shall not inherit the kingdom of God.' Then he subjoins, 'Such were some of you. But,' he adds, 'ye are sanctified by the Spirit of God.' Formerly these Corinthians were of the number of those who, continuing in their proper character, could 'not inherit the kingdom of God.' That which now made them of a new and opposite character was, that they were 'sanctified by the Spirit of God.'

In Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27, God says, 'A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes; and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.' Here, giving these Israelites 'a new heart,' and 'a new spirit,' is plainly and exactly equivalent to the import of this declaration, 'I will put my Spirit within you;' as the consequence of which, it is declared, that they 'shall walk in the statutes of God, and keep his judgments.' The disposition, therefore, with which mankind keep the statutes or obey the law of God, is produced in them by God himself, and is effectuated by his Spirit.

In the following chapter God says, ver. 13, 14, to the house of Israel, represented as spiritually dead, 'Ye shall know that I am the Lord, when I shall put my Spirit in you, and ye shall live.' Here spiritual life is exhibited as the immediate effect of the agency of the Spirit of God.

To these passages of Scripture I shall subjoin a few more out of a great multitude, to the same purpose. 'For the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost,' Rom. v. 5. 'Your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost,' 1 Cor. vi. 19. 'No man can say that Jesus is Lord, but by the Holy Ghost,' 1 Cor. xii. 3. 'For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God,' Rom. viii. 14. 'I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring,' Isa. xliv. 3. The direct consequence of this

effusion of the Spirit is declared in ver. 5: 'One shall say, I am the Lord's, and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob.'

2. The same doctrine is taught us by facts contained in the Scriptures.

Our Saviour preached to the Jewish nation at least three years and a half, if not more than four years. It will be admitted that he was the best of all preachers; and that his preaching was more perfectly calculated than any other to produce holiness in the hearts of those who heard him. Yet it will also be admitted that he was not a very successful preacher. We naturally ask, Why was he not successful? The apostles, on the contrary, though certainly and greatly inferior to Christ in wisdom and persuasiveness, preached still with wonderful success. St Peter, by the first sermon which he delivered to the Jews, probably converted more to the faith and obedience of the gospel, than Christ during the whole of his ministry. We naturally ask also, Whence arose this wonderfully different efficacy in the preaching of St Peter and that of his Master. The persons whom they both addressed were the same. They had been witnesses of the miracles of both. Why then were they perfectly dead to the preaching of Christ; and 'pricked to the heart,' and turned to God, by that of St Peter? The cause was not in the preaching. It was not in the hearers; for they were the very same persons. It was then an extraneous cause. The event was not derived 'from the will of the flesh, nor from the will of man, but from God.'

St Paul preached at Philippi 'many days.' It seems clear, that the jailer must frequently have heard him. Yet his words made no impression upon the jailer's heart until that night in which he was converted. Yet then, in a moment, upon Paul's calling to him to do himself no harm; he hastened into the prison, and cried out to Paul and Silas, 'Sirs, what must I do to be saved?' A cause adequate to this change in the jailer, must be admitted here: and this can have been no other, than that 'the Lord opened his heart,' as he had before done that of Lydia, in the same place.

Generally, to what other cause can be assigned the universal success of the apostles in preaching the gospel? St Peter has taught us to attribute this wonderful event to the peculiar and remarkable effusion of the Holy Ghost 'in the last days,' or days of the gospel, predicted by the prophet Joel, and begun to be accomplished on the day of Pentecost. If this be not admitted as the true cause, it will, I apprehend, be very difficult to assign another, which will be found adequate to the effect, or which will in any measure satisfy a sober inquirer.

II. *The nature of this agency next demands our consideration.*

Concerning this I observe,

1. That it is the result of the mere good pleasure of God. Whatever other reasons may exist for the communication of this essential blessing (and that the best reasons do exist can never be seriously questioned), it is plainly impossible that it should be merited by any child of Adam. The very supposition, that we are regenerated, involves the necessity of our regeneration. But this necessity is the result of our sinfulness only: and this character plainly precludes, wherever it is found, the possibility of meriting to be regenerated. The agency of the divine Spirit in this work is, therefore, on the one hand sovereign, and on the other gracious; or, in other words, flows from the sovereign and unmerited mercy of our divine Benefactor.

2. It is unresisted.

It has often been called irresistible. This language has given rise to very extensive, and, as I apprehend, to very unwarrantable controversies in the Christian church. Others, and among them men of great respectability, have more sanguine expectations concerning the issue of debates about metaphysical subjects, than I am able to form; and perhaps I should be unwarranted in saying that they are not more just. But, so far as my acquaintance with the views and reasonings of men extends, I entertain very faint hopes of seeing any solid good spring from the speculations concerning the nature of causes, and the modes of their operation. The facts, that such and such causes exist; and that they operate to the production of such and such effects, we in many instances well understand. But the nature of the cause itself, and the nature and manner of its efficiency, are, in most instances, too subtle, or too entirely hidden from our view, either to be perceived at all, or to be so perceived as to become the materials of real and useful knowledge. Hence, probably, has been derived the fact, that speculations on such subjects, though often satisfactory to the philosopher himself, and to his own immediate friends and followers, have rarely satisfied others, or produced any lasting effects on mankind. The schoolmen were perhaps as able investigators of such subjects as the world has ever seen, and their speculations were at times proofs of sagacity and discrimination not inferior to what has been displayed in the most boasted efforts of succeeding ages. Yet how little are they studied or remembered at the present time! Scarcely are they mentioned, unless with pity or contempt; or as sources of astonishment, awakened by the sight of talents misapplied.

The success of these men should, one would think, furnish a lesson to such as follow after them. They too had their day of reputation and splendour; of splendour, far superior to any thing which modern writers can boast, or modern times will ever be disposed to give. But it 'was a vapour which appeared for a little time, and then vanished away.' 'The morning clouds' of the present day will appear for a period still less; and the system which for the moment attracts many eyes, will in another moment be forgotten. Neither the fame acquired by the author, nor the stability attributed to his system by his followers, should therefore induce us to rely on the desert of the one, or the permanency of the other.

When it is said, that the agency of the Divine Spirit in renewing the heart of man is irresistible, it is probably said, because this agency being an exertion of omnipotence, is concluded, of course, to be irresistible by human power. This seems not, however, to be said on solid grounds. That agency of the Holy Ghost, which St Stephen informs us was resisted by the Jews, and by their fathers, was an exertion of the same omnipotence, and was yet resisted by human power. I know of nothing in the regenerating agency of the same Spirit, except the fact, that it is never resisted, which proves it to be irresistible, any more than that which the Jews actually resisted. That the Spirit of God can do any thing with man, and constitute man

any thing which he pleases, cannot be questioned. But that he will exert a regenerating agency on the human mind which man has not a natural power to resist, or which man could not resist if he would, is far from being satisfactorily evident to me. Indeed, I am ready to question whether this very language does not lead the mind to views concerning this subject which are radically erroneous.

In the cxth Psalm, in which we have an account of Christ's being constituted 'a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedek,' we have in the third verse this remarkable promise made to Christ, 'Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power.' This promise respects the very subject now under consideration; and is, I suspect, a more accurate account of it than can be found in the language which I am opposing. In the day of Christ's power his people are willing. The influence which he exerts on them by his Spirit, is of such a nature that their wills, instead of attempting any resistance to it, coincide with it readily and cheerfully, without any force or constraint on his part, or any opposition on their own. That it is an unresisted agency, in all cases, is unquestionable: that it is irresistible in any, does not appear.

III. *The necessity of this agency will, if I mistake not, be evident from the following considerations:—*

1. It is declared in the Scriptures.

'No man,' saith our Saviour, 'can come unto me, except the Father who hath sent me draw him.' This declaration will, I suppose, be allowed by the warmest opposers of this doctrine to have a meaning. There are but two meanings which it can possibly have. One is, that it is physically impossible for any man to come to Christ, unless drawn by the Father: the other is, that it is morally impossible. The former of these will be denied by both parties; the latter must, therefore, be conceded. In other words, it must be acknowledged that mankind are so opposed to Christ in their inclinations, that they will never come to him, that is, believe on him, unless drawn by the Father, or (which is the same thing,) renewed by his Spirit. It will be remembered, that God is nowhere in the Scriptures exhibited as drawing mankind to Christ in any other manner, than by the influence of the Holy Ghost.

'Except a man be born of the Spirit,' says our Saviour, 'he cannot see the kingdom of God.' Here it is obvious, that to be 'born of the Spirit is declared to be an event without which it is impossible for men 'to see the kingdom of God.' The necessity of the agency of the Spirit cannot be more strongly exhibited than in the declaration, that without it, it is impossible to see the kingdom of God.

'The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.' If the natural man cannot receive the things of the Spirit of God; if he cannot know them; if they are foolishness to him, so long as he continues in his natural state; if they are spiritually discerned, and therefore incapable of being discerned without a spiritual taste and character; if, at the same time, the discernment and knowledge of spiritual things is indispensably necessary to our attainment of salvation; then the agency of the Spirit of God in our regeneration is absolutely necessary to us, in the same sense and degree in which our salvation is necessary. Our Saviour declares to Nicodemus, that 'that (only) which is born of the Spirit, is spirit,' or spiritual; while 'that which is born of the flesh,' viz. all that is in man, and all that belongs to his natural character, 'is flesh;' that is, is of this very natural character 'which receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God.'

2. Reason teaches the same doctrine.

The question has been often asked, 'Why, since a holy mind can become sinful, a sinful mind may not also become holy. No preternatural agency,' it is observed, 'is necessary to accomplish the former change; why is any such agency necessary to accomplish the latter? The extent of the change in both instances is exactly the same; the one being merely the converse of the other. It would seem, then, that the same physical powers which are sufficient for the accomplishment of the former, must be sufficient also for the accomplishment of the latter. But by most men it is acknowledged that the physical powers of the same being when holy, are exactly the same as when sinful: both the understanding and the will remaining, in the physical sense, unaltered. Where, then, lies the impossibility, or even the difficulty of the supposition, that man can regenerate himself; or which is the same thing, turn of his own accord from sin to holiness?"

All these questions are in my view fairly asked, and all the principles suggested, true. Still, the conclusion is unsound, and will not follow. This, however, I am bound to prove in a manner equally fair, and the more especially as a great multitude of serious, and, I hope, good men have found, and still find, no little difficulty in their contemplations on this subject.

That a holy being should be capable of sinning, seems not, in the nature of the case, to be a supposition attended with any great difficulty. All beings, holy and sinful alike, relish and desire natural good, or happiness. This can be found in an endless multitude of objects. Of these some may be enjoyed lawfully, or consistently with the will of God; while others cannot. These, however, so far as they are supposed capable of communicating happiness, are still naturally the objects of desire to holy beings, as truly as to sinful ones. All natural good when perceived is, by itself considered, desired of course by every percipient being. Now it is plain, that this good may, in a given case, appear so great to a holy being, may so engross his whole attention, may so far exclude from his mind other considerations, and among them those of his duty, as to induce him to seek the good in view at the expense of his duty. In this manner, I apprehend, the angels who fell violated their duty; and our first parents, theirs. Nor do I see how holy beings, so long as they love natural good, and are placed in a world where it is variously and amply provided, can fail of being exposed to temptations from this source; nor, if these temptations be supposed to possess a given degree of power, or, which is the same thing, to contain a given degree of natural good, and to be set fully and exclusively before the mind, how such beings can fail, without peculiar divine assistance, of being exposed to fall.

In all this, however, there is nothing to countenance the supposition that a sinner will in the same manner turn from sin to holiness. A sinner has no relish for spiritual good; that is, for the enjoyment furnished by virtuous affections and virtuous conduct. To apply the words of Isaiah concerning Christ as regarded by the

Jews, to this good as regarded by sinners, 'When they see it, there is no beauty in it, that they should desire it,' Isa. liii. 2. Whenever this good, therefore, becomes an object of the sinner's contemplation, as his mind is wholly destitute of any relish for it, he will never desire it for its own sake; and will never make any such efforts to gain it, as are absolutely necessary to accomplish the renovation of his heart. The relish for spiritual good is that state of mind out of which all virtuous volitions spring. No volition is ever excited but by good, and by good actually perceived and relished. As spiritual good is never thus perceived by a sinner, it will not excite a single volition in his mind towards the attainment of it; but will operate upon him as little as harmony upon the deaf, or beautiful colours upon the blind.

But the relish for spiritual good is the characteristical distinction of holy beings; their essential characteristic, without which they would cease to be holy. The want of it, on the contrary, is a primary characteristic of sinful beings. In this lies the real difficulty of regenerating ourselves, and not in the want of sufficient natural powers: and so long as this continues, an extraneous agency must be absolutely necessary for our regeneration.

IV. *The objections to the agency of the Divine Spirit in this work shall now be briefly considered.*

1. It is objected, that this doctrine infers partiality in the conduct of God.

That in the conduct of God in this case there are mysterious and difficult things, which I cannot explain, I readily acknowledge. What the particular reasons are, by which God is influenced in this dispensation, he has not been pleased to reveal; and we, therefore, are wholly unable to determine. It is sufficient for us, that we know all his conduct, in this and every other case, to be directed by the best reasons.

But this case presents no more difficulty than a thousand others, in which we do not even think of starting this objection. We might as well complain of the common dispensations of God's providence, as of this. 'Why,' we might ask, 'was one child born of Popish parents, and educated in all the ignorance and superstition of the Romish religion; and another born of Protestant parents, and educated under the light and blessings of the Reformed religion? Why is one man destined by his birth to be a savage; and another to be a member of civilized, enlightened, and religious society? Why is one man a native of Sennaar; and another of New England; one a beggar; another a prince; one deaf and dumb; another endowed with hearing and speech? Why are there any beggars; any savages? Nay, why are there any men; and why are we not all angels?'

To apply the question to the very case in hand. Why, on the supposition that we regenerate ourselves, is one man furnished with those endowments both of understanding and will, and with those advantages, all of which united, terminate in his regeneration; and another, not?

It will be easily seen from these questions, that the objection of partiality lies with the same force against all inequalities of distribution in the divine government, as against this dispensation. Indeed, the only way to remove this objection must be to make all beings exactly alike, and to confer on them exactly the same distributions. In other words, God, in order to remove this objection, must make all his conduct a mere repetition of exactly the same actions towards every creature.

2. It is objected also, that this doctrine supposes man not to be a free agent in his regeneration.

To this objection I answer, that, if it be true, and be seen by us to be true, our knowledge of its truth must be derived either from some declaration of the Scriptures, or from the nature of the subject, philosophically investigated. From the former of these sources we cannot derive this knowledge; because no declaration of Scripture asserts any thing of this nature. All our knowledge with regard to it, therefore, must of course be derived from the latter. I ask, then, what knowledge does the nature of this subject furnish us of the truth of the objection? Is it derived from the fact, that this agency has been called irresistible? With the arguments derived from the use of this term, on either side, I have no concern. It is not used in the Scriptures, nor do I either discern or admit the propriety of using it. The task of defending the use of it, therefore, I shall leave to those who do.

Is it derived from the fact, that this agency is extraneous? It will not be pretended that all extraneous influence on the mind destroys its freedom. We act upon the minds of each other, and often with complete efficacy; yet it will not be said, that we destroy each other's freedom of acting. God, for ought that appears, may act also on our minds, and with an influence which shall be decisive: and yet not destroy, nor even lessen, our freedom.

Does the truth of the objection appear in the particular kind of agency here used. Let me ask the objector, what is this particular kind of agency? The only account of the subject in the Scriptures is, that it is renovating, regenerating, or sanctifying. So far as my knowledge extends, neither the friends nor the adversaries of the doctrine have added any thing to this account which explains the subject any farther. But can it be said even with plausibility, that God cannot sanctify any intelligent creature without infringing on his freedom? If it be said, it should also be proved; and this, so far as my knowledge extends, has not hitherto been done. Until it shall be done, the mere assertion of our opponents may be fairly answered by a contrary assertion.

When God created man, he created him in his own image. This, St Paul informs us, consists 'in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness.' But if God, without destroying or rather preventing his freedom of agency, could create him in this image, it would be difficult to prove, or to conceive, that he cannot restore to his descendants the same image, after it has been lost, without destroying their freedom. The thing given is the same; and the agency by which it is given is the same. Its influence on the freedom of the creature must, therefore, be exactly the same. Its whole influence, in both cases alike, is successive to the agency itself; and must, of course, affect the freedom of the creature in precisely the same manner.

Does our experience furnish any knowledge of this nature? Ask any Christian, and he will tell you, if competent to answer the question, that he is conscious of no loss nor change in his own freedom of acting; that on the contrary, he chose and acted in the same manner as before, and with the same full possession of all his powers; and that the only difference between his

former and present state is, that he now loves God, and obeys him voluntarily; whereas he formerly hated him, and voluntarily disobeyed him.

The truth is, this objection is not derived from revelation, nor from fact. It owes its existence only to the philosophical scheme of agency, which makes the freedom of moral beings consist in self-determination, indifference, and contingency; a scheme, in its own nature impossible and self-contradictory; as any person may see completely evinced in an inquiry concerning this subject by the first President Edwards.

Upon the whole, the plain declarations of the Scriptures are not to be set aside by the philosophy of men. Especially is this not to be done where the subject of investigation lies, as in the present case, beyond our reach. What the precise nature of the agency of the Holy Ghost in regenerating mankind is, in the metaphysical sense, man cannot know. It becomes all men, therefore, to be satisfied with the declarations of God who does know; who cannot deceive us; and who has, of course, declared to us the truth.

SERMON LXXIII.

REGENERATION.—ITS NECESSITY AND REALITY.

Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.—John. iii. 3.

Having considered the character of the Holy Ghost, and his agency in the work of regeneration, I shall now proceed, according to the plan originally proposed, to examine the work itself, under the three following heads:—

I. *The necessity,*

II. *The reality,*

III. *The nature of regeneration.*

I. *I shall consider the necessity of the work of regeneration.*

In the preceding Discourse I took the fact, that some men are regenerated, for granted; and on this ground attempted to prove that the agency of the Spirit of God was necessary for the accomplishment of our regeneration. The question concerning the necessity of regeneration itself, and the question concerning the necessity of that agency in producing it, are entirely distinct. Yet it will be readily perceived, that the arguments adduced under the latter question in the preceding Discourse, may with unabated force be, in several instances, applied to the former; that which is now under consideration. Particularly is this true concerning several passages of Scripture, then adduced. For example, John iii. 5, 6; Rom. viii. 6, 7; Gal. v. 19—23; 2 Thess. ii. 13; 1 Cor. vi. 11, connected with the context; are all, together with several others, of this nature. On these, to avoid wearying my audience with repetitions, I shall not at present insist.

At the same time, the certainty that there is nothing in our moral character which will lead us to regenerate ourselves, as exhibited in that Discourse, is one, and an important one, among the reasons which evince, in connexion with other arguments, the necessity of our regeneration; and is therefore with propriety recalled to your remembrance on the present occasion.

But the great proof of the necessity of regeneration is found in the depravity of our nature. The universality and the degree of this corruption have been shown, if I am not deceived, in a manner too evident to be rationally called in question. In the Discourses which I formerly delivered on these subjects,* I produced a long train of passages of Scripture, in which the natural character of man is, in the most unequivocal terms, declared to be corrupt, sinful, and abominable in the sight of God. This truth I elucidated also by arguments drawn from reason and experience, which to my own view were unanswerable. Among these I specified the opposition made by mankind to the gospel; the testimonies which mankind have themselves given concerning this subject, in their laws, their religion, their history, their conversation, and their conduct, both in amusements and in the serious business of life. From these, and several other things, I derived it as a consequence flowing in my own view irresistibly from the premises, that 'in our flesh,' or native character, 'there dwelleth no good thing.'

This doctrine St Paul teaches in the most explicit manner in the three first chapters of the Epistle to the Romans; and, commenting on his own words, says, 'We have proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin.'

I shall consider this point as being actually proved; and on this basis shall found the following arguments, designed to show the necessity of regeneration.

1. It is unreasonable to suppose that God can admit sinners to the blessings of heaven.

God is perfectly holy, and therefore regards sin only with hatred and abhorrence. Every sinner opposes his whole character, law, designs, and government; loves what he hates, hates what he loves, and labours to dishonour his name, and to frustrate his purposes. The designs of God involve the supreme and eternal good of the universe. In the accomplishment of this divine purpose his glory is entirely manifested, because the best of all characters is thus displayed in the most perfect degree. But these designs, and the character discovered in accomplishing them, the sinner steadily hates, and opposes. Were it in his power, he would frustrate their accom-

* See Sermons xxix. to xxxiv. inclusive.

plishment; and prevent the glory of God, and the supreme good of the creation.

This character of the sinner God discerns with clear and unerring certainty. Both his guilt and his desert are naked to the omniscient eye. It is impossible, therefore, that he should not regard it with abhorrence. To suppose him then to approve of and love such a character, is to suppose him to approve of that which he sees to be deserving of his absolute reprobation; and to love that which he knows merits nothing but his hatred. Should he in fact do this, he would invert his whole system of dispensations towards the universe; and exhibit to his intelligent creatures a character totally new, and directly opposite to that which he has displayed hitherto in his law and government, especially in the work of redemption. Of course, he would not only cease to be unchangeable, but would become a being of a totally opposite character to that perfect one which he has hitherto challenged to himself. He would renounce his Deity; and cease to sustain the excellence involved in the incommunicable name, Jehovah.

Farther: Should God, without approving of a sinful character, confer upon the unregenerated sinner the blessings which are the proper rewards of virtuous creatures, he would equally desert his character and government, and overthrow the wisdom, equity, and end of his designs. Every external favour shown to guilty beings after their probation is ended, is a testimony on the part of God, that he approves of their conduct during the probationary state, and a reward for that conduct. It is a definitive testimony; a testimony given when all their conduct is before him; a solemn, judicial testimony; a testimony of action, the surest interpreter of the thoughts. In the present case, it would be the highest and most solemn of all testimonies, because he would bestow on them the greatest of all rewards, the blessings of heaven.

If, then, he did not feel this approbation, he would, in the case supposed, declare the grossest possible falsehood to the universe; viz. that impenitent sinners merited the highest rewards which it was in his power to bestow. He would declare that such sinners deserved the same proofs of his favour as his obedient children, and were therefore of the same character; that rebels were faithful subjects; that enemies were friends; and that, although he had heretofore denounced them as subjects of his wrath, they were still the objects of his infinite complacency. This would be no other than a final declaration on his part, that right and wrong, holiness and sin, were the same things; that his law, and the government founded on it, were introduced to no purpose, unless to excite wonder and fear in his intelligent creatures, that the redemption of Christ was accomplished to no end; and that all the divine conduct, solemn, awful, and sublime as it has appeared, was wholly destitute of any object, and really of no importance in the view of the infinite mind.

2. This change of heart is absolutely necessary for the sinner himself, in order to make him capable of the happiness of heaven.

Heaven is the seat of supreme and unmingled happiness; of enjoyment, solid, sincere, and eternal. The foundation on which, so far as creatures are concerned, this happiness ultimately rests, is their holy or virtuous character. All their affections, all their pursuits, all their enjoyments, are virtuous without a mixture. Hence heaven is called 'the high and holy place;' and, from the dispensations of God towards these unspotted beings, is termed, 'the habitation of his holiness.' With such companions a sinner could not accord, such affections he could not exercise, in such pursuits he could not unite, in such enjoyments he could not share. This is easily and familiarly demonstrated. Sinners do not love virtuous persons here, exercise no virtuous affections, engage in no virtuous pursuits, and relish no virtuous enjoyments. Sinners in the present world love not God, trust not in the Redeemer, delight not in Christians, and regard neither the law of God nor the gospel of his Son with complacency of heart. Sinners in this world find no pleasure in the Sabbath, nor in the sanctuary, and never cordially unite either in the prayers or the praises then and there offered up to their Maker.

How then could sinners find happiness in heaven? That glorious world is one vast sanctuary, and the endless succession of ages which roll over its happy inhabitants are an everlasting sabbath. Their great and commanding employment is unceasing and eternal worship. 'They rest not day nor night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who wast, who art, and who art to come!'

As the worship of God is uniformly burdensome to sinners here, the same worship must be at least equally burdensome to them there. Nay, it must be far more burdensome. The more holy, the more spiritual any thing is in the world, the more loathsome, the more painful is it to the mind of a sinner. But all the employments of heaven are supereminently holy and spiritual. These then must be far more disgusting than any thing which religion, or its worship, can present to his view in the present world. In heaven, therefore, he would be far less happy that he is here. Every thing with which he was conversant would more oppose his taste, contravene his wishes, and disappoint his expectations. Nothing would give him pleasure; every thing would give him pain.

If then a sinner is to be admitted into heaven, it is absolutely necessary that he should have a new heart, a new disposition. Otherwise, it is plain, that, amid all the blessings of that delightful world, he would find nothing but disgust, mortification, and sorrow.

3. Such a change is necessary for the sinner also, in order to his becoming a useful inhabitant of heaven.

All the inhabitants of that happy world are formed to do good as well as to enjoy it. Their enjoyment itself is supremely the result of a disposition to do good, and of conduct in which this disposition is completely carried into efficacious practice. There is realized in the most absolute manner the whole nature of that perfect rule of righteousness delivered by our Saviour, that 'it is more blessed to give, than to receive:' to do good, than to gain it from others. Virtuous beings are assembled here for the very purpose of exhibiting in their conduct the divine nature, and transcendant effects, of this evangelical rule of righteousness; and from their united efforts flows in streams continually enlarging, universal, unceasing, and immortal good.

The good here enjoyed is a common or public good; in which one great and general interest is proposed and pursued, and to which all private, personal interests are cheerfully subordinated. No selfish affection operates

here ; no selfish purpose exists. Every mind is expanded with affections all embracing the common interest. Every design is elevated to a happiness rendered noble and supreme, because it is universal. To this object every pulse beats, every heart thrills, every tongue vibrates. On it, as if magnetically influenced, every eye is fixed, to it every hand is turned.

But every sinner would feel that 'all these things were against him.' His affections are only selfish, and his designs concentre solely in private, separate ends, and in interests opposed to the general welfare. His only scheme of happiness also is to gain enjoyment from others, and never to find it in doing good to others. This is a subject of which, as a source of enjoyment, he forms not a single conception. All his plans for happiness are matters of mere bargain and sale, in every instance of which, he intends to get the advantage of those with whom he deals. Good to him is good only when it is separate and selfish, and he knows not what it is to see his own happiness enlarged by the general participation.

In the great, commanding, and sole pursuit of the heavenly world, a sinner would be unable to unite at all. Every wish of his heart must oppose the wishes and designs of all around him, and the great object for which heaven itself was formed by the Creator, which renders it delightful in his eyes, and for which he has gathered into it the 'assembly of the first-born.' Of course, he would be alone, separated from his companions by a character totally opposite to theirs, hostile to them in all his wishes and pursuits, marked by them as an alien, despised as useless and worthless, pitied as miserable, and loathed as sinful!

Sin is the real and only cause of the wretchedness experienced in the present world, and the immediate as well as the original cause of the woes experienced in the regions of perdition. Were sinners admitted into heaven, the same lust, fraud, and cruelty, the same injustice, oppression, and violence, in a word, the same wickedness and woe which prevail in this world, would revive in that. Of course, the whole system of happiness begun there, and intended to be carried on throughout eternity, would be either prevented or destroyed. That God should permit these evils to exist, is incredible, and in my view impossible.

4. It is absolutely necessary that this change should be accomplished in this present world.

The present state is to man the only state of probation. All beyond the grave is a state of reward. The reward ought plainly to be such as to suit the character of every probationer; a true testimony of God to his real character; a reward such as he has merited, and such as a righteous God may be expected to bestow. Of course, the testimony actually given, must be a testimony to the character with which he leaves this world of probation, and with which he goes to the judgment.

Besides, man enters that world with the very same character with which he leaves this. Death makes no moral change in man, but is a mere passage from one state of being to another; a mere dismission from this world to that, of the probationer from his probation. A simple termination of the animal functions, a mere separation of the soul from the body, plainly cannot alter the moral state of the soul, or change at all its views, affections, or character. Of this truth the Scriptures furnish abundant evidence. 'Do,' says Solomon, 'whatever thy hand findeth to do with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in *sheol* (the world of departed spirits,) whither thou goest.' 'The night cometh,' saith our Saviour, that is, the night of death, 'in which no man can work.' Both these are direct declarations, that both the work and the state of probation are terminated by the grave, and will never exist in the future world. Accordingly, no change in the character of man, either in the articles of death, or at any succeeding period of existence, is indicated in the Scriptures. Of course, every man will appear at the judgment with the very character which he has when he leaves the present world; and in this character only will he be rewarded.

Accordingly the Scriptures teach us, that we shall be judged 'according to the deeds done in the body;' and 'rewarded according to our works,' accomplished on this side the grave. It is plain, then, that if men enter the future world without being regenerated in this, they enter with all their sins upon their heads, and must be rewarded for their sins only. But a reward for sin can never be happiness. If, then, sinners are to be admitted into heaven at all, they must undergo this great change of moral character here; if sinners must become holy; must cease from their rebellion and disobedience; must bow their wills to the will of God; and must yield themselves to him as voluntary instruments of his glory.

II. *The reality of this change in man may be satisfactorily evinced in the following manner.*

1. It is declared in the Scriptures.

Beside the evidence derived to the reality of regeneration from the absolute necessity of it to mankind, the Scriptures declare the existence of it in a great variety of forms. 'Of his mercy he saved us,' says St Paul, 'by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost. But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who is made unto us, of God, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.' To be sanctified is to be regenerated; and here it is declared, that Christ is become 'of God, sanctification' to all his children. 'Ye have put off the old man with his deeds,' says St Paul to the Colossians, 'and have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge, after the image of him that created him.' 'Put off,' says the same apostle to the Ephesians, 'the old man, which is corrupt, according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and put on the new man, which, after God, is created in righteousness, and true holiness.' In these passages of Scripture we are plainly taught the following things:—

(1.) That the natural character is considered by the apostle as differing from the regenerated, according to the full import of these two names, 'the old man,' and 'the new man.'

(2.) That the regenerated character is a new character.

(3.) That the assumption of this new character is equivalent to 'being renewed,' or 'created anew:' both of these expressions being used to denote it.

(4.) That the former character, or 'old man,' is a corrupt character, conformed to 'deceitful lusts,' or under the influence of such lusts.

(5.) That 'the new man,' or new character, 'is created after (or in) the image of God.'

(6.) That this image consists 'in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness.'

'For we are his workmanship; created in Christ Jesus unto good works,' Eph. ii. 10. Here the Ephesian Christians are declared to be 'the workmanship of God,' as to their Christian character; and to be 'created in (or through) Christ Jesus unto good works.'

'But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love, wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath made us alive together with Christ;' or rather, by Christ. Here the former state of the Ephesians is declared to have been a state of 'death in sin;' and their new state is declared to be a state of 'life;' and this they are said to have derived from God. But St Paul himself explains the import of this passage, if it needs explanation, by informing us that 'to be carnally minded is death,' and that 'to be spiritually minded is life and peace.' Saints also are said to be 'sanctified,' to be 'washed,' to be 'purified,' by the spirit of God.

It is impossible that the reality, or the greatness, or the importance of this change should be expressed in stronger or more definite terms. Those who are the subjects of it, are said to be 'made clean, pure, and holy;' to have 'a new heart, a right spirit;' to be 'renewed;' to be 'born again;' to be 'born of God;' to be 'born of the Spirit of God;' to be 'made alive from the dead;' to be 'created anew;' and to be 'new creatures.' Can any language more strongly declare that a real change is made in the moral character of man? That he becomes the subject of a character altogether new, and never belonging to him before? As a child when born has a new state of existence, so he who is born of God has also a state of existence, equally new to him. As a thing when created begins then first to have existence, so he who is created anew begins then to have spiritual existence. Accordingly, St Paul says, 1 Cor. xiii. 2, 'Without love I am nothing;' that is, without holiness, the love of the gospel, I have no spiritual being; no existence in the spiritual creation, or kingdom of God.

2. The reality of regeneration is clearly proved by the scriptural accounts of the first Christians.

Of the conversion of these Christians, and their consequent character, we have ample accounts in the Acts and the Epistles. Those who were Jews, we know beyond a doubt, were bitter and obstinate enemies and furious persecutors of Christ and his apostles; hated the religion which they taught; were bigotted votaries of a religion consisting in mere external services; children of wrath, and children of disobedience. What the Gentiles were is amply unfolded in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, where they are declared by St Paul to be lost in absolute abandonment and profligacy of character. Yet, in consequence of the preaching of the apostles, these same Jews and Gentiles assumed an entirely new character; and continued to exhibit it with increasing beauty throughout the remainder of their lives. Instead of their former fleshly works, enumerated by St Paul, Gal. v. 19—21, they showed in all their conversation, 'love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance; the divine and delightful 'fruits of the Spirit' of grace. Instead of persecuting Christians, they exhibited towards them all acts of kindness, and suffered persecution with them for the sake of the same glorious Redeemer. Instead of their former empty and merely ceremonious religion, they embraced the genuine piety and pure morality of the gospel. All their intemperance, impurity, deceit, injustice, pride, and bigotry, they renounced; and in their place substituted permanently the sober, chaste, sincere, equitable, candid, and benevolent spirit of the Christian system. Through life they exhibited this spirit in every amiable form; and at death sealed this unquestionable testimony with their blood.

Now it is certain, that 'an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth evil things; and a good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth good things.' It is certain, that 'a good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, nor a corrupt tree good fruit.' In other words, the heart will always characterize the conduct. Whence then, let me ask, was the difference in the conduct of these Jews and Gentiles, before and after their conversion to Christianity? The only answer which can be given consistently with these declarations of Christ is, that their hearts, before corrupt, and proving themselves to be so by a life distinguished by all kinds of wickedness, were now made holy; and were proved to be so, by a life adorned with every good work. To add to this decisive evidence, if it can be added to, it may be observed, that all the remaining Jews and Gentiles, who were not the subjects of this conversion, continued still to exhibit the same wickedness which their countrymen had also before exhibited, and were just as odious in the sight of God and of man.

3. The same truth is abundantly evident in the present experience of mankind.

It cannot be asserted, to the satisfaction of a rational inquirer, that the external, visible change in the conduct of a man, who, before his regeneration, has, with a good degree of uniformity, exhibited a conscientious, becoming, and amiable life, is, after his regeneration, so great as to convince the mind that he has experienced this radical alteration of character. Converse, however, even with such men in a course of intimate Christian familiarity, and you will always find a radical difference in their views, sentiments, and conduct; a difference realized by themselves, and obvious to you. On this subject a minister of the gospel ought to be allowed to possess peculiar knowledge, because he has peculiar advantages for acquiring it. Ministers converse in this manner more extensively than any other class of mankind, and have therefore more various and more abundant opportunities of gaining an acquaintance with facts of this nature. These opportunities I have myself enjoyed, and have here declared nothing but what I have often witnessed.

Yet these are not the cases which ought to be here insisted on. Instances, less liable to doubt and misconstruction, exist in numbers amply sufficient to place the point in debate beyond every reasonable objection. Wherever known infidels, or other open and gross sinners, have suddenly and finally renounced not only their false opinions, but their evil practices, and have continued through life to profess uniformly the doctrines, and to exhibit regularly and unceasingly the duties of Christianity, the case becomes decisive; and must, unless we cease to reason concerning human nature and human conduct upon known and established principles, satisfy every candid inquirer. The conduct in both cases proceeds from the heart. The state of the heart, therefore, or its moral character, was in the one case as

opposite to what it was in the other, as the conduct. The evil conduct proceeded from an evil heart; the good conduct from a good heart; and this change of the heart from evil to good, or from sin to holiness, is the very change which in the Scriptures is styled regeneration.

Among instances of this nature Colonel Gardiner may be mentioned as one, and the Rev. John Newton as another; both extraordinary, convincing, and, so far as I can see, unexceptionable. I have known a considerable number of instances scarcely less extraordinary; some of them by unquestionable information, others by personal acquaintance. Two of these were examples of habitual drunkenness, perhaps the most hopeless of all evil habits; and the reformation was so entire, and the piety so evident, uniform, and long continued, as to leave no doubts in the minds of sober men acquainted with the facts. A third instance, well meriting to be mentioned, was a young man of superior talents, formerly educated by me in this seminary. He devoted himself to the profession of medicine, and entered upon the practice with advantage. This youth was not only a determined infidel, but an open scoffer at the Bible, Christianity, Christians, and most other subjects of a religious nature. All these he exposed with a pungency of wit and keenness of satire which few men are capable of employing, and which very few are willing to employ in the same open, gross manner. After some years spent in this violent course of wickedness, he became seriously alarmed (I know not on what occasion) concerning his sinful character and future destiny. If I remember right, he almost or entirely despaired of the mercy of God, and considered his perdition as sealed. At length, however, he acquired hopes of salvation, and manifested in his conduct the spirit of Christianity so evidently and uniformly, as to excite a settled conviction in the minds of those around him that he was sincerely a Christian. With entirely new views and purposes, he then quitted the medical profession, and entered upon the study of theology. After some time he was regularly inducted into the ministry of the gospel; and sustained to his death, which happened about twelve or fifteen years afterward, the character of an able, faithful, and unblamable minister of Christ.

Instances of this nature generally I could multiply extensively; but the time forbids me to proceed any farther in this part of my subject.

4. The state of Christianity in the world at large may be fairly adduced as a convincing proof of the reality of this change.

The history of real Christianity is not to be sought for in the accounts given us of the life, policy, ambition, and violence of such rulers, statesmen, and warriors as have assumed the Christian name. The real nature and influence of the religion of Christ are not to be sought for in camps and cabinets, in courts and palaces. These are the seats of pride and luxury, ambition and cunning, wrath and revenge. Christianity here is only put on as an upper garment, to adorn the character, to comport with the fashion, or to cover unchristian designs. I do not intend that this is always the case. There are undoubtedly good men to be found even here. But I mean, that it is much more generally the case than a good man would wish, or be willing it should be. When infidels take their accounts of Christianity from the proceedings of the great, from their luxury, state-craft, conquests, and persecutions, they do not, and probably intend not, to do any justice to the subject. In these accounts they impose on their readers, and perhaps on themselves. But they deceive no man of common candour and tolerable information.

The real effects of Christianity on mankind, are to be sought and found in still life, quiet society, peaceful neighbourhoods, and well-ordered families. Here a thousand kind offices are done, and a thousand excellencies manifested, of which the great and splendid rarely form a conception; and which, nevertheless, present the human character to the view of the mind with an aspect incomparably more lovely than any other.

But even on the great scale of examination, Christianity has meliorated the affairs of this unhappy world in such a degree as, if thoroughly examined, strongly to evince the truth of this doctrine. If we compare the state of the Christian nations, especially the most enlightened and virtuous of them, with that of the most improved heathen nations, the only fair mode of instituting a comparison, we shall see ample proof of such a melioration of the human character as can be justly attributed to nothing but this important change of the human heart. Christianity has removed from among the nations who profess it, polygamy, the selling of children as slaves by their parents, the general and brutal degradation of women, the belief of the rectitude of slavery, the supposed right of masters to kill their slaves, the exposure of parents in their old age to be devoured by wild beasts, the same exposure of children by their parents, the sacrificing of human victims, the wanton destruction of human life for amusement in public games, the impure, brutal, and sanguinary worship practised in the regions of idolatry, together with many of the horrors of war and captivity, and many other enormous evils of a similar nature. At the same time it has introduced milder and more equitable government; established equitable laws, by which nations have, in a considerable degree, regulated their intercourse, given a new sanction to treaties, provided legal support for the poor and suffering, secured the rights of strangers, erected hospitals for the sick, and alms-houses for the indigent, formed with great expense a rich variety of institutions for the preservation and education of orphans, the instruction of poor children, the suppression of vice, the amendment of the vicious, and the consolation of the afflicted. It has made better rulers, and better subjects; better husbands, and better wives; better parents, and better children; better neighbours, and better friends. It has established the rational worship of the one living and true God; built churches, in which all men do or may worship him, and learn their duty; and with immense expense has sent, and is sending, these blessings to the ends of the earth. Whence this difference? Not from the difference of light. The Greeks and Romans were sufficiently enlightened at least to have begun this progress. But they did not take a single step towards real reformation. All that can be said is, their wickedness was a little more polished than that of their barbarian neighbours. No, it has sprung from that 'honest and good heart,' which is not in man by nature, but is given him by the Spirit of God. Such hearts, found here and there, like dispersed stars seen through the interstices of a cloudy sky, diffuse a feeble radiance over Christian countries,

and prevent the otherwise absolute darkness. Howard, intensely illumined with the benevolence of the gospel, shed a lustre over the whole Christian world. Inferior lights are everywhere scattered, and their combined influence is everywhere felt. Were the same character that of all men, the change in human affairs would be such as to demand no arguments to prove a change of heart. As the state of things is, it is plain that the spirit of the martyrs was not in their persecutors; the spirit of Howard was not in Voltaire; the spirit of Alfred was not in Frederic II. He who cannot see this, is unable because he will not; and may be well assured that, under the influence of his present temper, he has lost the power of moral discrimination.

SERMON LXXIV.

REGENERATION.—ITS NATURE.

Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.—John iii. 3.

Having in the preceding discourse considered the necessity and the reality of regeneration, I shall now proceed, according to the plan proposed, to examine its nature.

1. This change of heart consists in a relish for spiritual objects, communicated to it by the power of the Holy Ghost.

By spiritual objects, I intend the Creator, the Redeemer, the Sanctifier, heaven, angels, the word and the worship of God, virtuous men, virtuous affections, virtuous conduct, and all the kinds of enjoyment found in the contemplation of these objects; the exercise of these affections, and the practice of this conduct. The existence of these objects every man admits; and every man at all conversant with human life, must admit that a part of mankind profess to relish them, and to find in them real and sincere pleasure. A sober man must farther admit, that as the Creator of all things is infinitely more excellent than any other being, so his excellence must be capable, in the nature of things, not only of being perceived, but also of being relished by intelligent creatures. No man who has any regard to his character, as a man of sound understanding, will acknowledge that excellence exists, and yet deny that it is capable of being perceived and relished. Nor will any such man deny, that intelligent creatures may perceive the excellence of the Creator to be plainly superior to that of any other being, and may relish it accordingly. It must also be easily and certainly seen that, if we relish the excellency of the Creator himself, we cannot fail to extend the same relish to every thing in which this excellence is displayed; since this will be no other than relishing the excellence itself as it is manifested in different forms. It must be obvious, therefore, that this relish for the divine excellence once existing, must of course be extended to all the objects in which it is displayed, and to all those intelligent beings by whom it is relished.

It has been frequently supposed, that the Spirit of God regenerates man by immediately creating in him virtuous volitions. All the volitions of all moral agents are in my view, as will indeed be pre-supposed by those of my audience who remember the sermons which I delivered on the nature of the human soul, the acts of the agents themselves. The Spirit of God does not, in my view, when he regenerates mankind, create in them any volitions whatever; but merely communicates to them the relish for spiritual objects, which has been here mentioned.

When God created Adam, there was a period of his existence, after he began to be, antecedent to that in which he exercised the first volition. Every man who believes the mind to be something beside ideas and exercises, and who does not admit the doctrine of casualty, will acknowledge that in this period the mind of Adam was in such a state that he was propense to the exercise of virtuous volitions rather than of sinful ones. This state of mind has been commonly styled disposition, temper, inclination, heart, &c. In the Scriptures it usually bears the last of these names. I shall take the liberty to call it disposition. This disposition in Adam was the cause whence his virtuous volitions proceeded; the reason why they were virtuous, and not sinful. Of the metaphysical nature of this cause I am ignorant. But its existence is, in my own view, certainly proved by its effects. If the volitions of man are not immediately created, they are either caused by something in man, or they are casual. But they were not casual, for nothing is casual. And even if some things were casual, these could not be; because they were regularly and uniformly virtuous; and it is impossible, that casualty should be the source of uniformity or regularity. There was therefore in the mind of Adam, certainly a cause which gave birth to the fact, that his volitions were virtuous, and not sinful. This cause of necessity preceded these volitions, and therefore certainly existed in that state of mind which was previous to his first volition. This state of mind then, this disposition of Adam, existing antecedently to every volition, was the real cause why his volitions subsequently existing were virtuous. It ought to be remarked here, that plain men, with truth, as well as with good sense, ascribe all the volitions of mankind to disposition, the very thing here intended as their true cause.

In regeneration the very same thing is done by the Spirit of God for the soul, which was done for Adam by the same divine agent at his creation. The soul of Adam was created with a relish for spiritual objects.

The soul of every man who becomes a Christian is 'renewed, by the communication of the same relish. In Adam this disposition produced virtuous volitions. In every child of Adam who becomes the subject of virtue, it produces the same effects.

It will, perhaps, be objected to this view of the subject, that God is said 'to work in us both to will and to do, of his good pleasure,' Phil. ii. 13. Indeed, this passage formerly appeared to me to indicate that God exercised a different agency on the mind of man from that which has been here described. But an examination of the passage has convinced me, that my views of it at that time were erroneous. For,

(1.) The communication of this relish is as truly followed by virtuous willing and doing, as the creative act would be, which might immediately give existence to our volitions and our conduct. If then God communicates to us such a relish, or such a disposition, causing in us holy volitions and actions; he is as truly said to 'work in us' both these things, as he could be if he immediately created them. The only difference in this respect is, that they are now mediately, and would be then immediately, the effects of his agency.

(2.) The word here translated 'worketh' (in the Greek, *ενεργων*, inworketh, which characterizes the nature of the agency) is in Eph. ii. 2, applied to Satan in this manner: 'Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.' Now it will not be said that Satan creates evil volitions in the minds of the 'children of disobedience.' As the word is in both cases the same, it does not indicate of itself, in the objected passage, that the immediate production of virtuous volitions by the power of God is the thing intended.

I will only add on this subject, that the relish for spiritual objects, is that which in the Scriptures is called 'a new heart,' 'a right spirit,' 'an honest and good heart,' 'a spiritual mind,' and denoted by several other names of a similar import. Thus, 'a good man out of the good treasure of his heart' is said to 'bring forth good things.' Thus also, 'they who received the seed in good ground,' as exhibited in the parable of the sower, are said to be 'such as, in an honest and good heart, having received the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience. In these and the like instances, the heart is exhibited as the source of all virtuous volitions, desires, and conduct. This relish for spiritual objects, is, I apprehend, this very source of these interesting things.

2. This change of the heart is the commencement of holiness in the mind.

'The carnal mind,' that is, the original, natural disposition of man, 'is enmity against God; not subject to his law; neither indeed can be.' Before this change therefore, there is no holiness in the character, no relish for spiritual good, no exercise of virtuous volitions, no pursuit of virtuous conduct. All these things begin to be chosen and to be practised after they begin to be relished; and the first relish for them exists in this renovation of the mind.

3. This change is partial.

After regeneration the native character of man still remains, his relish for sinful pursuits and enjoyments still continues, and his relish for spiritual pursuits and enjoyments is never perfected on this side of the grave.

In this state, man exhibits to the view of the universe an object unlike any thing else which it has ever beheld. All other intelligent creatures, so far as we are informed, are either perfectly virtuous, or wholly destitute of real virtue. But regenerated man is really virtuous, and yet really sinful: his true and entire character being a mixture of moral good and evil. This mixed character is presented to us by St Paul in the seventh chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, by the phrases, 'the law in the members,' and 'the law of the mind.' These, he informs us, are totally contrary characters, warring in the same soul against each other, and carrying on a continual controversy while life remains. We are, however, abundantly taught, that the holy or virtuous disposition, like the house of David, waxes 'stronger and stronger;' and the sinful disposition, like the house of Saul, 'weaker and weaker.' This increase of strength on the one hand, and this diminution of it on the other, is not indeed regular, constant, and always discernible; but it is yet irregularly progressive to the end of life. There are seasons in which the 'law in the members brings the law of the mind into captivity.' David committed adultery with Bathsheba. Peter denied his Master; and dissembled with the Jews that went to Antioch. John and James proposed to call for fire from heaven upon the inhabitants of a Samaritan village. The disciples, as a body, contended 'which of them should be the greatest,' and all 'forsook' their Master in the garden of Gethsemane, 'and fled.' Still all of them were better men near the close of life than at any preceding period. What was true of them is true of every good man. He will upon the whole improve through life; and will ordinarily, year by year, though not without various interruptions and backslidings, become a better Christian. Yet perfection in holiness is never found in the present world. 'If we say we have no sin,' says St John, speaking of himself and all other Christians, 1 John i. 8, 'we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.'

4. Notwithstanding the partial nature of this change, it is still the foundation of perpetual holiness.

'Verily, verily, I say unto you,' saith our Saviour, 'He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life; and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life:' or, as it is in the original, 'hath passed,' that is, already, 'from death unto life.' It naturally seems mysterious, 'that imperfect holiness should in this case be perpetual; when the perfect holiness of Adam, and the perfect holiness of angels was terminated by apostasy. The explanation of this mystery lies, it is presumed, in this peculiar fact, that those who are the subjects of this imperfect holiness are the seed promised to Christ in the covenant of redemption, as the reward of his labours and sufferings. It certainly is not in the nature of the holiness: for this in all the cases specified is the same. It is not in the degree: for that was greater in those who fell, than in those who endure. In those who fell, it was perfect so long as it continued. In those who endure it is always imperfect, and often interrupted by backsliding. It is not in the nature of the subjects. The angels who fell were superior in their nature to all men; and the perfect nature of Adam was superior to that of his sanctified children. Yet the perseverance of every saint, remote as his character is from perfection, is secured by the promise of God, and

carried into complete and final accomplishment by the power of the Spirit. Of this enduring holiness regeneration is the basis; and the subject of it never ceases to be holy while he lives.

5. This change is the source of new views of spiritual and divine subjects.

These views united constitute what is often termed spiritual knowledge, divine knowledge, spiritual light, and divine light. As the opinions of divines, and other Christians, have been different concerning this subject, it will be proper to consider it with particular attention.

It has been extensively supposed, that the Spirit of grace regenerates mankind by communicating to them new, clearer, and juster views of spiritual objects. The understanding being thus enlightened and convinced, the heart, it is supposed, yields itself to this conviction; and the man spontaneously becomes under its influence a child of God. I shall not attempt here to describe the metaphysical nature of the work of regeneration; nor to define precisely the manner in which it is accomplished; nor the exact bounds of the divine and human agency in this great concern. Of these subjects I have not sufficiently distinct and comprehensive views to undertake this employment with any satisfactory hope of success. Yet it appears to me clear, that the account which I have now given of this subject is not scriptural nor just. Without a relish for spiritual objects, I cannot see that any discoveries concerning them, however clear and bright, can render them pleasing to the soul. If they are unpleasing in their very nature, they cannot be made agreeable by having that nature unfolded more clearly. He who disrelishes the taste of wine, will not relish it the more, the more distinctly and perfectly he perceives that taste. Nor will any account of its agreeableness to others, however clearly given, and with whatever evidence supported, render the taste agreeable to him. To enable him to relish it, it seems indispensable that his own taste should be changed, and in this manner fitted to realize the pleasantness of the wine. Light is either evidence, or the perception of it; evidence of the true nature of the object which is contemplated, or the perception of that evidence. But the great difficulty in the present case is this: the nature of the object perceived is disrelished. The more then it is perceived, the more it must be disrelished of course, so long as the present taste continues. It seems therefore indispensable, that, in order to the usefulness of such superior light to the mind, its relish with respect to spiritual objects should first be changed. In this case, the clearer and brighter the views of such objects are, the more pleasing they may be expected to become to the mind.

This, I apprehend, is the true progress of this work in the human soul. A relish for all spiritual objects never before existing in him, is communicated to every man who is the subject of regeneration by the Spirit of God. Before this event, he disrelished all such objects; now, he relishes them all. Before, he was an enemy to God; now, he becomes a friend to God. Before, he loved nothing; now he loves every thing, of a spiritual nature. He who has hitherto been an enemy to a good man, disrelishes every thing which pertains to him, his character, conduct, conversation, and opinions, his family, his friends, his very looks, nay, even the spot where he lives, and in a word, every thing which is his. If you undertake to convince him, while this disrelish continues, that the object of his dislike is undeserving of all this; you may indeed present to him arguments which he cannot answer, and silence his objections by the irresistible force of proof. You may explain to him in the clearest manner the excellencies of this object, and set them in such a light that he may have nothing left to say against it. Should all this have been done, his dislike, in the case supposed, would still continue; his views, though enlarged, would be of exactly the same general nature; and his opposition to the hated object, instead of being diminished, would rather increase. We will now suppose this man to cease from his enmity, and to become a decided and sincere friend, A moment's thought will satisfy any mind, that, with the change of his relish, a universal change of his views also will take place. The very same things which formerly disgusted him, will now please him. What was formerly odious, will now become amiable. The evidences of worth and excellence, which before silenced, will now satisfy him. His eye, no longer jaundiced, will see every thing in its proper native light, in its true character, importance, and desert; and will discern in what was before unpleasing, deformed, or disgusting, a beauty, loveliness, and lustre wholly new.

This allusion will distinctly explain my own views of both the source and the nature of spiritual light. When the relish for spiritual objects is communicated to the mind, the enmity of the man towards these objects is converted into good-will. He now becomes a friend to God and to his law, to truth and to duty. Over these, and all other objects of the same general nature, he sees a new character diffused, of which before he did not form a single conception. Where they were before disgusting, they are now pleasing. Where they were before tasteless, they are now relished. Where they were before deformed, they are now beautiful. Where they were before odious, they are now lovely. The reason is, he now beholds them with new eyes. Before, he saw them with the eyes of an enemy; now, he sees them with those a friend. The optics which he formerly possessed spread over them an adventitious and false colouring, altogether foreign to their nature, and exhibiting that nature under a universal disguise. These optics are now purified, and he sees all these objects as they really are; in their true colours, their native beauty, and their inherent splendour. This is what I understand by the spiritual light derived from regeneration.

6. This change is instantaneous.

This position has been as much controverted as any of those advanced in this Discourse; but, as it seems to me, with no solid support either from reason or revelation.

The scheme of those who oppose this doctrine appears generally to have been this: The subject of regeneration is supposed to begin, at some time or other, to turn his attention to spiritual concerns. He begins seriously to think on them, to read concerning them; to dwell upon them in the house of God, in his meditations, in his closet, and in his conversation. By degrees he gains a more thorough acquaintance with the guilt and danger of sin, and the importance of holiness, pardon, acceptance, and salvation. By degrees, also, he renounces one sinful practice and propensity after another; and thus finally arrives at a neutral character,

in which he is neither a sinner, in the absolute sense, nor yet a Christian. Advancing from this stage, he begins at length to entertain, in a small degree, virtuous affections, and to adopt virtuous conduct; and thus proceeds from one virtuous attainment to another while he lives. Some of the facts here supposed, taken separately, are real; for some of them undoubtedly take place in the minds and lives of those who become religious men. But the whole, considered together, and as a scheme concerning this subject, is in my view entirely erroneous.

Were we to allow the scheme to be correct and scriptural, still the consequence usually drawn from it, that regeneration is gradually accomplished, is untrue. Regeneration, according to every scheme, is the commencement of holiness in the mind. Without calling in question the doctrine, that man, in the moral sense, is ever neutral, it is intuitively certain, that a man is at every given period of his life, either holy or not holy. There is a period in which every man who becomes holy at all first becomes holy. At a period immediately antecedent to this, whenever it takes place, he was not holy. The commencement of holiness in his mind was, therefore, instantaneous; or began to exist at some given moment of time. Nor is it in the nature of things possible that the fact should be otherwise. All that can be truly said to be gradual with respect to this subject is, either that process of thought and affection which precedes regeneration, or that course of improvement in holiness by which it is followed. But neither of these things is intended in the scriptures, nor ought to be intended in the conversation and writings of Christians, by the word regeneration.

It is often objected to the instantaneousness of regeneration, that the change is too great to be accomplished in a moment. Most of the persons who make this objection, aim, I am persuaded, at what is customarily called by divines, the work of sanctification; that is, the Christian's advancement in holiness after he is regenerated. This plainly is in fact, as it is exhibited in the Scriptures, a work which is progressive through life. It may well seem strange, for it certainly is untrue, that sanctification in this sense should be instantaneous.

By those who admit that agency of the Spirit of God in renewing mankind, which has been exhibited in these Discourses, the instantaneousness of this change has, it is believed, never been denied. The act of turning from sin to holiness in the first instance, on the part of man, and the act of communicating a disposition thus to turn, on the part of the Spirit of God, are in their own nature so obviously accomplished in a moment, that it seems difficult to conceive how any person, considering them with attention, can have supposed them to be progressive. In the Scriptures, the accounts of this combined subject everywhere teach us, that it exists instantaneously. The phraseology by which it is chiefly denoted in the Scriptures, strongly indicates that this is its nature. It is exhibited to us under the expressions, being 'born again;' being 'created anew;' having 'a new heart and a right spirit created within us;' 'turning to God;' 'turning from darkness to light;' and others of a like nature. All these expressions originally denote events instantaneously existing; and in their figurative application indicate the instantaneousness of the fact to which they are applied.

The same thing we are taught in the accounts given in the Scriptures of this fact, as having actually taken place. Thus the three thousand Jews who were converted by the first sermon of St Peter, yielded themselves to God at that moment. Such, also, was the conversion of Dionysius, Damaris, Sergius Paulus, the jailer, and generally of the great multitudes whose conversion is recorded in the Acts of the Apostles. Such, also, was that of the nobleman of Capernaum, the father of the epileptic child, the woman of Samaria and her fellow citizens, and the thief upon the cross.

7. This change, as to the time and manner of its existence, is ordinarily imperceptible by him who is the subject of it.

There have not been wanting heretofore, there are not now wanting, persons holding the name of Christians, and those in considerable numbers, who profess to know the time and manner of their regeneration, and to have been conscious at the time of the existence of this change in their moral character; and who accordingly recite all this to each other without any apparent doubt of the soundness of the recital; nay, who make this a subject of public investigation with respect to all those who offer themselves as candidates for admission into their churches. By such men the existence of this change is considered as so manifest whenever it takes place, that they are able to point out the day, the place, and all the attendant circumstances. From the confidence with which they speak on this subject it has perhaps arisen that many others, who do not go the same length, still go a part of it: and believe in an indefinite manner that these things may, at least, be discerned and remembered with probability; that they are to be sought for; that the want of being conscious of them and of remembering them, is an unhappy event, not experienced by more favoured Christians, nay, by most Christians. Accordingly, the want of this knowledge and remembrance is regarded by such men, however exemplary their lives may be afterward, as involving a defect in the proper evidence that they are Christians. However good the fruit may be which they bring forth, instead of determining by the taste that it is good, they feel unsatisfied with this mode of proof; and wish rather to rely on some discovery which they consider as practicable, of the time and the place at which the bough producing the fruit was ingrafted.

All these are, I apprehend, opinions wholly unscriptural, and of course deceitful and dangerous. For,

(1.) The Scriptures nowhere refer us to the time or manner of of our regeneration, for evidence that we are regenerated. If the time and manner of our regeneration were certainly known by us, it is intuitively evident, that our regeneration itself would be equally well known. If this then were the case, it is incredible that the Scriptures should not, even in a single instance, refer us to so completely satisfactory a source of evidence, to determine us finally in this mighty concern; but should at the same time direct us to the so much less perfect evidence, furnished by the subsequent state of our affections and conduct. 'By their fruits shall ye know them,' says our Saviour. 'Then are ye my disciples indeed, if ye keep my commandments.' 'Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, but he, that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven, is my disciple.' These are the rules, by which, together with

others of exactly the same nature, we are directed in the Scriptures to judge of our moral state. But these rules are not only superfluous, but useless, if the time, the manner, or the fact of our regeneration were ordinarily known by us. For these, and each of these, would furnish evidence of this subject completely decisive, as to the state of all men. He who knew these things would certainly know that he was a Christian: he who did not, would certainly know that he was not a Christian. No other rule, therefore, could ever be needed, or could ever be employed. According to this scheme, then, Christ and the apostles have devised an imperfect rule to direct us in our decisions concerning this interesting subject; while uninspired men of modern times have by their ingenuity fortunately found out a perfect one.

(2.) The relish for spiritual good, and the exercise of holy affections, are at their commencement certainly no more distinguishable, than the same relish and the same exercises in the same mind usually are afterward. Men sometimes seem to suppose, that in these first acts of a virtuous mind there is something extraordinary and peculiar. All that makes them extraordinary is, that they are the first. In the degree in which they exist they are usually among the least remarkable. There is of course nothing to make them distinguished, except the mere fact, that they are the first.

But no person needs to be told, that the subsequent holy exercises are so far from being certainly known to be such, that they are ordinarily at the best believed, and in most instances merely hoped, to be of this character. If, then, the first holy exercises are not more distinguishable than the subsequent ones, and the subsequent ones are only distinguished in such a degree as sometimes to be believed, and at most times merely hoped, to be of this character; then it is certain, that the time, the manner, and even the fact of regeneration are so far from being clearly known in all ordinary cases, that they can never be relied on with safety, if considered by themselves only. Much less can they be regarded with undoubting confidence.

(3.) Multitudes of those who have professed, with much apparent assurance, to know all these things concerning themselves, have afterwards fallen off, and become sometimes lukewarm professors of Christianity, and sometimes open apostates. This fact, which is by no means uncommon among persons holding the opinion here censured, clearly proves, that the reliance which is placed on the knowledge professed is often unfounded, and may be always. That which has frequently deceived our fellow men, ought ever to be supposed to be capable of deceiving us.

The truth is, the infusion of a relish for divine things into the mind is 'a breathing of the Spirit of life on dry bones,' perceivable only by its effects: like the communication of the animating principle to the embryo, real, yet not discernible in itself, but in the consequences which it produces. Were the case otherwise, St Paul could never have asked the Corinthian Christians, 'Know ye not your own selves?' Nor directed them to 'prove themselves, whether they were in the faith.' Were the contrary opinion just, this apostle would certainly have appealed to the time, place, and manner of his own regeneration, which were probably better known to him than the same things ever were to any child of God, as proofs of the fact that he was regenerated. But this he never does. On the contrary, the evidence on which he relied was furnished by the fruits of holiness apparent in his life.

REMARKS.

From these observations, which have been made concerning this subject, it is evident, that the work of regeneration is worthy of the Spirit of God.

Regeneration is a change of the temper or disposition, or, in other words, of the heart of man; and, by consequence, of his whole character. The heart is the great controlling power of a rational being; the whole of that energy by which he is moved to action. The moral nature of this power, therefore, will be the moral nature of the man. If this be virtuous, all his other faculties will be rendered means of virtue; if sinful, the means of sin. Thus regeneration will affect the whole man, and govern all his character, powers, and conduct.

Regeneration is of the highest importance to man, as a subject of the divine government. With his former disposition, he was a rebel against God: with this, he becomes cheerfully an obedient subject. Of an enemy he becomes a friend, of an apostate he becomes a child. His obedience is henceforth filial, accepted of God, and useful to the universe. From the debased, hateful, miserable character of sin he makes a final escape; and begins the glorious and eternal career of virtue. The deformity, disgrace, and contempt, of which sin is the parent and the substance, he exchanges for moral excellence, loveliness, and beauty.

With his character his destination is equally changed. In his native condition he was a child of wrath, an object of abhorrence, and an heir of woe. Evil in an unceasing and interminable progress, was his lot; the regions of sorrow and despair his everlasting home; and fiends and fiend-like men his eternal companions. His own bosom was the house of remorse, while a conscience, unceasingly wounded by his sin, held up to his eye the image of guilt and the predictions of misery, and filled him with immoveable terror and amazement. On his character good beings looked with detestation, and on his ruin, with pity; while evil beings beheld both with that satanic pleasure which a reprobate mind can enjoy at the sight of companionship in turpitude and destruction.

But when he becomes the subject of this great and happy change of character, all things connected with him are also changed. His unbelief, impenitence, hatred of God, rejection of Christ, and resistance to the Spirit of grace, he has voluntarily and ingenuously renounced. No more rebellious, impious, or ungrateful, he has assumed the amiable spirit of submission, repentance, confidence, hope, gratitude, and love. The image of his Maker is instamped on his mind, and begins there to shine with moral and eternal beauty. The seeds of immortality have there sprung up, as in a kindly soil, and, warmed by the life-giving beams of the Sun of righteousness, and refreshed by the dewy influence of the Spirit of grace, rise, and bloom, and flourish with increasing vigour. In him sin, and the flesh, and the world, daily decay, and daily announce their approaching dissolution; while the soul continually assumes new life and virtue, and is animated with superior and undying energy. He is now a joint-heir with Christ, and the destined inhabitant of heaven. The gates of glory and of happiness are already open to receive him; and the joy of saints and angels has been renewed over his

repentance. All around him is peace; all before him purity and transport. God is his Father, Christ his Redeemer, and the Spirit of truth his Sanctifier. Heaven is his eternal habitation; virtue is his immortal character; and seraphim, and cherubim, and all the children of light are his companions for ever. Henceforth he becomes of course a rich blessing to the universe. All good beings, nay, God himself, will rejoice in him for ever, as a valuable accession to the great kingdom of righteousness, as a real addition to the mass of created good, and as an humble but faithful and honourable instrument of the everlasting praise of heaven. He is a vessel of infinite mercy, an illustrious trophy of the cross, a gem in the crown of glory which adorns the Redeemer of mankind.

Of all these sublime attainments, these exalted blessings, these divine allotments, regeneration is the beginning. What, then, can be more worthy of the Spirit of truth? What effort in creation, what event in providence, is more becoming his character? The rise of an empire, the formation of a world, is a poor and humble display of infinite perfection, compared with the sanctification of an immortal mind. In the progress of eternity one such mind will enjoy more good, exercise more virtue, and display more excellency of character, than this great world of men has ever enjoyed, exercised, or displayed. Accordingly, God himself divinely characterizes this illustrious work in the following magnificent terms. 'For, behold! I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered, neither come into mind. But be ye glad, and rejoice for ever, in that which I create; for, behold! I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and my people a joy.' Of such importance and glory is the new creation or regeneration of the soul of man, that, in comparison with it, the original formation of the heavens and the earth is in the divine eye unworthy even of being remembered. It was, therefore, a work proper for God the Father to contrive, for God the Son to procure even with his own death, and for God the Holy Spirit to accomplish with his life-giving and almighty power in the souls of the guilty, ruined, and perishing children of Adam.

SERMON LXXV.

REGENERATION.—ITS ANTECEDENTS.

Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas: and brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?—Acts xvi. 29, 30.

Having in the two preceding Discourses considered the necessity, the reality, and the nature of regeneration, I shall now proceed to give a history of this important work as it usually exists in fact; and shall attempt to exhibit its antecedents, its attendants, and its consequents. The first of these subjects shall occupy the present Discourse.

The text is a part of the story of the jailer, to whose charge Paul and Silas were committed by the magistrates of Philippi, with a particular direction, that he should 'keep them safely.' To comply with this direction 'he thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks.' In this situation, at midnight 'they prayed, and sang praises to God.' 'Suddenly there was a great earthquake; so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed. And the keeper of the prison, awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled. But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm; for we are all here. Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas; and brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?'

The man who is the principal subject of this story had been educated a heathen, and, until a short time before the events specified in it took place, was totally ignorant of the Christian religion. Within this period he must have been present, and I think not unfrequently at the preaching of Paul and Silas: otherwise he could not have known that there was such a thing as salvation. Probably he was induced, in common with his fellow citizens, to hear their discourses merely as a gratification of curiosity. Whatever was the motive, it is plain he had gained some knowledge of a Saviour; and had learned that through him, men might in some manner or other be saved.

The things which he had known concerning these subjects seem not, however, to have made any very deep impressions on his mind. Before the extraordinary events recorded in the verses immediately preceding the text, he appears not to have conversed with these ministers about his religious concerns, nor to have felt any peculiar anxiety concerning his guilt or his danger. On the contrary, we cannot hesitate to consider him, as clearly proved by his severe treatment of them, to have been hitherto in a state of religious unconcern, a state of sinful coldness and quietude.

But at this time a change was wrought in the man great and wonderful; a change, manifested in his conduct with the most unequivocal evidence. But by what was this change accomplished? What was it that of a heathen made this man a Christian? Was the cause found in the miraculous events by which the change was immediately preceded? It would seem that many others who were equally witnesses of these events still continued to be heathen, and experienced no alteration of character. Beyond this it is evident from the story,

that the jailer did not witness them at all; and that he did not awake out of sleep until after the earthquake and all its alarming effects had terminated. Besides, when he had awakened, and concluded that the prisoners had made their escape, he determined to kill himself; an effort which refutes the supposition that he had any just moral apprehensions, and proves him to have been solicitous only concerning his responsibility to the magistrates. He had indeed heard Paul and Silas preach; so had many others who still continued to be heathen. Preaching, therefore, did not alone accomplish this change; otherwise it would have accomplished it in them also. An influence not common to others, must have been felt by him; an influence never felt by himself before must now have produced this mighty alteration in his character.

The text presents him to us in the utmost agitation and distress, and as thus agitated and distressed concerning his salvation. 'He called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas; and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?' A little before he had 'thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks.' Immediately before he was on the point of committing suicide; a gross and dreadful crime, which would have ruined him for ever. A little before, nay immediately before, he was a heathen; regardless of salvation, a foe to Christianity, and the hard-hearted jailer of these ministers of the gospel.

But now he bade adieu to all these dispositions and practices at once; renounced his former heathenism and sin, and became a meek, humble, and pious follower of the Redeemer. Now he fell down at the feet of his prisoners, and relied implicitly on them for direction concerning his eternal well-being.

A description of the state of this man's mind in the progress of his regeneration must, in substance, be a description of the state of every mind with respect to the same important subject. The events preceding the work of regeneration are substantially the same in every mind; the work itself is the same; and its consequences are the same.

The first great division of this work, viz. what I have mentioned as the antecedents of regeneration, is commonly called conviction of sin. Of this subject the text is a strong illustration, and will very naturally conduct our thoughts to every thing which will be necessary to it on the present occasion. The jailer plainly laboured under powerful and distressing conviction of his own sin, and of the danger with which it was attended. Of this truth his conduct furnished the most affecting proof. The state of mind which he experienced, and which this passage of Scripture describes, it is the design of this Discourse to exhibit under the following heads:—

I. *The cause,*

II. *The nature,*

III. *The consequences of conviction of sin.*

I. *The peculiar cause of this conviction is the law of God.* 'By the law,' saith St Paul, 'is the knowledge of sin.' As sin is merely 'a transgression of the law;' and as, 'where no law is, there is no transgression;' it is clear beyond a question that all knowledge of sin must be derived from the law. To discern that we are sinful, we must of course know the rule of obedience; and comparing our conduct with that rule, must see in this manner, that our conduct is not conformed to the rule. In this way all knowledge of sin is obtained.

This, however, is not an account of the knowledge of sin intended by conviction, as that word is customarily used by divines. The great body of sinners under the gospel have in some degree at least, this knowledge; and yet are not justly said to be convinced.

Conviction of sin denotes something beyond the common views of the mind concerning its sins; and is always a serious, solemn, heartfelt sense of their reality, greatness, guilt, and danger. This all sinners under the gospel have not; as every man knows, who possesses a spirit of common observation; and peculiarly every man who becomes a subject of this conviction. Every such man knows that in his former, ordinary state he had no such sense of sin.

To explain this subject it is necessary to observe, that there is a total difference between merely seeing or understanding a subject, and feeling it. A man may contemplate, as a mere object of speculation and intellect, the downward progress of his own affairs towards bankruptcy and ruin, and have clear views of its nature and certainty; and still regard it as an object of mere speculation. Should he afterward become a bankrupt, and thus be actually ruined, he will experience a state of mind entirely new, and altogether unlike any thing which he experienced before. He now feels the subject: before he only thought on it with cool contemplation; and, however clear his views were, they had no effect on his heart. His former views never moved him to a single effort for the prevention of his ruin; those which he now possesses would have engaged him, had they existed at the proper time for this purpose, in the most vigorous exertions. Just such is the difference between the common views of sin, and those which are experienced under religious conviction. What before was only seen, is now realized and felt.

This also is accomplished by the law, felt as well as understood; brought home to the heart, and strongly realized by the sinner. This fact is thus forcibly described by St Paul: 'For I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.' He was 'alive,' that is, in his own feelings, while he was 'without the law;' or while the law was no more realized than it is by mankind in their ordinary state: while it is acknowledged to be the law of God, but not seriously regarded, applied to themselves, nor felt to be a rule of duty, obliging them indispensably to obey.

'But when the commandment came.'—The commandment was before at a distance, scarcely seen, and scarcely regarded; but now came home to him, to his sober thoughts, his realizing apprehensions.

'Sin revived.'—Sin began then first to be perceived to be his true and distressing character. It arose out of the torpid state in which it had seemed to exist before, and assumed new life, strength, and terror. Of consequence, he who had hitherto considered himself, while he was inattentive to the nature and extent of the divine law, as a just man, safe, and acceptable to God, now 'died;' now perceived himself to be a great and guilty sinner, condemned and perishing; and all his former safety, righteousness, and life vanished in a moment.

Under conviction of sin, the law is applied by the sinner to himself, and considered as the rule of his own

duty; the rule by which his character is hereafter to be tried, and the rule by which he himself is now to try it. Before this, no such views of the law had entered his mind; no such trial had ever been made. In this trial the law is often, solemnly, critically, and effectually examined. Both it precepts and penalties are brought home irresistibly to the heart. Before, they were things with which the sinner had little or no concern. Now, he finds them to be things with which he is more deeply concerned than with any other.

II. *The nature of this conviction* may be unfolded in the following manner:—

In the ordinary circumstances of the mind it is usually disposed to acknowledge, that there is such a thing as sin; that it is in itself wrong, odious, mischievous to mankind, dishonourable to God, and deserving in some degree of punishment. It is usually ready to acknowledge also, that itself is sinful, and of course exposed to the anger of God. With regard to sin, as with regard to the law, its views are often, perhaps generally just in a certain degree; but are loose, careless, and inefficacious; having no other effect on the mind than to produce, at seasons rare and solitary, some reproaches of conscience, and a degree of regret and fear, feeble, momentary, and easily forgotten.

But when the man becomes a subject of religious conviction, he feels for the first time that sin is a real and dreadful evil. For the first time the law of God is seen to be a righteous and reasonable law, demanding nothing but what ought to be demanded, and forbidding nothing but what ought to be forbidden. Its precepts and its penalties are both yielded to, as just; and God is acknowledged to be righteous in prescribing the former and inflicting the latter.

Himself he readily pronounces to be a sinner, universally debased, utterly blamable, justly condemned, and justly to be punished. Instead of self-justification and self-flattery, he is now more ready to pronounce the sentence of condemnation on himself, than on any other person; and is hardly brought to admit the pleas advanced by others in palliation of his guilt, or in the defence of his moral character. Sin, and his own sins especially, now appear as things new, strange, and wonderful; as evils awfully serious and alarming. The law of God is now applied to himself as his own rule of duty; and obedience to it is confessed to be reasonable, indispensable, and immensely important. Every violation of its precepts, therefore, is regarded by him as a sore and dreadful evil; as guilt which he perceives no means of wiping away, and as danger which he finds no opportunity of escaping. An accumulation of crimes innumerable and of guilt incomprehensible is thus seen to have been formed by the conduct of his whole life, which to the anxious and terrified eye of the criminal, has already swollen to the size of mountains, and ascended to the height of heaven.

These views, it is to be remembered, are wholly new to the sinner. Their novelty, of course, greatly enhances in his eye the terrifying and oppressive magnitude of the subject. All new things affect us more when new, than when by frequent repetition they have become familiar. Before, he never in sober earnest believed himself to be a sinner. To find himself, therefore, to be not only a sinner, but a sinner of so guilty and blamable a character, naturally overwhelms him with anguish and dismay.

His mind also is now exceedingly alarmed and distressed by this affecting discovery. On an agitated mind all things with which it is concerned make deep impressions, deeper far than when it is at ease; and especially those things, which produced the agitation. Such, particularly, is the fact in this state of religious agitation. For both these reasons, as well as from the real greatness and nature of his guilt, the convinced man is often ready to believe that no sinner was ever so guilty as himself.

It is not uncommon to hear persons of no singular depravity declare, that they are doubtful whether Judas was equally a transgressor with themselves. I have heard doubts expressed by persons of more than common decency and amiableness, whether Satan was not less odious to God than they were: and this reason has been alleged for the doubt, that he had never sinned against forgiving and redeeming love. It is not to be wondered at, that the soul to which these awful subjects are thus new, and which is thus terrified by its first views of them, should be even excessive in its self-condemnation.

With the greatness of its guilt, the greatness of its danger keeps an equal pace. Scarcely any thing more naturally or more commonly occurs to the mind in this situation, than doubts whether such guilt as itself has accumulated can be forgiven. 'The mercy of God,' which is declared in the Scriptures to be 'greater than our sins,' to be 'above the heavens,' 'to extend to all generations,' and to 'endure for ever,' is often doubted, so far as the sinner himself is concerned; admitted easily with regard to others, and with regard to all or almost all others, it is still doubted so far as he is concerned, and is easily believed to be incapable of extending to him. Often he is strongly tempted to believe that he has committed the unpardonable sin; and often and much is he busied in examining what is the nature of that sin. Instead of self-flattery, the only employment which he was formerly willing to pursue with respect to his spiritual concerns, and which he indulged in every foolish and excessive degree, he is now wholly engaged in the opposite career of self-condemnation; and not unfrequently pursues it to an excess equally unwarranted by the Scriptures. Nor is he at all prone to feel that he is now equally guilty of new sin in limiting the mercy of God, and in forming new kinds of unpardonable sins, as before, in presuming without warrant on the exercise of divine mercy towards his hardened heart.

All these emotions are also greatly heightened by the remembrance of his former stupidity, unbelief, and hardness of heart, his light-mindedness and self-justification, his deafness to instruction, his insensibility to the calls of mercy, the reproofs of guilt, and the warnings of future woe. What before were his favourite pursuits he now considers as the means of his ruin; what before was the object of his delight is now the object of his abhorrence. That which was once his support is now his terror; that which he accounted and boasted of, as his wisdom, he now considers as the mere madness of Bedlam. Nor can he explain to himself how such sottishness could ever have been his conduct or his character.

The Bible now, its threatenings and promises, its doctrines, precepts, and ordinances, assume an aspect wholly new; for the first time real, solemn, important;

the only ground of his distress, and the only source of his possible comfort. The same truth and reality, the same solemnity and importance, at once invest the prayers, sermons, and other religious instructions which he has heard from his parents, and ministers, and from other persons of piety. Why they did not always and of course wear these characteristics, is now his astonishment; why he did not covet them, listen to them, and obey them. 'Madness,' entire and dreadful, he now readily acknowledges, 'was in his heart' from the beginning, and has hitherto constituted his only moral character.

It is not here to be supposed, that this is in form an exact account of the state of every convinced sinner. In substance it may be considered as universally just. Some such sinners are subjects of far more deep and distressing convictions than others; convictions much longer continued, respecting some of these objects more and others less; producing more erroneous conclusions, greater self-condemnation, deeper despondency, and universally more distressing agitation. Some minds are naturally more exquisitely capable of feeling than others, more prone to sink, less prepared to hope, to exert themselves, to reason, and to admit the conclusions which flow from reasoning; less ready to receive consolation, and more ready to yield to these as well as other temptations. Some have been better instructed in early life, have been more conscientious, amiable, and exemplary, and have less to reproach themselves with in their past conduct. The Spirit of God also may choose to affect, and probably does affect different minds in different manners. Finally, some minds may be more surrounded by temptations and dangers, and at the same time furnished with friends less accessible, counsels less wise, and directions less safe in this season of trial and sorrow. From these and many other concurring causes, it happens, that in form, degree, and continuance, convictions operate very differently on different minds: nor can any human skill limit them in these respects.

It ought by no means to be omitted here, that there are persons, especially of a steady serene disposition, educated in a careful, religious manner, and habitually of unblamable lives, in whom the process of conviction is conformed in a great degree to their general character. These persons, to the time of their conversion, have not uncommonly no remarkable fears or hopes, sorrows or joys. Conscientiously, but calmly, they oppose sin; evenly, but mildly, they sorrow for it; and steadily, but with no great ardour of feeling, they labour in the duties of a religious life. In the account which they give of their religious views and emotions, there is little to excite any peculiar degree of comfort in themselves, or of hope concerning them in others. Still their lives are often distinguished by uncommon excellence. Their progress is not that of a torrent, now violent, now sluggish and stagnant, but that of a river, silently and uniformly moving onward, and never delaying its course a moment in its way towards the ocean. In these persons a critical eye may discern a fixed, unwarping love of their duty, a perpetual repetition of good works, a continual advance towards the consummation of the Christian character.

In substance, however, this work is the same in all minds. All really discern the importance, reasonableness, and justice of the divine law, their own violations of its precepts, the guilt which they have in this manner incurred, the righteousness of God in punishing them for it, and the extreme danger to which they are therefore exposed. No sinner can turn from sin to holiness without seeing the evil and danger of the one, and the excellence and safety of the other. No sinner can turn from sin to holiness without knowing and acknowledging his own sin and danger, the reasonableness of the divine law, and the justice of God in punishing his transgressions.

III. *The immediate consequences of this conviction*, next demand our attention.

On this subject it is necessary to observe in the beginning, that the sinner is still altogether a sinner. The only difference between his present and former character is, that before he was an unconvinced, and now a convinced sinner. Before he was ignorant of his true character, now he understands it clearly.

Hence, it will be remembered, all his resolutions, efforts, and conduct will partake of his general character, and will of course be sinful. Between his conscience and his affections there is now a more complete and open opposition than ever before. His conscience justifies God, approves of the divine law, and in spite of himself acquiesces in his condemnation; but his heart is still utterly opposed to all these things, and usually more opposed to them than ever.

He is indeed afraid to sin; but it is because he dreads the punishment annexed to it, not because he hates the sin. Nor is it an unknown nor probably a very unfrequent case, that these very fears become to him motives to continue in sin, and even to give himself up wholly to sinning. Under the influence of his fears he is not unfrequently disposed to conclude that there is no hope for him; and that, therefore, he may as well, and even better, indulge himself in wickedness, than attempt a repentance and reformation which his deceitful heart, and probably all his spiritual enemies, represent as too late, and therefore fruitless. From this danger some, it is not improbable, never escape; but 'return like the dog to his vomit, and like the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.' Still I apprehend this is very far from being a common case. A very small number only, as I believe, compared with the whole, yield themselves up to ruin in this deplorable mannner. Perhaps no one who persisted in his efforts to gain eternal life, was ever finally deserted by the Spirit of grace.

To such as perseveringly continue in their endeavours, the next natural step in their progress, the first great consequence of conviction of sin, is to inquire most earnestly what they shall do to be saved. Of this anguish, produced by such conviction, the text furnishes us with a very forcible example. No picture was perhaps ever more striking than that which is given us of the extreme agitation of the jailer in the text. 'He called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas; and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?' An agitation not unlike this frequently occupies the hearts of others, and prompts them with the same earnestness to make the same solemn and affecting inquiry.

Antecedently to this period, the sinner has in many instances lived without a single sober thought of asking this question at all. 'Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season I will call for thee;'

has been his only language to repentance and reformation. The subject has never become seriously interesting to him before. Before, he has never seen his guilt or his danger. Before, he has not wished for salvation; has found good enough in the world, in sin, and in sense, to prevent all anxiety about future good; considered this as present and real; and regarded that as distant, doubtful, and imaginary. But now his danger of ruin, and his necessity of deliverance, appear in their full strength. In this situation he makes this great inquiry with all possible solicitude. His happiness, his life, his soul, is in the utmost danger of being lost for ever, are felt to be suspended on the answer. He beholds God his own enemy, and an unchangeable enemy to sin and impenitence, now rising up to destroy him utterly, and to pour out upon him his wrath and indignation. In the deepest anguish he searches with prying eyes for a place of safety.

' Here he first finds himself at a total loss concerning what he shall do. Here he first discovers his own ignorance of this great subject. Before, he was ' rich, and had need of nothing ;' had eyes, which saw clearly all wisdom; understood all that he needed to know or do; and wanted no instruction nor information from others. Now he first finds himself to be, and to have been, ' poor, and wretched, and miserable, and blind, and naked,' and in want of all things, Now, instead of deciding on questions of the greatest moment and difficulty in theology, and deciding roundly without examination or knowledge, he is desirous of being instructed in small and plain things; and instead of feeling his former contempt for those who are skilled in them, he becomes humble, docile, desirous of being taught, and disposed to regard with sincere respect such as are able to teach him.

At the same time, he especially betakes himself to the source of all instruction in all things of this nature; the word of God. This book he searches with all anxiety of mind to find information and hope. The threatenings and alarms which before hindered him from reading the Scriptures, now engage him to read them. His own danger and guilt he now labours thoroughly to learn, and is impatient to know the worst of his case. Whatever he finds there recorded he readily admits, however painful, and employs himself no more either in doubting or finding fault. To the former he has bidden adieu; the latter he knows to be fruitless. However guilty the Bible exhibits him, he is prepared to consider himself as being at least equally guilty. However dangerous it declares his case to be, he is prepared to acknowledge the danger.

In this distress, it will be easily supposed, he also searches for the means of deliverance. For these he labours with the deepest concern. Hence he reads, examines, and ponders with an interest new and peculiar; with fear and trembling, with critical attention to every sentiment, declaration, and word, with an earnest disposition to find relief and consolation in any and every passage where it can be found. The Bible is now no longer the neglected, forgotten, despised book which it formerly was, but his chief resort; ' the man of his counsel,' the rule of his conduct. To him it has now become for the first time the word of God, and the means of eternal life.

All the difficulties which heretofore prevented him from being present in the house of God, have now vanished. The disagreeable weather, the personal indisposition, the indolence which seemed like an indisposition, the plainness of the preacher, the inelegance of the sermon, and the imperfection of the psalmody, keep him at home no more. In this solemn place he listens to all that is uttered, and watches all that is done. The preacher's words become ' as goads; piercing to the dividing asunder of the soul and the spirit, of the joints and marrow.'

At his former listlessness he is now amazed, as well as that which he still beholds in others around him. The sabbath, no longer a dull, wearisome day, of which the hours dragged heavily, and during which he could hardly find any tolerable means of passing the time, now becomes a season of activity and industry, unceasing and intense; a season waited for with anxiety, and welcomed with hope and joy. The sanctuary, no longer regarded as a place of mere confinement, as the scene of tedious, dull, unmeaning rites, where grave people were believed to assemble for scarcely any other purpose except to keep gay ones in order, has now become ' the house of ' the living ' God, and the gate of heaven;' the place where he expects to find, if he finds at all, an escape from death, and the way to eternal life.

In the meantime, he cries mightily unto God for deliverance from sin and ruin. Prayer, long, perhaps from the beginning of his life, unused, unknown, and unthought of, or if thought of at all and attempted, always a burden, now becomes his most natural conduct. He sees and feels that God alone can deliver him; and therefore irresistibly looks to him for deliverance; oftentimes indeed with fear even to pray, from the strong sense which he entertains of his absolute unworthiness, and his unfitness to perform this first, most natural, most reasonable of all religious services. Sensible how impure an appearance he must make before that God, ' in whose sight the heavens are unclean, and whose angels are charged with folly,' he feels unwilling, like the publican, even ' to lift up his eyes towards heaven: but smiting his breast,' cries out with importunate anguish, ' God be merciful to me a sinner.'

But he cannot be prevented from praying. His cries for mercy, and those at times involuntary and ejaculatory, are forced from him by the sense of his guilt, and his fears of perdition. They often break out in his walks, in the course of his daily employments, and in his occasional journeyings; they spring from his meditations; they ascend from his pillow. The question, Whither a sinner shall be directed to pray, has become nugatory to him; and has been decided, not by metaphysical disquisition, but by the controlling anguish of his heart.

During this season of struggling for salvation, it is no unfrequent thing for his despondency to continue to return at intervals with more weight, and to sink him deeper in distress; according to the different states of his mind, and the nature of the different subjects which occupy his thoughts.

It is all along to be kept in view that, as I have heretofore remarked, this state of things is very different in different persons; varying almost endlessly in manner and degree; in some instances comparatively calm, quiet, and of an even tenor; in others disturbed, distressed, and tumultuous. Still it is also to be remembered that substantially it is the same.

During this state of mind, it is farther to be observed, the sinner forsakes, of course, many of his former fa-

vourite objects, especially his diversions, his gayety, his loose companions, and his haunts of sin. These he now perceives and feels to be the seats and sources of temptation, danger, and sorrow. Hence he shuns them with vigilant care and lively dread, not from virtuous motives, but from the fear of rendering his case more dreadful and hopeless.

But none of his efforts give him rest. Neither his affections, desires, nor labours, are virtuous in the evangelical sense, or commendable in the sight of God. His sense of danger only, and his apprehension of the inestimable importance of escaping, originally asleep or dead, is now alive and awake. This feeling, and its necessary effects, constitute the only change in his condition. No real goodness, no moral excellence, nothing really acceptable to God, is yet begun in his mind, or supposed to be begun. To be sensible that we are sinners is not the result of virtue. There is no real goodness in being afraid of the anger of God. There is not necessarily any thing holy in acknowledging that God is just in inflicting punishment which has been deserved. These things may all exist without any hatred of sin, any love to God, or any faith in the Redeemer.

The prayers which he daily offers up to his Maker are not the offspring of piety, but of terror. The child who sees the rod brought out to view, and beholds correction at the door, is ever ready to supplicate for pity and forgiveness, and to promise whatever may contribute to his escape from the impending danger. Yet he is not of course a dutiful child.

Still these efforts of the sinner are useful to him. No unregenerated man was probably ever convinced, except by trying his own strength, that he was unable of himself to perform virtuous actions, to pray, to serve, and to glorify God; unable, I mean, in this sense, that he has no heart, no inclination, to perform these duties; and that he will never possess a better disposition but by the renovating agency of the Spirit of God. The more he labours, however, the more clearly he will perceive his services to be all essentially defective, and really sinful. The more he prays, the more unworthy he pronounces his prayers. An unconvinced sinner always believes that he can pray in a manner acceptable to God; a convinced sinner readily declares, that he cannot pray in a manner acceptable, not to God, but even to himself.

In the struggle thus continued, and thus earnestly conducted, he learns how obstinate his sinful dispositions are, and with what hopeless difficulty they are to be overcome. Convinced at length that all his efforts must, without the immediate assistance of God, prove entirely vain, he casts off all his dependence on himself, and turns his eyes to God with the feelings of Peter when beginning to sink, and cries out in his language, 'Lord, save me, or I perish!'

REMARKS.

1. From these observations we learn the use and influence of the law of God in promoting the work of conversion.

The law evidently begins this work in the soul; or, perhaps, in more accurate language, it begins and produces that state of thought and affection in which the soul is usually turned to God. Without the terrors of the law, this state of mind would manifestly never be produced, unless the whole tenor of divine providence should be changed. Yet this, so far as we can see, is a natural and necessary pre-requisite to conversion. The sinner entirely needs thus to understand and feel his condition; his guilt, his danger, his helplessness, and his absolute necessity of being renewed by the Spirit of grace. By the law alone is he enabled clearly to see, and strongly to feel, these interesting things. From the same source of instruction he learns the true nature of his own efforts; for it is by a comparison of them with this standard of perfection that he sees how destitute they are of all real holiness, and how unavailing to recommend him to God. In a word, from the law only does he gain the knowledge that he is spiritually 'sick,' and stands in infinite need of the divine 'physician.'

2. These observations also teach us the necessity as well as usefulness of that preaching which explains and enforces the nature of the law.

It is not unfrequent to hear both preachers themselves, and many other persons, condemn the preaching of the law. These persons dwell much on the endearing benevolence of the gospel, the riches of the divine goodness displayed in it, and the importance and wisdom of winning sinners to embrace it. On the other hand, they censure with no small severity the preaching of the law, and those who in this manner attempt to alarm sinners concerning their moral condition. If the things which have been said in this Discourse, are admitted to be just, it must also be admitted that these persons know very little of the important subjects which they handle in this free and unhappy manner. They must plainly be ignorant of the nature both of the law and the gospel, of the sinner's danger and guilt, the means of his deliverance, the nature of both conviction and conversion, the use of convictions towards conversion, and the use of the law in exciting them.

It has, I trust, been clearly shown, that the law is absolutely necessary to rouse the sinner from his sleep of death, to point out to him his danger, and to induce him to seek for relief. To the necessity of the law for this purpose, the necessity of preaching it is exactly proportioned. Nothing else will accomplish the end. So long as this is kept out of view, other things will only soothe the sinner. If he views God as merciful without any regard to his justice, as forgiving without solid reasons, without an atonement, and without the application of that atonement to himself, he will be fearfully deceived; and trust in that mercy on terms and with views agreeably to which it can never be exercised.

This method of decrying the divine law and the preaching of it, is a dangerous method of flattering sinners to destruction, and of 'sewing pillows under all arm-holes.'

Christ, the prophets, and the apostles, acted in a very different manner. They stung sinners to the quick; 'pricked them to the heart' with strong, solemn, and affecting representations of their guilt, their danger, and their approaching damnation; roused them from their slumbers, and forced them to listen, feel, and act.

The nature of the case shows the reasonableness and excellency of their example, and the propriety and wisdom of following it; while, at the same time, it holds out the folly of those who disuse, as well as those who censure, preaching of this nature. We need not be at

all afraid lest sinners in modern times should be more easily affected than they were in ancient times. Their hearts are by no means peculiarly tender; but, like the hearts of those who lived in former days, resemble the 'rock,' and need both 'the fire and the hammer,' to break them in pieces.

Some persons are probably afraid to preach in this manner, lest they should give pain to their hearers, and hazard their own popularity. These men either destroy or prevent much good, by standing in the place of such preachers as, like Boanerges, would thunder an alarm in the ears of sleeping guilt, and rouse the torpid soul to a sense of its danger.

3. From these observations we also learn the necessity of the gospel to the accomplishment of this great work.

If the sinner were left wholly to the law he would sink and die; for it gives him neither encouragement nor hope. While the law is of mighty and indispensable use, to rouse him from his sloth, and awaken him to vigorous exertions for his deliverance, the gospel is the only foundation of hope that these exertions will be of any use. Without this hope he would do nothing but despair. It is indispensable, therefore, that the gospel should follow the law in all sound preaching; that, when the sinner is roused to inquire 'what he should do to be saved,' he may find encouragement in its glorious promises and invitations. In this manner he learns, on the one hand, his ruined condition by nature and by practice; and, on the other, that safe and happy state, into which he may be introduced by the grace of God. Thus the adaptation and utility of the whole word of God to the purposes designed by it, are strongly manifest; the wisdom of all things contained in it, as the word of life; their excellency, their glory, and their resemblance to its Author. Thus also it is commended to our study, contemplation, wonder, and praise.

SERMON LXXVI.

REGENERATION.—ITS ATTENDANTS, GENERALLY CONSIDERED.

That ye put off, concerning the former conversation, the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.—EPHES. iv. 22—24.

IN the last Discourse I described the situation and conduct of a convinced sinner. It is now my intention to exhibit the conversion of the same sinner to God: or to exhibit what in that Discourse I called the attendants of regeneration.

In the text, connected with the 17th verse, the Ephesians are commanded to 'put off the old man with his deeds, and to put on the new man;' or, in a more strict accordance with the original language, 'to cast away the old, and be clothed with the new man.' It has been supposed, that the passage contains an allusion to the conduct of the new converts at their baptism; who are said at this ordinance to have cast away their old garments, as a symbol of their renunciation of sin, and to have been clothed with new ones, as a token of their assumption of holiness. It has also been supposed, that the apostle alludes to the custom of actors, who changed their clothes whenever they changed their characters. The allusion is, however, so natural and familiar, that it seems unnecessary to look far for an explanation.

To 'put off the old man,' and to 'put on the new man,' are in the text exhibited as equivalent to 'being renewed in the spirit of their mind,' that is, to being the subjects of regeneration. This doctrine is still farther illustrated in the declarations, that the 'old man is corrupt,' and that 'the new man is created, after God, in righteousness and true holiness.' That to renounce the former of these characters and to assume the latter, is the same thing with being regenerated, no person probably, who is acquainted with this subject, will dispute.

Under these two heads, then, I shall now consider the farther progress of this convinced sinner; viz.

I. *His renunciation of sin.*

II. *His assumption of holiness, as his future character.*

As these co-exist in the mind, it will be unnecessary to consider them apart.

When the convinced sinner has, by a succession of earnest efforts to save himself, proved his utter inability to accomplish this important work; the next natural step, and that which he then becomes convinced it is absolutely necessary for him to take, is to cast himself wholly upon God. He sees himself perfectly helpless; and, if left to himself, utterly ruined. In the anguish of mind produced by this view of his situation, he casts himself at the footstool of divine mercy, as a mere suppliant, as devoid of any recommendation to the favour of God, as a ruined, miserable creature, as justly condemned, as justly to be punished, as having no hope, but in mere forgiveness, as desiring salvation of mere grace and sovereign love, as without any power of atoning for his sins by any thing which he can do, as capable of being saved only on account of the atonement of Christ, and as incapable of renewing himself, or of being renewed, but by the power of the Holy Ghost. All these things are felt, and not merely understood; not merely considered as being proved, or capable of proof by sound argument. The several trials which the mind has made, have of themselves become proofs of the highest kind, to which it now opposes neither objection nor doubt. Its views have been too clear to be denied or questioned; and

the frame of the mind, its anxiety and distress, render it even impatient of the suggestion of uncertainty.

Self-righteousness is therefore now relinquished. The pride of saving himself, either wholly or partially, is now given up, and the sinner is humbly and easily satisfied to be saved by Christ. To his atonement, to his infinite compassion, he looks for the aid which, though felt before to be unnecessary, he now regards as absolutely and infinitely necessary to prevent him from being lost.

When the sinner has come to this state of views and disposition, God in his infinite mercy usually, perhaps always, communicates to him 'the new heart, the right spirit,' so often mentioned in the Scriptures.

It will here be useful, and probably necessary, to guard the minds of those who hear me against a common and very natural error concerning this important subject.

It has often been supposed that in some part, or in the whole, of that process of the mind which has been here described, there is something done of a meritorious nature; something so pleasing to God, that on account of it he bestows this incomprehensible blessing. In my own view, this opinion is wholly unscriptural, and altogether dangerous. If God gives the virtuous disposition intended, then it did not exist in the mind before it was thus given; and, as this disposition is the only source of virtuous action in the mind, it is perfectly clear that there can be no such action before it is communicated. That God does in fact give it by his Spirit, has, I trust, been heretofore proved. Antecedently to regeneration then, there is no virtuous action in the mind, in the true and evangelical sense; unless we are to suppose two distinct sources of virtue, and two different kinds of virtuous action.

It will, here, be naturally asked, What, then, is the true nature of this subject? What is the use of conviction of sin? Why does God communicate such a disposition to such sinners, as are effectually convinced of their sins, rather than to any others?

In answer to these reasonable questions I observe, that the use of such conviction is to bring the sinner to a just view of his own condition and character, as a sinner; of the character of God as his Sovereign; of the divine law, as the rule of his conduct; of the character of Christ, as his Saviour; of the absolute necessity of an interest in his redemption for the attainment of salvation; and of the excellency and importance of holiness, in all its branches, as a moral character indispensable to entitle him to the favour and approbation of God. Without these apprehensions it would be very difficult to conceive how a sinner could become the subject of those exercises, which belong to the nature of conversion to God. For example: How can the sinner who does not clearly see the evil, odiousness, and malignity of sin, ever be supposed to hate sin, mourn for it, or abstain from it in future periods? How, unless he discerned the excellency and obligation of the law as a rule of duty for himself, can he discern either the guilt of his transgressions, or the necessity and value of his future obedience? How, unless he be fully convinced of the justice and glory of God in hating and condemning sin, can he acknowledge God to be a reasonable or righteous Sovereign? And how can he ingenuously and voluntarily turn to him at all? Finally, if he do not perceive his own helplessness, and his insufficiency to save himself, how can he betake himself at all to him for salvation? How, if he does not realize the fitness of Christ to be trusted with his soul, and all its concerns, as 'able,' willing, and faithful 'to save to the uttermost all that will come unto God by him,' can he believe on him or trust in him for these infinite blessings?

When God bestows the new disposition on the sinner in the state above described, rather than in his ordinary state, he does this, I apprehend, not because the sinner has merited this blessing, nor any other, at his hands; but because he has now become possessed of such a character and such views as render the communication of it fit and proper in itself. God never extends mercy to sinners because of their desert, or worth, but because they need his mercy. When he sent his Son into the world, to save the apostate race of Adam, it was not because these apostates had merited, but because they needed, such kindness at his hands. It was a mere act of grace, of free, sovereign love. The communication of it was not a reward conferred on worth, for they plainly had none; but a free gift to mere necessity and distress. Christ 'came to seek and to save that which was lost;' and 'to call, not righteous beings, but sinners to repentance.' The father in the parable, did not admit the prodigal into his family and favour on account of any service which he had rendered, for he had rendered none; but on account of the misery and ruin of his son pleading strongly with his own compassion. Such I conceive to be the case of every convicted sinner, when he is made the subject of the renewing grace of God.

But there is a plain reason, why such sinners are made the objects of divine mercy when they have arrived at a complete view of their guilt, danger, and dependence on God for sanctification and deliverance, rather than while they were at ease in sin and self-justified in their rebellion. In the latter situation they were utterly unprepared either to feel or understand the nature and extent of the divine goodness in bestowing these blessings, and of course to be thankful, obedient, humble, and universally virtuous to that degree which is necessary to their effectual preparation for heaven, and which seems incapable of being accomplished in any other manner than this which I have described. A deliverance is both understood and felt in proportion to the greatness of the sense which the person delivered has had of his danger. A new moral character is welcomed in proportion to the feelings which have been experienced in the debasement and disadvantages of the character previously existing. Universally, every benefit is realized in proportion to the sense of our own necessity. Thus, by the sense of his guilt, danger, and need of salvation, experienced under the conviction of his sin, the sinner is prepared with the utmost advantage to receive his sanctification, justification, and final deliverance from eternal ruin. This is what I call the fitness of the sinner for the reception of these benefits; a fitness which seems indispensable; appearing plainly to render it proper that God should give these blessings to a convinced sinner, when it would be wholly improper to give them to the same sinner while unconvinced and insensible. Benefits are wisely conferred on those who are fitted thoroughly to understand, feel, and acknowledge them; and unwisely on those who are not; whose views are obscure, whose feelings are

blunt, and whose acknowledgments, if made at all, are wrung from them by the hard hand of necessity. In the former case, the benefits may be said to be laid out well; in the latter, to little or no purpose.

These observations may possibly throw some light on a subject which hitherto has been almost merely a topic of debate among theologians. This is the true nature and efficacy of the prayers of such persons as are under conviction of sin. Some divines have strongly encouraged, and others utterly discouraged convinced sinners from praying. Those of the latter class, founding their opinions on the declaration that 'the prayers of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord,' observe, that the prayers of convinced sinners cannot be acceptable to God; that they cannot reasonably be expected to be either heard or answered; and that therefore, it is unjustifiable to advise such sinners, or any sinners whatever, to pray at all.

This subject will hereafter naturally offer itself for discussion, I shall now consider it only so far as my present purpose demands. According to the opinion which I have recited, no man can with any propriety pray for his regeneration. The sinner cannot pray for it, because his prayers are sinful and abominable. The saint cannot pray for it with propriety, because he is already regenerated, and cannot possibly either need or receive it. Thus the greatest blessing ever given to man, and that on which all other blessings depend, cannot be prayed for by him who receives it; and stands, therefore, on a ground totally diverse from that on which all other blessings rest; viz. on such a ground that a man can never ask it for himself.

The prayers of convinced sinners, it is said, are insincere, and therefore abominable to God. In answer to this objection, I observe, that a sinner, whether convinced or not, may undoubtedly pray with insincerity in all instances; but there is no invincible necessity that his prayers should always be insincere, notwithstanding he is a sinner. A sinner may, from a sense of his danger and misery, pray as sincerely to be saved from that danger and misery, as a saint. His disposition, I acknowledge, is still sinful; and his prayers are wholly destitute of moral goodness. But the mere wish to be saved from suffering, is neither sinful nor holy. On the contrary, it is merely the instinctive desire of every percipient being; without which he would cease to be a percipient being. That there is any thing hateful to God in this wish, whether expressed in prayer or not, I cannot perceive, nor do I find it declared either by reason or revelation. It may, indeed, be united with other desires, and those either virtuous or sinful; according to the prevailing character of the mind in which it exists; and the whole state of the mind may be accordingly denominated virtuous or sinful. Still this desire is neither morally good, nor morally evil; and therefore neither pleasing nor displeasing, as such, in the sight of God.

That God pities sinners as mere sufferers will not be doubted; otherwise he would not have sent his Son to redeem them from sin and misery. That he pities them more when storngly affected with a sense of their guilt and misery, than when at ease concerning both, will, I think, be readily believed. The sinner is certainly not less an object of compassion, but much more, when he feels the evils in which he is involved; and I can see no reason why he may not be more an object of divine compassion on that account, as well as of ours. The cries of the sinner for mercy are not therefore in themselves sinful; and there is nothing to make the sinner less, but apparently much to make him more, an object of the divine pity.

As the sinner knows that regeneration is the only possible mean of escape and safety, so he may, and plainly will, feel in the same degree the necessity of regeneration to him, as of safety. For regeneration, then, he will cry with the same ardour, and the same freedom from sinfulness in this prayer, considered by itself, as for salvation or deliverance from suffering.

That the prayers of unregenerate men are not virtuous, must undoubtedly be admitted; for nothing can be virtuous which does not proceed from a heart good in the evangelical sense. That they are sinful, so far as they are of a moral nature, must also be admitted, at least by me. The declaration of Solomon, that 'the prayers of the wicked are an abomination,' appears to me, together with others of the like import, to be a description of the prayers of wicked men as they are in their general nature; and not as the mere cries of a suffering creature for mercy. In these, considered by themselves, I see nothing of a sinful nature. They are not indeed objects of the divine complacency; and the sinner who offers them is clearly an object of the divine anger. But I see no evidence that the prayers of such a sinner may not be objects of the divine benevolence, and regarded by the infinite mind with compassion. To that compassion only are they addressed. The cries of a profligate vagrant in distress render him more properly and more intensely an object of compassion, and more especially entitled to relief, although he is still profligate, from a good man, than he would be were he to continue insensible and hardened under his sufferings, and thus utterly unfitted to have any proper views of his need of relief, or the kindness of his benefactor in furnishing it. I see no reason why God may not regard suffering sinners in a similar manner. That he does in fact thus regard them is, I think, unanswerably evident; regeneration, regularly following such prayers, and being regularly communicated to the subjects of them in the course of God's providence, whenever it exists at all. That this is ordinarily, nay, that it is almost always the fact, cannot, I think, be questioned. All sinners under conviction pray; and of such sinners all converts are made. To convinced sinners, crying to God for mercy, regeneration is communicated by the Spirit of God; and we are not, I think, warranted to conclude that it is given to any others. As then the whole number of regenerated persons is formed of those who have been convinced of sin, and who have been diligently employed in prayer while under conviction, it is plain that their prayers are not abominable in such a sense as to prevent the blessing prayed for from descending upon them; and therefore not in such a sense as rationally to discourage them from praying.

The prayer of the publican is, in my view, a clear and strong illustration of the justice of these remarks. There is no proof, nor, in my opinion, any reason to believe, that this man was regenerated. On the contrary, he declares himself in his prayer to God, to be a sinner. As this declaration is put into his mouth by our Saviour, it must, I think, be considered not only as a sincere declaration, but a correct one; expressing with exactness the precise truth. He was also a convinced sinner;

as is evident from his own words, and from the whole tenor of the parable. Yet he was 'justified rather than the Pharisee.' The Pharisee came before God with a false account of himself, with a lofty spirit of self-righteousness, and with an unwarrantable contempt for other men, particularly for the publican. The publican came with a strong and full conviction of his sin, and his supreme need of deliverance. With these views, confessing himself to be a sinner merely, he earnestly besought God to have mercy on him. His sense of his character was plainly just; and his prayer, being the result of his feelings was of course sincere. Thus far I consider him as justified, and no farther. If he was regenerated in consequence of his prayer, and justified in the evangelical sense, the parable becomes completely decisive to my purpose, and furnishes all the encouragement to convinced sinners to pray which can be asked. But this I will not at present insist on, because it is not expressly declared; although in my own view, it is fairly and rationally inferred from the strain of the parable.

These observations I have made at the present time, because the subject could scarcely fail of occurring to your minds, and because difficulties could scarcely fail of attending it, in the view of some persons at least, which it must be desirable to remove. Allow me, however, to observe, that divines, so far as I may be permitted to judge, have insisted on the metaphysical nature of this and several other subjects in such a manner as rather to perplex than to instruct those who have heard them. To unfold or to limit exactly the agency of moral beings, seems to be a task imperfectly suited to such minds as ours. What the Scriptures have said concerning this subject we know, so far as we understand their meaning. We also know whatever is clearly taught us by experience. Beyond this our investigations seem not to have proceeded very far; and almost all the conclusions derived from reasoning *a priori*, have failed of satisfying minds not originally biased in their favour.

From this disgression, which I hope has not been wholly without use, I now return to the general subject.

When the sinner has come to this state of discernment and feeling, in which his character, danger, and necessity of deliverance are thus realized; and has thus cast himself, as a mere suppliant for mercy, at the footstool of divine grace, God, as has been already observed, gives him a new and virtuous disposition, styled in the Scriptures 'a new heart;' 'a right spirit;' an 'honest and good heart;' 'the good treasure of a good heart;' and by several other names of like import. That act of the Spirit of God by which this disposition is communicated, that is, the act of regenerating man, and the disposition itself which is communicated, I cannot be expected to describe. Neither of these things can in the abstract be known, or even contemplated by such minds as ours. Not a single idea would ever be formed concerning the nature or existence of either, were they not discovered by their effects; or, as they are called in the gospel, 'their fruits.' It may however be useful to repeat, that what I intend by this disposition, is the cause which, in the mind of man, produces all virtuous affections and volitions; the state in which the mind is universally possessed of a tendency to the evangelical character; or the tendency itself of the mind towards all that which in the character is morally excellent. The existence of this disposition is proved by its effects; and in these only can it be seen. As these are new, and before unknown, it follows irresistibly, that the cause is equally new. This is also abundantly taught by the Scriptures, in which the disposition itself is called 'a new heart;' the man, who becomes a subject of it, 'a new creature;' and the life proceeding from it, 'newness of life.'

The first great effect of this disposition is the exercise of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The convinced sinner, as I have repeatedly observed, deeply feels his own utter inability to atone for his sins, to satisfy the demands of the divine law, and to reconcile himself to God.

All this, however, Christ informs him in the gospel he is able, willing, and faithful to do for him. In this situation, the sinner for the first times confides in these declarations of the Redeemer, and in that moral character which furnishes the evidence of their truth. The scheme of saving himself, either wholly or partially, he has now given up, and is satisfied and delighted to be saved by Christ alone. His self-righteousness, so dear and delightful to him before, he now discerns to be nothing but gross spiritual pride, and so far from being praiseworthy, as to be the foundation of nothing but guilt and shame. Now he quits all designs of exalting and gratifying himself in this work; and becomes highly pleased with exalting Christ by cheerfully rendering to him all the honour of his salvation. With these emotions he receives Christ with all the heart, and confides in him for acceptance with God, as the only and at the same time the most desirable atonement for sin. Now, if he could save himself, he would not choose to be thus saved; but sees a beauty and glory in the salvation of sinners by Christ with which his heart wholly accords, and with which his soul is exceedingly delighted. He surrenders himself, therefore, into the hands of this divine Redeemer confidentially, to be his here and for ever; to be governed by his choice, and to do all his pleasure.

The next effect of this disposition is that which in the Scriptures is called repentance unto life; and in theological discourses, evangelical repentance.

It has been already observed, that the convinced sinner is of course deeply affected with a realizing sense of his sins, as being guilty, deserving the wrath of God, and the sources of ruin to himself. After he is regenerated, he for the first time begins to hate his sins, as odious in their very nature; as injurious to God, his fellow creatures, and himself; and to loathe himself as a sinner. Now for the first time he begins to feel that he has been an ungrateful, impious, and rebellious wretch, opposed in heart and life to the government of his Maker, a nuisance to his fellow creatures, and an enemy to himself. His character he perceives to be deeply debased, and himself to be 'unworthy of the least of all the mercies' bestowed on him by his divine Benefactor. With all this is also united a strong sense of the odiousness and danger of every future sin, a sense which is continued through life.

All these things, also, he spontaneously and ingenuously confesses before God. Him he has injured above all other beings, and to him he wishes especially to make whatever satisfaction is in his power. Willingly, therefore, he humbles himself before his Maker in dust

and ashes, and henceforth assumes lowliness of mind as his own most becoming and favourite character.

The disobedience which he thus hates and loathes he necessarily wishes and labours to avoid. The obedience which he heretofore loathed he spontaneously assumes, in a manner not less necessary, as his own future character. Unwilling now to wound himself, to injure his fellow men, and to dishonour God by the indulgence of his former guilty inclinations, he resolves henceforth to do that and that only which will glorify his Maker, promote the happiness of his fellow creatures, and profit his own soul. To this great work, the end of all others, he consecrates himself with sincerity, zeal, and fixed determination.

The next fruit of this disposition is love to God. When the soul is regenerated, it begins to behold its Maker's character with new optics; and therefore perceives the character itself to be new, so far as its own views are concerned. It is now seen to be formed of such attributes as wholly deserve and most reasonably claim the supreme love of every intelligent being. God becomes to the renewed man a welcome object of his daily thoughts and meditations; an object great and awful indeed, but also lovely and delightful. These two great parts of the divine character being generally united in the view of the mind, produce in it that regard to God, compounded of fear and love, which is commonly named reverence; the affection in which love is more frequently exercised than by itself. In the same mind also the sight of his wonderful works, and more wonderful agency, produces admiration; a sense of his excellence, complacency; and the reception of his blessings, gratitude; and with these are inseparably united all the other affections of piety,—dependence, confidence, resignation, hope, and joy. Of these, some prevail at one time, and some at another; but all are inwrought into the very character of the soul, as primary parts of its moral nature. These three exercises constitute what in the Scriptures is called conversion, or turning from sin to God.

The next fruit of this disposition is love to mankind. Evangelical love to our neighbour; that is, to all mankind, whether friends or enemies, is a characteristic of the renewed mind, as really new, and really unexperienced before its renovation, as repentance or faith. Whatever love it exercised to others antecedently to this period was either selfish or merely instinctive; in the former case sinful, in the latter possessed of no moral character, any more than the affection of brutes to their offspring. Now the love which it exercises is impartial, generous, and noble. Under its influence the renewed man does that which is good, just, and sincere, because it is so, and because God has required these things in his law, and not from a regard to reputation or convenience. Now he finds the promotion of happiness to be desirable and delightful in itself, and independently of a separate reward; to be done for its own sake, and not merely as it is done by publicans and sinners. The great question now becomes, how, when, and where good can be done; and not what he shall gain by doing it. Now also he chooses to do good by rule, and from a spirit of obedience to the rightful lawgiver and all-wise director, and thus makes it the purpose of his life. Now, finally, he does good conscientiously, with contrivance and design; not accidentally, loosely, and rarely. Towards Christians this love assumes a peculiar character, being made up of two great and distinguished exercises, the general benevolence exercised towards them in common with all men, and that peculiar delight in their virtuous character, commonly called complacency, and, in the gospel, 'brotherly love.' This is the object of the new 'commandment' given by Christ in the gospel, and made the touchstone by which they are proved to be his disciples.

Of all these exercises of the mind it is to be observed, that they are active exertions, directed invariably and always towards the promotion of real good; the spring of all excellent conduct within and without the soul. It is not to be understood, that they exist and act in such a separate manner, as to be distinguishable, as to the times and modes of their existence or operations; nor that they actually take place in that order in which they have now been mentioned. Of this subject the Scriptures give us no distinct account; and happily, as indeed might fairly be concluded from their silence, it is of no serious importance to us. All which is really necessary is, that they exist and increase in such a manner as is best in the sight of God.

As the regenerated man discerns his own unceasing need of divine assistance, and his general propensity to stop and backslide in his religious course, he will necessarily and instinctively look to God for assistance, strength, and success. Prayer will be the breath by which he will live, and grow, and thrive. The closet, the family, and the church will alternately be the scenes of his public and private devotions, the places where he will find hope, and peace, and joy, and where he will advance in all evangelical attainments. To the Scriptures also will he betake himself for the same aid. In them he finds God speaking to him, and declaring the very things which are necessary to enlighten his understanding and to amend his heart. To the Scriptures, therefore, he will continually resort, and will make them the object of his investigation and reflection at all convenient seasons. Nor will he be less employed in exploring the recesses of his own heart; that he may learn as far as may be the moral state of his mind; his sins and dangers, the improvements which he has made in holiness, and the means of future safety.

In the like manner will the renewed mind solicit, and lay hold on the company, conversation, and friendship of good men. Their views of the Scriptures, of the danger of sin and temptation, and of the excellency and safety of holiness; their own affections and conduct; their example and prayers; their sympathy, communion, and encouragement; will prove ever-flowing springs of spiritual life and consolation. These are its own companions in the path of life, the disciples of its own Saviour, the children of its own heavenly Father. All its interests are theirs. One common cause unites, one common family embraces, one common spirit quickens, and one God, the Father, the Redeemer, and the Sanctifier of all, loves, purifies, conducts, supports, and brings to his own house both the regenerated man and his fellow Christians. In them, therefore, he finds an interest, a friendship, a kindred character of soul, which binds him to them with an indissoluble attachment. With peculiar satisfaction he enjoys their company here, and with delightful hope anticipates their endless society hereafter.

Thus have I endeavoured summarily to explain the

work of regeneration, and to describe those immediate fruits of it, by means of which alone it is discernible by man. As these apparently co-exist with the work itself, I have in general language called them, its attendants. The name, I confess, is not metaphysically exact, nor will I insist on the entire propriety of adopting it. Yet as it naturally coincides with the views formed on this subject by the mind in which it exists, it seems sufficiently descriptive of what was intended, for my purpose.

SERMON LXXVII.

REGENERATION.—ITS ATTENDANTS. FAITH. REPENTANCE.

Then Judas, who had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders; saying, I have sinned, in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What is that to us? see thou to that. And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself.—Matt. xxvii. 3—5.

In my last Discourse, I gave an account of the work of regeneration, and particularly of its immediate effects on the mind, which, because they apparently co-exist with it, I styled its attendants. Of these I particularly mentioned faith in Christ, repentance, love to God, and love to mankind. All these exercises of the renewed mind are of such importance in the scriptural scheme, as to demand a distinct and particular consideration.

Faith, the first of them in the order which I have adopted, has heretofore been largely examined. In so complex a science as that of theology it is impossible not to anticipate particular subjects of discourse; because, among several things which are collateral and not regularly successive, and which are also variously connected, it becomes almost necessary to select (for reasons irresistibly occurring,) some one out of the several connexions, which will prove in a measure injurious to the consideration of others. On some accounts, the natural order would have induced me to discuss the subject of faith in this place; on others, it seemed desirable to give it an earlier examination. As the mind can very easily transfer it to that period at which in the order of time it begins to exist, the disadvantage will be immaterial, should it upon the whole be thought a disadvantage.

The next subject of consideration is repentance unto life, usually called evangelical repentance.

In the text, we are informed that Judas, after he had betrayed Christ, seeing that he was condemned, 'repented himself.' It is therefore certain that Judas was in some sense a penitent; yet it is equally certain that his repentance was not genuine; or, in other words, was not the repentance which is required by the gospel. As one of the most useful methods of distinguishing that which is genuine from that which is spurious is to compare them, I shall in the discussion of this subject,

I. *Examine the repentance of Judas;* and,

II. *The nature of true repentance.*

Concerning the repentance of Judas, I observe,

1. It was real.

That Judas actually felt, and did in no sense counterfeit the sorrow which he professed for his treachery and its consequences, is evident beyond a possible doubt; its existence being evinced by the highest of all proofs—its influence on his conduct. False repentance, therefore, by which I mean all that which is not evangelical, has a real and not merely a pretended existence. Of course it is not in this respect at all distinguished from the repentance of the gospel.

2. It was deep and distressing.

This also is equally evinced in the same manner. No person who was present to hear what Judas said, and to see the things which he did, could entertain a doubt that he was exceedingly distressed by the remembrance of what he had done. False repentance may not only be real, but deeply distressing; and cannot by this circumstance be distinguished from that which is genuine.

3. It was attended by a strong and full conviction of his guilt.

This is also amply declared both in his words and in his actions, so as not to admit even of a question. False repentance, therefore, cannot be distinguished from the true by this circumstance.

4. It was followed by a frank confession of his guilt.

'I have sinned,' said this miserable man, 'in that I have betrayed the innocent blood.' This confession he made before those to whom we should naturally expect him last to make it; viz. the very persons who had hired him to sin. It was also a confession extorted from him by a sense of his guilt alone, and not by any human persuasion, art, or violence. It was sincere; being not only really, but intentionally true; a frank declaration both of his views and his conduct. Such a confession therefore is no decisive proof that repentance is genuine.

5. It was also followed, so far as was now possible, by a departure from his former conduct.

Whatever motives of a different kind prompted Judas to his treachery, it is plain covetousness had its share of influence. The attainment of money, he himself informs us, was an object primarily in his view. 'What will you give me,' said he to the chief priests, 'and I will deliver him unto you?' The sum which they offered was indeed very small; still it plainly operated with commanding force upon his mind. Nor need we wonder that he who, when he kept the bag which contained the little means of subsistence on which, when not supported by hospitality, Christ and

his apostles lived, could from time to time basely plunder so small a part of it as not to be detected by his companions, should be induced to undertake a very base employment for thirty pieces of silver. But on the present occasion, covetous as he habitually was at all former times, he voluntarily returned the money which he had received to the chief priests, and in the anguish of his heart overcame for a season this ruining propensity. Beyond this, he was desirous to do justice to the character of Christ. 'I have sinned,' said he, 'in that I have betrayed the innocent blood.'

6. It was followed by the voluntary infliction of great evils upon himself.

Besides the voluntary surrender of the money, which, if we may judge from what the attainment of it cost him, must have been given up with great difficulty, he went immediately away, and put a violent end to his own life: thus choosing to encounter the greatest evil which can be suffered in the present life, rather than endure the anguish of heart produced by the dreadful sin of which he had been guilty in betraying his Lord.

From this melancholy fact it is clearly evident, that no voluntary penance furnishes the least proof that the repentance which occasioned it was genuine. We may give 'all our goods to feed the poor,' nay, we may 'give our bodies to be burned,' and yet it may 'profit us nothing.'

From these observations it is unanswerably evident, that a false repentance may wear many appearances of the true, that it may in many respects be followed by the same or similar conduct; and that it may on the whole go very far in its resemblance; and still not be evangelical.

In other circumstances the false penitent may exhibit still farther such resemblances in his character. Thus Saul, when he pursued David to the cave of Engedi, and David, by cutting off the skirt of his robe while he slept, had proved to him that he had spared his life while it was in his power to have killed him, was strongly affected by a sense of David's superior righteousness and benevolence, and exhibited a deep conviction of his own inhumanity and injustice. Nor was he in a small degree grateful to David for preserving his life when so entirely in David's power. In the indulgence of this emotion he prayed, and, so far as we can judge, wished, for a blessing upon David. From this example it is evident, that under clear and strong views of sin, persons may exercise a species of repentance in which all these emotions shall exist, together with all the conduct naturally springing from them, and yet their repentance may not be that of the gospel.

In proportion as any counterfeit approximates towards that which it is designed to resemble, is the importance of the discrimination by which its real nature is to be distinguished. Since false repentance, therefore, can in so many particulars approach towards the true, it is indispensably necessary to examine them both in such a manner as to acquire distinct apprehensions concerning their different natures. To complete this design, I now proceed,

II. *To examine the nature of true repentance.*

Of this important evangelical subject it may be observed, that it includes,

1. Just views of sin.

'Fools,' or wicked men, 'make a mock of sin;' that is, they regard it as a thing destitute of any real importance; as a trifle, about which they have no reason to be seriously concerned; as an object of sport and diversion, rather than of solemn or even of sober thought. To these views of sin the convinced sinner, so long as his convictions continue, has bidden a final farewell. To his eye sin appears as a great and terrible evil, fraught with consequences of the most dreadful nature. But even his views are principally generated by an alarming sense of its dangerous consequences, rather than by any just emotions arising from its nature. The views formed by the penitent differ from both these. While he realizes all the apprehensions of the convinced sinner, he adds to them also a new and peculiar sense of the importance of sin, as an evil in itself. To him it appears as a great evil, primarily, as it respects God. The character of God is in his view so great and so good, and his commands are so reasonable, that obedience to him appears supremely excellent and desirable, and disobedience supremely undesirable and unworthy. Both are estimated by his eyes with a steady reference to the glorious character of the Creator, the excellence and importance of the law by which he governs the universe, the auspicious efficacy of obedience to it, and the malignant influence of disobedience on the character and happiness of intelligent beings. Wherever God is concerned, all regard to creatures must be secondary and comparatively unimportant. But when we consider the number of intelligent creatures, the dignified nature of their faculties, the importance of their actions in producing happiness or misery, and their capacity of enjoying happiness or suffering misery throughout eternity, their combined interests become an object to a created eye literally immense. The interest of one immortal mind, and the virtue of that mind living and operating throughout endless ages, severally transcend all finite estimation. Of this virtue and these interests sin is the absolute destruction. It will therefore necessarily seem to the penitent an evil which cannot be measured.

As his own interests and virtue are concerned, he will feel this subject in a peculiar manner. These he naturally realizes in a stronger degree than he can realize the same thing as belonging to others. Particularly, he will be deeply affected by a consciousness of that debasement which sin has produced in his character! He will feel himself brought low; degraded beneath the proper level of a rational being, lost to all useful and honourable purposes, and active only to such as are unworthy and mischievous. Of course he regards himself as having been a nuisance to the universe, and therefore justly loathsome in the sight of God, and contemptible in that of all virtuous beings. Of necessity, therefore, he will be odious and contemptible in his own sight.

To atone for an evil of such vast moment will appear to him utterly beyond his power. It will seem plainly impossible to him to repair in any manner the injury which he has done to God, the dishonour which he has cast upon his law, and the injustice which he has been guilty of to the universe. That this should be done will appear to him indispensable, in order to his acceptance with God. The condescension of God, therefore, in providing, and the benevolence of Christ in accomplishing, such an atonement, will seem to him vast, wonderful, and eminently divine.

2. True repentance involves in it hatred of sin.

Under the influence of conviction, every sinner hates sin in this sense, that he regards it as the source of future punishment; that is, he dreads the suffering and hates the cause of it, as such; and under the influence of this feeling he will usually abstain from many, perhaps most, overt acts of transgression. But the penitent hates sin in its very nature. He does not merely dread the punishment, but the sin independently of the punishment; so that were there no punishment to follow, he would still carefully avoid the sin. In its own nature it is loathsome to his taste, just as certain kinds of food are disgusting to a particular taste, and are avoided, not because they are supposed to be injurious to the health, but merely because they are disgusting.

It ought perhaps here to be observed, to prevent perplexity in the minds of those who hear me, that I do not intend to represent the penitent as hating or loathing those kinds of enjoyment which in their nature may be lawful, and are sinful only by some attendant circumstances with which they are at times enjoyed; nor to represent him as hating the objects whence such enjoyment is derived. Objects of this kind, and the enjoyments springing from them, are made agreeable to our nature by the Creator himself, are equally pleasing to the penitent and impenitent, and are in themselves lawful when existing in the proper degree, and in the proper circumstances. Food and wine are both means of pleasure which may be lawfully enjoyed; but they are also the means of gluttony and drunkenness. The penitent hates the gluttony and drunkenness, but he does not therefore hate the food and the wine, nor the pleasure which they communicate when lawfully enjoyed. Nor has God required this at his hands. If, indeed, he has found them to be dangerous to him, as temptations to inordinate and sinful indulgence, he will dread and watch, and, as the case may be, shun them on this account. Yet the pleasure which they communicate when lawfully enjoyed, neither is nor is required to be the object of his hatred. The sin committed in an inordinate or otherwise unlawful use of the object will be hated by the penitent, and not the object itself.

I have mentioned under the preceding head, that sin will be viewed by the penitent as being primarily evil, because it is an injury done to God. This consideration will peculiarly awaken his hatred of sin. An injury done to a Being so great and glorious will appear to him pre-eminently unreasonable and ill-deserving. He will remember with peculiar solemnity and lively affection, that this glorious Being has forbidden sin in every form and degree, and that every transgression is therefore an open, as well as causeless affront to his infinite authority. Nor will he fail to recollect, that the same exalted Being is his own supreme Benefactor, and that every blessing which he has received has 'come down from the Father of lights.' With this great consideration in view, he will be deeply pained by a sense of the ingratitude exercised towards his Creator in every transgression.

Nor will he be less deeply affected when he remembers, that sin alone occasioned all the sufferings of the Redeemer. That so glorious and excellent a person as Christ should suffer at all, and especially in so dreadful a manner, every penitent will feel to be of all things the most undesirable, and the most to be regretted. How evil then in its nature must be the cause of these sufferings, and how distressing to know that in this evil his own sins have their share!

Besides, all his own sins have been committed in a full view of these sufferings, with an ample knowledge of their greatness and intensity, together with a complete discovery of Christ's excellence in consenting thus to suffer, and amid the very sound of those offers of mercy which Christ proclaimed through the agonies of the cross. By these considerations the penitent will feel his own unworthiness, particularly his ingratitude, mightily enhanced, and will 'abhor himself, repenting in dust and ashes.'

Nor will the mischiefs occasioned by sin to his fellow creatures fail to increase mightily his hatred of this dreadful evil. All the sufferings found throughout this great world, will be easily seen by him to have sprung from this cause only, and a great part of them to be its immediate effects. These being its proper fruits, exhibit in the clearest and most forcible manner the nature of the tree. In deceit, fraud, contention cruelty, oppression, and bloodshed, he will see portrayed in living colours the detestable nature of the spirit which gives them birth. But this is not all. A much more important consideration will everywhere present itself to his view, and much more powerfully affect his heart. All his fellow men are immortal, and are capable of endless happiness or endless suffering. Nay, it will be the actual lot of every one of them to be happy or miserable for ever. Viewed in this light, their interests become infinitely valuable. Sin, the cause of all their future as well as present misery, is thus invested with an importance which to the eye of the penitent becomes literally immense. With deep concern and amazement he will behold a vast multitude of rational beings, 'bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh,' corrupted by this moral pollution in such a manner as to render them incapable of happiness, and to such a degree as to render it wholly improper for God to make them happy. Beyond this, he will see them not only cast off for ever by God, as wholly unfit to be members of the kingdom of happiness, and made objects of his wrath and indignation, but finally ruined, and made for ever wretched by the proper influence of the sin itself. The same malignant efficacy with which it produces the sufferings of the present world will produce similar sufferings in every other world where it predominates, greater always in proportion to the degree in which it prevails. In the world of perdition, therefore, being unmingled and perfect, it will produce finished ruin to all its wretched inhabitants. With these views of this mighty evil, he will behold it with the deepest loathing and abhorrence. With these views he will regard that example which may tempt others to sin, those arguments which may perplex or bewilder them, those doctrines which may encourage or quiet them in disobedience, and generally all those motives which may slacken their course in the path of virtue, or quicken their progress in iniquity, only with alarm and horror. Necessarily, therefore, will he refuse to become the instrument of setting these snares for the feet of his fellow men, and of digging the pit of destruction in their way. Anxiously will he watch, and strive, and pray that he may not become the means of leading immortal minds to final ruin.

Nor will he fail to be deeply affected with the evils done by sin to himself. This part of the subject he will be able to understand more clearly, and to realize more

strongly, than perhaps any other. The debasement of his nature as a rational being, mentioned under the former head, will seem to him an evil of no secondary magnitude. The complete perversion of his noble faculties, the frustration of the end of his existence, the continual inroads made upon his peace, the prevention of his usefulness, together with his exposure to final perdition, all accomplished by this malignant cause, render it necessarily and supremely detestable in his sight.

At the same time this hatred will be directed towards sin of every kind. The same odious nature is adherent in sins, whatever form they may assume, and in whatever manner they may exist; whether they are secret or open; whether they exist in thought, word, or action; whether they immediately respect God or men, his fellow man or himself; whether they are reputable or disreputable; whether productive of gain or followed by loss. In every one of these forms they have still the same evil, shameful, odious character; and will therefore universally awaken his hatred.

Finally, he will hate sin in all persons; in himself, his family, his friends, his fellow Christians, his countrymen, and mankind. The only difference here will be, the nearer it comes home to him he will hate it the more. In his friends and fellow Christians, therefore, his family and himself, he will hate it more than in others; especially as the expressions of his hatred towards their sins, and his opposition to his own, may have a peculiar efficacy in preventing future transgressions. Nor will the kindred or amiableness of any person prevent him from regarding his sins with disgust and abhorrence.

3. True repentance involves in it a sincere sorrow for sin.

A dutiful child who has disobeyed his father feels, after all the fears of punishment are over, a sincere regret because he has disobeyed. A good man when he has done an injury to a friend, even when the fact is unknown, and himself is secure from all possible detection, laments secretly his unworthy conduct. A penitent feels a similar regret that he has offended God and injured his fellow men, not from the apprehension of their resentment or of the anger of God, merely, but also from the sense of the evil which he has done, from a realizing view of the unworthiness of which he has been guilty. With this view he will be ever ready to cry out with St Paul, 'O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?'

4. True repentance will prompt the subject of it freely to confess his sins before God.

Confession is the first, the proper, the natural language of repentance. In this manner Job confessed when God, appearing to him with divine glory, discovered to him the corruption of his heart and the guiltiness of his life. 'I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.' In the same manner David also confessed; 'I acknowledge my transgression, and my sin is ever before thee.' Thus also Nehemiah and his companions, the captives who had returned from Babylon, spent one-fourth part of the day of their public humiliation in confessing their sins; and said, 'Thou art just in all that is brought upon us; for thou hast done right; but we have done wickedly.' Thus the Lamentations of Jeremiah are extensively occupied in this employment. Thus Daniel in strong terms declared to God the sins of himself and his people. Thus, finally, have all sincere penitents done in every age and in every country. The heart, in the clear view of its sins, in the strong apprehension of the wrongs which it has done to God and to mankind, is full and overflows; and 'out of its abundance the mouth' is compelled to 'speak.' Besides, confession is the first attempt towards making amends for the injury; and the penitent is ready to adopt every measure which may in his view contribute to the accomplishment of an end believed to be so important, and relished as so desirable.

5. True repentance is followed by reformation.

Every penitent will like Elihu pronounce concerning himself, as well as concerning others, 'Surely it is meet to be said unto God, I have borne chastisement; I will not offend any more. That which I see not teach thou me; if I have done iniquity, I will do no more.'

Amendment is the end of all repentance; and this involves the twofold office of forsaking sin, and practising holiness. It will easily be believed, that he who hates and mourns for his sins must, under the influence of this disposition, regard the future commission of them with dread, and proceed to it only under the influence of frailty, the occasional predominance of lust, or the powerful influence of external temptations. To forsake it will also be believed to be a commanding object of his designs and efforts. With this object is intimately connected a fixed and universal determination faithfully to practise future obedience. This is the sum of the divine pleasure concerning his remaining life; the substance of all the precepts contained in the law of that glorious Being, to have offended whom excites his deepest sorrow, and to please whom is now the object of his most earnest desire. A general reformation of his life will therefore be the only conduct originated by the present temper of his heart. Against sin, against all sin, he will 'set his face as a flint.' His passions henceforth will be subordinated to his conscience, and his conscience enlightened and directed by the Scriptures of truth. Every lust he will labour to subdue, every enemy to overcome, and every temptation to resist or escape. More and more continually will this be the purpose and employment of life. With increasing resolution he will 'go from strength to strength,' improve in holiness as he increases in years, and become from time to time, more and more 'meet to be a partaker with the saints in light' in their communion and their joys.

REMARKS.

1. From these observations we learn, that a repentance may exist and go far, and yet not be evangelical.

From the account already given of the repentance experienced by Judas, it is plain that he entertained such views and felt such emotions as are also felt by true penitents. There is nothing in the nature of the case which hinders all these, and others like them, from being experienced by any false penitent. From this fact it is clear, that false repentance may be easily mistaken for the true; and equally clear, that a careful discrimination is indispensably necessary to distinguish them from each other. Otherwise, the false penitent may be easily, and, for ought that appears, fatally de-

ceived. If the account here given of evangelical repentance be admitted, the distinction between this and all counterfeits is clear and decisive. The false penitent never forms just views of the nature of sin, never hates it as evil done to God and his fellow creatures, never in this view mourns for it, never confesses it ingenuously, and never faithfully forsakes it. He who cannot find these things in his heart and conduct may safely conclude that his repentance is not that of the gospel.

2. The same observations prove that repentance is a spirit justly according with the real state of things.

The penitent is really, as he pronounces himself to be, a sinner, guilty in the sight of God, and deserving of his wrath. Sin is really the great evil which he feels and acknowledges it to be; and is therefore to be hated, lamented, confessed, and forsaken in the very manner determined on by himself. His situation is in all respects as bad, and his character as unworthy as he supposes them. The views which he entertains of himself therefore are exactly agreeable to truth, and such as he is plainly bound to entertain. All views of himself and of his condition which are discordant with these would be contrary to truth, and a mere mass of falsehood. Of the same nature are the affections involved in evangelical repentance. They are the very affections which necessarily arise out of these views, and the only affections which in the penitent's case correspond with truth. Of course, they are plain and indispensable parts of his duty.

3. These observations teach us that repentance is absolutely necessary to salvation.

Without repentance the sinner would still continue to be a sinner; an enemy to holiness and to God, to happiness and to heaven. If he did not hate sin it would be physically impossible that he should forsake it, that he should love or practise holiness, that he should be cordially reconciled to God, that he should relish the happiness of heaven, or that he should desire or enjoy the friendship of virtuous beings. It would be impossible that he should receive Christ as his Saviour, trust in his righteousness for acceptance, love his character, or welcome his mediation. At the same time it would be morally impossible that God should receive or justify the sinner, unite him to his family, or restore him to his favour. To all these things repentance is plainly and absolutely indispensable.

The views which the penitent entertains of moral subjects, and the affections with which he regards them, prepare him, and are indispensably necessary to prepare him, to partake of the favour of God, the employments of holiness, and the blessings of redemption. Evangelical repentance is the beginning of moral health in the soul. At the commencement of its existence, the former evil, morbid principles begin to lose their hold, and to have their power diminished. The divine Physician then first achieves his victory over the moral diseases which were before incurable, and the balm of Gilead begins to restore its decayed and ruined faculties. From this moment immortal health, the life of heaven, returns to the languishing mind, health that cannot decay, life that cannot terminate, the youth of angels which cannot grow old, but is formed to increase, and bloom, and flourish for ever.

SERMON LXXVIII.

REGENERATION.—ITS ATTENDANTS.—LOVE.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love.—Gal. v. 22.

Having considered in preceding Discourses, faith in Christ and repentance unto life, the two first of those moral attributes which I called the attendants of regeneration; I shall now go on to examine the nature of the third and fourth of these attributes, viz. love to God, and love to mankind. As both these are only exercises of the same disposition directed towards different objects, I shall here consider them together; reserving a separate discussion of them to a future occasion. St Paul informs us that 'Love,' viz. the disposition mentioned in the text, 'is the fulfilling of the law;' that is, of the two great commands, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbour as thyself.' These commands constitute a primary part of a theological system, and will necessarily become a subject of particular investigation in the progress of these Discourses. They will therefore furnish an ample opportunity for the separate consideration of these two great exercises of love.

In examining this subject at the present time, it is my design,

I. *To exhibit the nature of this love;*

II. *To prove its existence.*

I. *I shall endeavour to exhibit the nature of evangelical love.*

1. The love of the gospel is a delight in happiness: or, in other words, good-will towards percipient beings, as capable of happiness.

Happiness is the object ultimately and always aimed at by the mind under the influence of this affection. As percipient beings are the only beings capable of happiness, the love of happiness is, of course, the love of percipient beings. Of these, intelligent beings are capable of so much greater and more important happiness than mere animals, as scarcely to allow of any comparison between them. The love of happiness, therefore, is supremely the love of intelligent beings. This accordingly has been assumed as a definition of love. It is not however metaphysically correct. 'A righteous' or virtuous 'man will,' as such 'regard the life,' and of course the happiness universally, 'of his beast;' and this, though a small, cannot fail to be a real object of his regard.

A delight in happiness, metaphysically considered, supposes it enjoyed, or already in possession. When it is not enjoyed, and yet is supposed to be possible, the same affection becomes, and is styled the desire of happiness. Whatever we delight in when present and possessed, we desire when absent, or unpossessed. The mind under the influence of this affection, therefore, while it rejoices in happiness actually enjoyed, necessarily wishes its existence wherever it is capable of being enjoyed.

1. This love of happiness is universal.

This proposition follows unavoidably from the former. If the mind delights in happiness as such, it is plain that this delight will exist wherever the happiness is found. If it desire happiness as such, this desire will be extended to every case in which it perceives that happiness may be enjoyed. The delight, therefore, will be co-extended with the knowledge which the mind at any given time possesses on actual enjoyment; and the desire, with its knowledge of possible enjoyment. So far then as the views of any mind in which this disposition exists extend, its love of happiness will be universal.

3. This love of happiness is just.

By this I intend, that the greater happiness, whether actual or possible, will be loved more, and the smaller happiness less. This also is inherent in the very nature of the affection. If the mind delight in happiness, it follows necessarily that this delight must increase as the object of it increases. For example; if it delight in the happiness of one being, it will equally delight in the same happiness of a second; in the same manner in that of a third; of a fourth, a fifth, a sixth, and so on in that of any given or supposable number. Or, should we suppose one of these beings to be happy in any given degree, and that happiness doubled, tripled, quadrupled, or increased in any other degree, the delight of such a mind in this object would be increased in the same proportion. I do not here intend that this affection will operate with the mathematical exactness here stated. I am well aware that such minds as ours are utterly incapable of operating with their affections in this perfect manner. This mode of illustration has been here used for the sake of exhibiting the general proposition in a manner clear and decisive, and if I mistake not, it unanswerably evinces the truth of the proposition.

In entire accordance with this doctrine we are commanded to 'love God with all the heart,' not only as an object of our complacency, but of our benevolence also. We are not only required to approve of his perfect character, but also to delight in his perfect happiness, or, as we more usually term it, blessedness. His perfect character is the cause of which his perfect happiness is the effect. The former it is our duty to reward with supreme complacency, the latter it is equally our duty to regard with supreme benevolence.

No less accordant with this disposition, also, is the second command of the same law. 'Our neighbour, that is, any and every individual of the human race, is the subject of the same happiness as ourselves. We are therefore required to 'love our neighbour as ourselves;' viz. because his happiness is of the same importance as our own; not indeed mathematically, but generally and indefinitely, as the words of the command import.

It is to be observed here, that benevolence is the only object of this command. The greater part of those who are included here, under the word 'neighbour, are wholly destitute of virtue in the evangelical sense. But towards any and all of these it is physically impossible to exercise complacency: this affection being no other than the love of such virtue.

4. This affection is disinterested.

If the preceding positions be allowed, this follows of course. Nothing is more evident than that the mind which loves happiness wherever it is, and in proportion to the degree in which it exists, must of course be disinterested. In other words, it must be without any partiality for its own enjoyment, or any preference of it to that of others. Its delight in the happiness enjoyed by others, will be the same with that which it finds in its own enjoyment; so far as it is able to understand and realize it in the same manner. We cannot, I acknowledge, either understand or feel the concerns of others in the same degree as our own; and from this imperfection would arise, even if our benevolence were perfect, a difference in our estimation of these objects, which so far as I see could not be avoided. But in cases not affected by this imperfect state of our minds, cases which even in this world are numerous, no reason can in my view be alleged why the estimation should not be the same. In a more perfect state of being, it is probable, the number of such cases may be so enlarged as to comprehend almost all the interests of intelligent creatures.

5. This love is an active principle.

By this I intend, that in its nature it controls all the faculties in such a manner as to engage them supremely in the promotion of the great object in which it delights. Of this truth we have the most abundant proof in the scriptural exhibitions of the character of God, of the Redeemer, and of those saints whose history they record. 'God,' saith St John, 'is love.' 'Every good gift,' saith St James, 'and every perfect gift, is from above; and cometh down from the Father of lights.' 'Nevertheless,' saith St Paul, 'he left himself not without witness; in that he did good, giving us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.' 'Thou art good,' says David, 'and dost good; and thy tender mercies are over all thy works.' 'Jesus Christ,' says St Peter, 'a man who went about doing good.' It is hardly necessary to observe, that the whole body of worthies presented to us in the Scriptures were in this respect 'followers of God, as dear children;' or that 'the same mind' was in them, 'which was also in Christ.' The Epistles of St Paul, particularly, and his whole history after his conversion, as given to us by St Luke, are one continued proof that this was his ruling character. The love which exists 'in word, and in tongue,' the Scriptures reprobate, and approve and enjoin that only which, in their emphatical language, exists 'in deed and truth.' We hardly need, however, look to this or any source for evidence concerning this subject. Love in all cases, so far as our experience extends, prompts him in whom it exists to promote the happiness of the object beloved. So plain is this to the eye of common sense, that no person believes love to exist in any mind, which does not labour to accomplish happiness for the object which it professes to love. Thus a parent who neglects the happiness of his children is universally pronounced not to love them; and thus persons professing friendship for others, and inattentive at the same time to their welfare, are with a single voice declared to be friends in pretence merely.

What is true in this respect of these natural affections, is altogether true of evangelical love. Its proper character is to 'do good as it has opportunity.'

6. This principle is the only voluntary cause of happiness.

The benevolence of intelligent creatures is the same in kind with the benevolence of God; and for this reason is styled 'the image of God.' But the benevolence of God is the single original cause, the sole as well as boundless source of all the happiness found in the creation. In the great design of producing this happiness, he has required intelligent creatures to co-operate with himself. Of their labours to this end, their own benevolence is the only immediate cause. Benevolence, therefore, in God and his intelligent creatures, considered as one united principle of action, is the only voluntary source of happiness in the universe. As, therefore, none but voluntary beings can produce or even contrive happiness, and as no voluntary beings except benevolent ones are active to this end, it is plain that happiness is ultimately derived from benevolence alone, and but for its exertions would never have existed.

7. This principle is one.

By this I intend, that the same love is exercised by a virtuous mind towards God, towards its fellow creatures, and towards itself. The affection is one. The difference in its exercise springs only from the difference of its objects. 'Love is the fulfilling of the law;' that is, one affection, exercised towards God and towards man, is alternately the fulfilling both of the first and second commandments. He who is the subject of one of these exercises is of course a subject of the other also. He who loves God loves mankind; he who loves mankind loves God. There are not two affections of the mind, in the strict and metaphysical sense, one of which is called love to God, or piety, and the other love to mankind, or benevolence: but there is one love, now exercised towards God, and now towards mankind.

II. *I shall now proceed to prove the existence of this principle.*

The evidence which I shall adduce for this purpose will be derived,

1. From the Scriptures;
2. From reason.

The first argument which I shall allege from the Scriptures is the moral law; 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart; and thy neighbour as thyself.'

I have already observed that benevolence, or love to happiness, or to intelligent beings as capable of happiness, is the object and the only object of the second of these commands. Should any doubt remain on this subject, it may easily be removed by the consideration, that our Saviour has taught us to consider our enemies, universally, as included under the word 'neighbour.' The enemies of a good man, knowing him to be such, are always wicked men; and, having no holiness or evangelical virtue, cannot, in the physical sense, be loved with complacency, or the love of virtue. The love of happiness, therefore, or benevolence, is the principle especially, if not only, enjoined in this law. Accordingly, our Saviour called the command, enjoining 'brotherly love,' that is, the love of his disciples towards each other, or, in other words, complacency, a 'new commandment.'

As the moral law, then, enjoins especially the love of happiness, that is, benevolence, so it evidently enjoins this disposition in a proportion corresponding with that which has been insisted on in this Discourse. We are required in it to 'love God with all our heart; and our neighbour as ourselves.' In other words, we are required to exercise this love proportionally to the importance or greatness of the object loved: supremely towards that object which is supremely great and important, and equally towards those objects whose importance is equal.

With this view of the law perfectly accords our Saviour's practical comment on the second command: 'Whatever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them; for this is the law and the prophets.' In this command our own equitable wishes for good to be done to ourselves, are made the measure of the good which we are bound to do them.

(2.) As another proof, I allege Luke vi. 32, 33, 35; 'For if ye love them that love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them. But love ye your enemies; and do good and lend, hoping for nothing again: and your reward shall be great; and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind to the unthankful and to the evil.'

In these declarations of our Saviour it is manifest, first, that the love which he enjoins, is disinterested love; for it is productive of beneficence without reference to a reward. Secondly; we learn from them, that even this is not sufficient to constitute the disinterestedness of the gospel: it is still farther required, that the benevolence shall operate towards enemies, overcoming all hostility towards those who hate us; requiring us, instead of being enemies, to become friends to our enemies; to render good for their evil, and blessing for their cursing. Unless we do this, we are elsewhere informed in the gospel, that we are not, and cannot be, 'the children of our Father, who is in heaven.' Thirdly; we are taught that the disposition with which we do good to others for the sake of gaining good at their hands, or the spirit with which we do good merely to those who do good to us, that is, selfishness in its fairest and most reputable form, neither merits nor will receive a reward, and is only the spirit of 'publicans and sinners.'

(3.) I allege as another proof the declaration of the apostle, 1 Cor. xiii. 5, 'Love seeketh not her own.'

In this declaration St Paul has asserted the disinterestedness of evangelical love, not only in the most explicit manner, but with the force peculiar to himself. Literally, he declares that love does not seek her own interest at all; but is so absorbed in her care for the common good, as to be wholly negligent of their personal concerns. This, however, I do not suppose to have been the meaning of the apostle. But he plainly intends, that this spirit is wholly destitute of any selfish character. Less than this it will, I think, be impossible to consider as meant by him in this passage.

With these three passages the whole volume of the Scriptures accords; and that these clearly determine the love required in the gospel to be the love of happiness—proportioned to the importance of the object loved—and disinterested in its nature, the points relative to this subject which are chiefly disputed, cannot, I think, be denied without violence.

To this decisive voice of revelation, reason adds its

own unqualified testimony; as I shall endeavour to show in the following observations:

1. The benevolence, which I have described, is the only equitable spirit towards God and our fellow creatures.

That the interests of God are inestimably more valuable than our own, will not be questioned by any man. This being allowed, it can no more be questioned that they deserve incomparably more regard than our own. Nor can it any more be doubted that the interests of our neighbour are, at a fair average, equally valuable with our own. The fact, that they are ours, certainly adds nothing to their value. For what then, it may be asked, can they be more valuable than those of our neighbour? God unquestionably regards them alike; and it will not be denied that he regards them equitable, and in the very manner in which we ought to regard them.

A public or common good, therefore, is more valuably and ought to be more highly regarded than the good of an individual, for this plain reason, that it involves the good of many individuals. This has ever been the only doctrine of common sense. In free countries particularly, where men have had the power as well as the right to act according to their own judgment, a majority of votes has always constituted a law; obviously because a majority of interests ought ever to be preferred to those of a minority, and still more to those of an individual. On the same principle, laws which consult the general good are ever pronounced to be right, although they may operate against the good of individuals. On the same principle only, are individuals required to devote their labour, their property, and at times their lives, for the promotion or security of the general welfare. Selfishness, on the contrary, which always prefers private good to public, would, if permitted to operate, produce an entire subversion of public good. All the views, affections, and operations of selfishness, are unjust; the interests of an individual being invariably estimated more highly by this disposition, and loved more intensely, than their comparative value can ever warrant. It can never be a just estimation which prefers the private good of one to the good of many, the interests of each of whom are just as valuable as those of that one; or which prefers the interests of man to those of God. If this estimation is right, and the regard with accompanies it, then God ought to give up his own kingdom, purposes, and pleasure, for the sake of the least of his intelligent creatures; and the good of the universe ought to be sacrificed to the good of one.

2. It is reasonable to suppose, that God would create, and that he has created intelligent creatures with this just disposition.

That there should nowhere exist in the intelligent kingdom a disposition regarding things according to their value, is a supposition too absurd in itself, and too dishonourable to the Creator, to be made by a sober man. Such a disposition, it is plain, must be more estimable and lovely to the eye of the divine mind than any other which is supposable. If, then, God made his works with a design to take pleasure in them, or to be glorified by them, he could not fail to give existence to such a disposition, unless it was because he was unable. But this will not be pretended. Such a disposition, therefore, certainly exists.

3. If there be no such disposition, there can be no pure or lasting happiness.

(1.) There is no original cause of happiness, but the action of minds. Minds are the only active beings in the universe. Matter, if eternal, must have been eternally quiescent. But minds never act to the production of that which they do not love. If then they did not love happiness, they could not act to the production of it. Of course, if God had not been benevolent, that is, if he had not loved happiness, he never could have produced it; nor created those beings who were to be made happy.

(2.) Without the same disposition, intelligent creatures could never produce happiness for each other. Under the divine government, happiness, in an endless variety of forms, is produced by intelligent creatures for each other. The degree in which their benevolent offices accomplish good for each other, is, to a finite eye, literally immense. But it is clearly evident, that if they were not benevolent, no part of this good would ever exist.

Should it be said, that creatures who are not benevolent do in fact produce happiness for each other in the present world; as is unanswerably manifest in the proper influence of natural affection, and various other attributes of the human mind: I answer, first, that all this happiness, like all other, is ultimately derived from the benevolence of God, and would have had no existence had he not possessed this disposition. Secondly, the happiness thus produced is far from being pure or lasting. Thirdly, natural affection is not an original and necessary attribute of a rational being, but has its origin and continuance in circumstances which may be termed accidental; and accordingly has no existence where those circumstances are not found. Fourthly, natural affection is an attribute of a benevolent as well as of a selfish being, and is therefore no part of selfishness. Fifthly, the Scriptures teach us, that even this good is not derived from the proper tendency of our selfish nature, but from a particular restraining influence of God on its proper operations, which either prevents their existence, or lessens their malignant efficacy. That the world is so comfortable as it actually is, is I apprehend the result of a mere act of mercy on the part of God, rather than of the genuine tendency of the human character. Finally, should all be allowed to this source which is claimed for it, the happiness which it yields is so mixed and so transient, as to form an exception to the doctrine which I am defending, too unimportant to deserve any serious attention.

(3.) There is no other disposition which is happy. The happiness inherent in a disposition is the enjoyment either experienced in the exercises of the disposition itself; or springing from the consciousness of its excellence; or resulting from a knowledge of the desirable nature of its consequences. Some of the exercises of selfishness are pleasant in themselves, and some in a knowledge of their consequences. Thus, pride is in a degree always pleasing to the proud man; pleasing, I mean, in its very nature. The same thing may be said also of the sensual appetites, whenever they are gratified. Some of them also are pleasant in the knowledge of their consequences; particularly those which respect fame, power, and property. But the pleasure furnished by all of them is in itself poor, transient, and mixed with no small pain and mortification. The pleasure furnished by our sensual appetites is also a part, not of a selfish, but of a merely animal nature; and so far as

it is temperately enjoyed, belongs equally to a benevolent as to a selfish being. Selfishness can here claim nothing as being peculiar to itself, except inordinate indulgence; and this is regularly a diminution of the enjoyment, and an accumulation of pain and sorrow. In the meantime, none of the affections of selfishness yield happiness from a consciousness of their nature and operations. They cannot be seen to be excellent, because they are all obviously evil and odious. They cannot be seen to be honourable, because they are all base and contemptible. Of course, the mind cannot approve of these affections, nor of itself while indulging them; but must condemn both them and itself for cherishing them as being vile and despicable.

A great part of the happiness enjoyed by intelligent beings arises from the knowledge that they are esteemed and loved by other intelligent beings. This is an enjoyment to which selfishness can make no claim, for no being can approve of selfishness. Whether it exists in himself or in others, it necessarily and always awakens contempt. The selfish man is therefore cut off by his very nature from this delightful enjoyment.

At the same time, this spirit produces, of course, evils immense in their number, and surpassing all finite estimation in their degree. Self-condemnation, the hatred and contempt of others, contentions, oppression, tyranny, war, and bloodshed; in a word, all the evils occasioned by man to himself, or to his fellow men, are uniformly and universally the effects of this disposition. No clearer proof can be reasonably demanded of its unhappy nature and miserable consequences, than the unceasing bitter complaints with which this world everywhere resounds; almost all of which terminate in the deplorable nature of this disposition, or its malignant efficacy on the interests of man. It cannot be believed, it cannot with decency be said, that God has formed a universe of intelligent creatures, and withheld from them all that disposition which alone is productive of happiness, and left them wholly to that which is the source of misery alone. That God made the universe with an intention to make it happy, and upon the whole to make it supremely happy, will be denied by gross infidels only. But it is plain that this end would be impossible, unless he should give to intelligent creatures this disposition.

4. This is the only disposition which can be approved or loved by God.

(1.) It is the only disposition which is like that of God. But all beings approve and love that in others, which they approve and love in themselves. God approves and loves himself for his benevolence. Of course, he cannot but approve and love the same disposition in his intelligent creatures; and, by unavoidable consequence, must equally hate that which is of an opposite nature.

(2.) It is the only disposition which can voluntarily become the means of his glory. It has been already seen that benevolence is the only fulfilment of the law. It was formerly shown, and is abundantly evident that this disposition, and no other, voluntarily coincides with him in promoting the great end of all his works; viz. the happiness of his immense kingdom. But it is plain, that this voluntary coincidence of his intelligent creatures he must necessarily approve and love; approbation and love being in every such case inseparable from an intelligent nature. All beings, and God as truly as any other, love of course a voluntary coincidence with their favourite designs, and necessarily approve of it also, whenever the designs themselves receive their approbation.

(3.) It is the only amiable disposition. There is nothing amiable beside the voluntary promotion of happiness, and those minds which voluntarily promote it. But benevolence is the only disposition, and the minds in which it exists are the only beings, by which happiness is voluntarily promoted. These therefore are not only amiable, but the only things in the universe which are amiable in any serious degree.

But to suppose that God has not created such beings in the universe as he can approve and love, such beings as voluntarily become the instruments of his glory, such beings as in their nature and efforts show, incomparably more than all others, his wisdom and goodness as the Creator of all things, is an absurdity too monstrous to be admitted by a sober man.

I shall only add to the proofs already alleged, that the existence of this disposition is unanswerably evinced by facts, partly disclosed by revelation, and partly obvious to reason.

God, as was shown in a former Discourse, is infinitely benevolent, and wholly disinterested. Christ has also been proved to sustain the same character. That 'the same mind' was in the apostles, 'which was also in Christ,' cannot be disputed, nor can it reasonably be disputed that it is possessed by every good man, and is that which constitutes the excellence of his character.

REMARKS.

1. If these things be true, it is manifest that evangelical religion is a very different thing from what it has been very frequently supposed.

Evangelical benevolence is the sum and substance of evangelical religion: that which, entering into faith and repentance, renders them excellent and lovely in the sight of God. It has its seat in the heart only, and not in external conduct, nor in the understanding. It is therefore totally different from all the external worship and the external actions sometimes termed moral, of the superstitious or merely moral man; from the rhapsodies, visions, and pretended revelations of the enthusiast; and from the speculative faith and the enlarged understanding of the mere philosopher.

2. From these observations also it is evident, that the religion of the Bible is as noble, as divine, as could be expected in a revelation from God.

The disposition required of mankind by their Creator, as the amount of all that which he chooses them to be, must be supposed to accord in some good measure with the excellence and dignity of his own nature. If therefore in a book professing to be a revelation from him, we should find the contrary character, viz. one which was chiefly useless, and destitute of dignity and worth, demanded as the sum of human duty, this fact would greatly weaken, nay, it would wholly destroy, its pretensions to be a revelation from God. But, if the character required in such a book should be wholly pure, noble, and excellent; should this book be at the same time the only one which either disclosed or required such a character, and should every thing contained in it perfectly accord with the requisition, strong presumption would be furnished in this manner, that it was indeed a revelation from God. Such is the character required in the Scriptures.

3 How desirable is that change of heart to which this disposition in man owes its existence.

Who, with calm and just consideration of this subject, would not rejoice to be delivered from a narrow-minded, partial, bigoted, envious, proud, avaricious, malignant, temper; and to become the subject of a benevolent, sincere, disinterested, pious, and expansive disposition, inclined to all good, and effectually prepared to love and to promote, as well as to enjoy it? a disposition the same with that of the 'general assembly of the first born;' the same with that of angels; the same with that of Christ; the same with that of God? All real and enduring good commences within the soul. This disposition is itself that commencement, the beginning of all noble pursuits and dignified enjoyments, the means of insuring peace and joy within and without, of securing the love of all virtuous and excellent beings, and of gaining the favour and complacency of God. It fits us to live eternally, eternally to do good to our fellow creatures, to improve and benefit ourselves, and to glorify our Maker and Redeemer for ever. Eternal life, beauty, and happiness, in itself, it is the source of all other happiness, and peculiarly of the happiness and glory of heaven.

4. How manifest is the wisdom of God in effectuating and requiring this excellent disposition.

Benevolence is to the intelligent universe what attraction is to the material one; the power which holds the parts together, and unites them in one immense and incomprehensible system. In accomplishing this end, it first forms them of such a character as renders them capable of this union; a spirit expansive, harmonious, discerning the universal good, and delighting in it with complacency supreme and eternal. Each member of this great kingdom it attaches to each, and all to God. Each it prepares to understand and to love his own place, allotments, and enjoyments, and to be equally satisfied with the stations and circumstances of others. These universally he knows are determined by wisdom which cannot err, and by benevolence which cannot injure, in such a manner as most perfectly to accomplish, the supreme good of each and of all. This good he prefers to every other; in this he unceasingly rejoices; to the accomplishment of this he consecrates all his powers. Whatever coincides with it he approves, whatever voluntarily promotes it he loves. To every such being he is bound by this great 'bond of perfection,' perfectly binding together all perfect beings.

God, at the head of this amazing kingdom, he sees labouring with infinite power and goodness to accomplish this mighty purpose, and rejoices that these perfections insure its certain accomplishment. His virtuous creatures also he beholds honourably and delightfully employed as voluntary agents and instruments in the same exalted designs. To love and do this is equally his glory, and their excellence and beauty. To both, therefore, he is inseparably and eternally united with an attachment which nothing can sunder, nothing weaken; by bands which improve and strengthen for ever.

This divine union includes alike every member of the great system of virtue. In Jehovah it unites him with infinite attachment to his children. In them, it unites all as one vast family to him, with an attachment occupying all the faculties of the soul. He is the sun; they the worlds and systems, which with perfect harmony move around him, attracting and being attracted, enlightening and reflecting light, enjoying and being enjoyed. With a perpetual emanation, his glory informs, pervades, and animates the whole; while the respective stars, differing indeed from each other, are yet all really glorious, and shine with immortal beauty and lustre.

This system of good, selfishness aims and attempts to destroy. The atoms which when joined together formed worlds and systems of usefulness and beauty, it finally separates by annihilating the attracting influence which held them together. No longer drawn to their great centre, no longer united to each other, they recede continually from God, and light, and good, and from all future connexion with the intelligent universe. The soul ceases from its union to its Maker, and becomes a stranger to its fellow creatures. Deserting voluntarily all social beings, and by all deserted, it is henceforth alone, separated, and solitary in the universe; a wanderer beyond the limits of the virtuous creation, moves only to disorder, and operates only to mischief; a dishonour henceforth to its Creator, and a nuisance to his intelligent kingdom.

How infinitely important is it, then, that this glorious principle of love should exist; that it should be effectuated by God; and that it should be required by the solemn authority, the supreme sanctions of that law, by which, throughout immensity and eternity, he governs the universe of virtuous beings.

SERMON LXXIX.

REGENERATION.—ITS ATTENDANTS.—CONSISTENCY OF BENEVOLENCE WITH PROVIDING PECULIARLY FOR OUR OWN.

But if any provide not for his own, especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.—1 Tim. v. 8.

In the last Discourse I attempted to explain the nature, and to prove the existence of disinterested love. To this doctrine there have been many objections, as there have also been to every other peculiar doctrine of the Scriptures. It is now my design to consider some of the principal.

None of these objections is more frequently made, or made with stronger appearances of confidence, than the following: "That, if we are required to love others as ourselves, we are of course, required also to do as much for them as for ourselves; to make the same provision for their wants, and to take the same effectual care of their concerns. The Scriptures," say the objectors, "inform us, that love, existing merely 'in word and in tongue,' is not the love which they require, nor at all the object of their approbation; that, as it is productive of no real good to others, it is clearly of no value. The love which they require, is that which exists 'in deed and in truth;' which, being the source of solid good, is necessarily the object of rational esteem. If, then, we are required to love, we are of course required to perform the actions which flow from love, and which prove its reality and sincerity. If therefore we are required to love in any given degree, we are required also to perform the actions which flow from it in that degree. If we are to love others as ourselves, we are bound to do for them the same things which we are bound to do for ourselves."

I can easily suppose this objection to be made with soberness and conviction. The reasoning by which it is supported has a fair appearance, and cannot be denied to be specious. It deserves therefore a sober consideration, and a rational answer. Such an answer I will endeavour to give; and will attempt to show, that the conclusion drawn from this reasoning by the objector is disproved by the very principles on which it is founded; by the very nature of disinterested love, when considered in connexion with the circumstances of the present world. To this end, I observe,

I. *That whenever the conduct proposed is physically impossible, it cannot be our duty.*

This assertion will be denied by no man. It can no more be denied that it excludes from our active beneficence a very great proportion of the human race; viz. all or almost all those who are remote from us, and a very great proportion of those who are near to us. From doing good to the former we are prevented by distance of place. From doing good to very many of the latter we are equally prevented by their multitude; the number being so great that we cannot benefit all, unless we give up the duty of being really useful to any.

It ought however to be here remarked, that all men can exercise a benevolent spirit towards all men, and can supplicate blessings for all in their prayers. It is also to be observed, that some persons can extend their acts of kindness very far, to distant nations and to distant ages; particularly those who are eminently qualified to instruct and inform mankind by their writings; and those who regulate the affairs of nations, and thus seriously affect the state of the world. I need not say how few of the human race are included in both these classes.

II. *Wherever this conduct would frustrate the great end of benevolence by lessening human happiness, it cannot be our duty.*

It will not be pretended that the law which requires us to exercise benevolence, or the love of doing good, requires us also to act in such a manner as to prevent the existence of that good. That this would be necessarily the effect of the conduct proposed by the objector, will be evident from the following considerations:—

1. If the affairs, interests, and duties of mankind were all thrown, as according to the objection they must be thrown, into a common stock, there would be little or no good done to any.

The mass of concerns would be immense, could never be comprehended by the mind of man, and could therefore never be arranged into any order or method. But without such arrangement there could be no knowledge of what would be necessary, useful, or desirable. Without such knowledge the interests of men could never be so disposed as to be pursued with any advantage. Without such knowledge the duties of men would never be wrought into such a system as to be understood by him who directed the efforts of others, much less could they be understood by those who are to make the efforts, or, in other words, to perform the active duties of society.

A small mass of ideas easily becomes too complex an object for the mind distinctly to comprehend, until these ideas are arranged in a regular scheme. Without such arrangement, the human capacity is too limited to think with any clearness or success, wherever the objects of thought are even moderately numerous. But, in the case proposed, the number of objects in the affairs of a single town would be exceedingly numerous, and would wholly surpass the utmost comprehension of man.

In consequence of our want of capacity to comprehend and methodize these concerns, they would lie in a state of universal disorder and confusion, and all would of course go to ruin. Instead of the good which is now contrived and done, there would be comparatively nothing done or contrived. Instead of the abundant food and raiment, instead of the comfortable habitations, the extensive instructions, and the multiplied kind offices, now furnished by mankind to themselves, and each other, none of these things would be supplied, nor any thing else which is useful, nor indeed any thing else which is necessary. Mankind, on the contrary, would be houseless, hungry, and naked, and in endless multitudes would perish with famine, heat, and frost.

Besides, every kind of human business is imperfectly done, and to little purpose, when it is done in the gross, compared with what is accomplished when it is separated into parts, and these are severally distributed to different hands. In this case the whole business is rendered simple, easy to be understood, and easy to be accomplished. In this manner every thing is done much more expeditiously and more perfectly. Much more is therefore done; and that which is done, being better done, will answer a much better purpose. Such has been the regular progress of things in all civilized nations, and it has ever borne an exact proportion to the degree of their improvement. The business of life has thus been actually and sedulously divided, wherever considerable designs have been skilfully carried on. In this manner the effects of human industry (or the business actually done) have been increased beyond what the most sanguine mind could imagine. One man, for example, to whom the whole business of making so simple a thing as a pin was allotted, could hardly finish twenty in a day. Ten men, dividing the several parts of the business among them, can easily finish more than forty-eight thousand. What is true of this subject is true in different degrees of all human business, and extends to the ship, the manufactory, and the farm, with an influence generally the same.

2. It is indispensable to the accomplishment of hu-

man concerns, that the division of human industry should be voluntary.

Force and pleasure are the only causes by which men have been induced to labour. Under a free government force cannot be applied to this end, nor except very imperfectly, under a despotic one. Even where it is thus applied, it is so far unavailing, as to reduce the quantity and value of that which is done by slaves, or men compelled to labour, to one-half, one-third, or one-fourth, of that which is voluntarily done by the same number of freemen. A single family at the head of one hundred slaves will easily consume all that is produced by the labour of those slaves; while that of an equal number of freemen would amply support five-and-twenty families. From these observations it is plain, that if the voluntary industry now exerted were to cease, and forced labour to be substituted for it, one-half, two-thirds, or three-fourths, of human enjoyments now furnished by voluntary industry would at once be lost by mankind.

Industry becomes voluntary only by the agreeableness of the employment chosen; or on account of the reward which it secures; or, what is more commonly the fact, by both. The nature of the employment is often so important in this respect, that no reward can ever reconcile many persons to the employments in which they are placed by their parents, or induce them to acquire the skill which is necessary to success. Were we generally forced to our employments, we should find this generally the fact, and the whip would be almost as necessary to compel our industry, as it ever has been to compel that of slaves. Were it possible to manage a world in this manner, the result would still be the general diffusion of poverty, suffering, and depopulation. On the contrary, plenty, ease, and comfort, nay, convenience and even luxury are the regular result of voluntary industry in all countries enjoying the common blessings of Providence.

3. In this very manner God has divided the business of mankind, by separating them into families.

By the separation of mankind into families God has distributed their business in such a manner, that a little part is placed in every hand which is capable of managing business at all; such a part, and such only, as each can easily comprehend, and easily accomplish. Human business is therefore so divided here, that it can be done, and done with ease, expedition, and success.

At the same time the division is perfectly voluntary; the employment in every case being ordinarily chosen by the individual for himself. The situation also in which he is placed, and the partner with which he is connected in life, are both objects of his choice; and these facts, united with the common rewards of industry, furnish all the reasons which can usually exist to render it cheerful and efficacious.

This division is the best possible, because it is the simplest and the easiest possible; the result of mere nature, requiring the intervention of no force, law, or human contrivance; because it extends throughout the world, over every age and nation, in the same easy and perfect manner; because it exists every where through mere propensity, without any contention and without any difficulty. It is the best, because it has been thoroughly tried, and has been always found peacefully and happily to accomplish the end in view. No attack has been able to change its course, no circumstances to check its progress. It is the best, because it is the establishment of God himself; the result of his perfect wisdom and goodness: and an honourable proof of these attributes in its Author. In perfect accordance with these observations it has ever proved the means of producing necessaries to the whole race of Adam; comfort and convenience to most; and to not a small number wealth, luxury, and splendour.

4. The division of the world into families is of immense utility to mankind, as it generates natural affection.

Natural affection is solely the result of natural relations; and almost all these are originated by the family state. With every other distribution of mankind which can be substituted for this they are wholly incompatible.

The importance of natural affection to the human race is incalculable. It resists in a great degree the tendency of mere and absolute selfishness, expands and softens the heart, excites and nourishes sympathy and compassion, and prevents the world from becoming a mere seat of clashing, violence, and cruelty. The attachment which natural affection forms in men towards the members of their families, ultimately extends itself also to their habitations and farms, and by an easy process reaches their country, laws, government, and nation. All men without it would in the end become mere vagabonds and outcasts, thieves and robbers.

To prevent these evils, it would seem, God implanted in us this singular propensity of our nature; a propensity highly useful when we are virtuous; and indispensable to our peace and comfort while we are sinful. In the absence of virtue it is the only tie which effectually binds mankind together.

5. By the institution of families, preparation is effectually made for the preservation, support, and education of children.

The truth of this proposition, and the manner in which it is accomplished, will naturally be the themes of a future Discourse, in which I propose more extensively to handle this subject. Suffice it now to say, that but for this institution children would neither be loved, nor preserved, nor educated. The substance of all education is the establishment of good habits. Habits extend alike to the body and mind; and equally influence our thoughts and affections, our language and conduct. Without them, nothing in the human character, or human life, is efficacious, permanent, or useful. To establish them therefore in the morning of life, is the great business of all wise and well directed education. But habits are formed only by the frequent and long-continued repetition of the same measures; and nothing ever becomes habitual, except that which has been long and often repeated. To accomplish such repetition, nothing will suffice but the steady affection of married parents; that is, so far as useful and moral purposes are concerned. Of course, but for this institution, children would never be habitually trained to industry, to economy, to submission, or to good order; nor to sweetness of disposition, tenderness of affection, amiableness of manners, offices of kindness, or any other useful conduct. Of course, when they were not left to perish, they would grow up without knowledge, useful principles, or useful habits; without the knowledge or love of good order; without amiableness, and without worth. Of course, they would become mere beasts of prey. Not only would civilized life, with all its arts

and improvements, with all the blessings of rational freedom and good government, with all the superior blessings of morality and religion, vanish from under heaven; but new horrors would be added to the society of savages. The world would become one vast den, and all its inhabitants would be changed into wolves and tigers.

6. Were the affairs of mankind thrown together in a common stock (according to the scheme of the objector), as all would know that every man was entitled alike to the fruit of the labours of all, none would labour except for the present moment.

Neither inclination nor duty will ever prompt any man to labour for another, who, while equally able, will not labour for himself. That inclination will not produce this effect, I need not attempt to prove; that duty will not, is alike the decision of the Scriptures and common sense. 'He that will not work, neither let him eat,' is equally the judicial sentence of both.

In the present state of man, amid all the advantages furnished to industry by education, habit, example, and reward, the number of idlers is not small. In the proposed state, it would include the whole number of the human race. There would therefore be originally no disposition to labour. Should we, however, suppose some tendencies of this nature to exist, a complete discouragement would be thrown on all, by the knowledge that the proper reward of every industrious effort would either be wholly prevented, or snatched away by the hands of those who would not labour at all. Of course, mere necessaries, such as food and clothes, habitations and fuel, would be provided only in the degree which absolute necessity demanded, even by those who were industriously inclined. What then could become of the rest? Plainly, where they did not plunder, they would perish.

As therefore necessaries only would be provided, and even these only in the most stinted manner, it is evident that all the comforts of men would vanish at once. All the blessings of civilized life, its knowledge, arts, refinement, and religion, would cease to exist. There would be neither schools nor churches; for none would be inclined or able to build them. There would be neither instructors nor ministers, neither legislators nor magistrates. Law, protection, and justice, learning and religion, together with a host of blessings which they lead in their train, would visit the world no more.

7. All the duties of man respect especially the objects which he best knows; those particularly which are most, and most commonly, within his reach; and to which he can most frequently and effectually extend his beneficence.

Man owes more to the poor in his neighbourhood, to his neighbours, generally, to the town and the country in which he lives, than to others. The reason is obvious. It is in his power to do them more good, and God has placed him where he is, that he may do this very good. For the same reason he owes more to his own family, because he can do more good to the members of it than to any other equal collection of mankind.

As therefore it is the indispensable duty of all men to do the most good in their power, and as this is the direct dictate, the genuine tendency, of benevolence, so it is certain, that the division of mankind into families furnishes the fairest, and the only fair, foundation for accomplishing this purpose in a successful manner. On any other supposable plan, instead of increasing the efficacy of benevolence, or multiplying the enjoyments of mankind, we should in a great measure cramp the former and destroy the latter.

REMARKS.

1. From these observations it is evident, that no objection lies, from the nature of benevolence, against this great requisition of the gospel.

From the considerations which have been alleged it is manifest, that the arrangement of mankind into families is the foundation of more possible and more actual good than could be accomplished by any other means; of more, if man were perfectly disinterested, and yet possessed of his present limited capacity; of incalculably more, as man really is—a selfish, fallen creature. At the same time infinitely more evil is prevented. The gospel therefore has directed the efforts of human benevolence in the best manner, and so, that they may be truly said to be employed with the highest advantage.

At the same time, the wisdom of God is strongly manifested in furnishing every individual of the human race with so desirable a field for the exercise of his benevolence. In each case this field is at his door, always within his reach, easily comprehended, necessarily delightful, ever inviting and ever rewarding his labours. At the same time, it is sufficiently wide to employ and exhaust all his contrivance, and all his active powers. Nowhere else could he do so much good; and the utmost which he can do can be done here. This field is also provided for every man. Objects of beneficence are furnished to him of course, and for all those objects an efficient benefactor is supplied. Thus, in the simplest of all modes, is provision effectually made for the beneficence of all, and the comfort of all.

At the same time this happy arrangement becomes of course the foundation of the happiest distribution of mankind into larger societies, and the means of uniting to them, in the strongest and most enduring manner, the attachment of the individuals. He, therefore, whose superior powers and opportunities enable him to extend the offices of good-will beyond this little field, has one which is wider always spread around him, where these superior powers may always be advantageously employed. This more extended scene of usefulness is a mere appendage to the other. Were there no families, there would be no country; were there no little spheres of beneficence, there would be no great ones; and were good-will not exercised first towards those who are near, it would never be extended to those who are distant. The kindness learned by the fire-side, and practised towards the domestic circle, is easily spread by him who is invested with sufficient talents through a country, or extended over a world.

2. These observations clearly show the folly of Godwin's system of human perfectibility.

This wretched apostle of atheism, with a weakness exceeded only by his audacity, has undertaken, in form, to show himself wiser than his Maker. For this purpose he has boldly declared marriage to be an unjust monopoly, and the institution of families to be the means of preventing the happiness and perfection of man. Of this perfection a promiscuous concubinage, and a community of labours and of property are, in his opinion, essential constituents. Nor has the whole concurring experience of mankind, invariably opposed to his doctrines, been sufficient to awaken him from his

dreaming speculations to sober thought, and the exercise of common sense. This system, if it may be called such, this crude gathering together of ideas into a mob, he professedly founds on the doctrine of disinterested good-will; and these he professes to be the genuine consequences of this glorious principle. Were they indeed its consequences, every good man would be struck with amazement and horror; for they would undoubtedly annihilate all the comfort, peace, and hopes of mankind. That benevolence, which is the only virtue, would prove the most fruitful and efficacious cause of absolute destruction of all human good; and its glorious character, instead of being the voluntary cause of happiness, would be exchanged for that of being only and fatally the voluntary cause of misery.

Who, for example, would labour, if he were uncertain that he should enjoy the fruit of his efforts; much more, if he were assured that he should not enjoy it? What multitudes now refuse to labour when completely secure of all its products! Were this stimulus to industry taken away, the exertions of man would terminate in a moment, and the world would become the seat of universal inexertion and idleness. The food, clothes, and other comforts now brought into existence by the toil of man, are barely sufficient to supply his immediate wants. All the food annually produced is annually consumed. Multitudes are scantily supplied; while always some, and in particular seasons great numbers, even in industrious and fruitful countries, perish with hunger. Suppose half the labour by which food is furnished were to cease, what would be the consequence? The answer cannot be mistaken. Multitudes must immediately die, and still greater multitudes perish by gradual suffering and lingering want. The young, particularly, the infirm, the feebler sex, together with all those unaccustomed to labour at all, or unacquainted with that kind of labour by which food is produced, must, where they did not subsist by plundering others, become speedily victims to famine. Within the period of a single generation, the present population of the globe would be reduced to that of an American wilderness. China, India, and Europe would be emptied at once. The arts of life, the knowledge, the order, the safety, the refinement, the humanity, the morals, and the religion of civilized society would vanish; and hunting, and scouting, and pawawing be substituted in their stead. The regions which are now beautified with verdant fields, and enriched with luxuriant harvests, whose hills and plains are adorned with cheerful villages and splendid cities, in which thousands of churches invite mankind to the worship of God, and ten thousands of schools allure their children to knowledge and improvement; would become a vast Patagonian desert, gloomily set with here and there a solitary wigwam, wandered over at times by the prowling foot of a savage, and, when undisturbed by the war-whoop, the shrieks of terror, or the groans of suffering, hushed into the universal sleep of silence and death. That such would be the fact is certain, because, where property has for a length of time continued unsafe, it has all regularly existed.

One-half of the story, however dismal the recital may seem, has not yet been told. The very savages have families, and provide for them with no little care. We must sink below the Patagonian, who performs this duty, to find either the character or the circumstances of those who do not. The savages, in many instances at least, are chaste; in all, are the subjects of natural affection; and feel strong attachments to their friends and their nation. These means of comfort, these last hopes of virtue, the philosopher whom I have mentioned proposes to destroy. In their stead he leaves nothing but the fierce and brutal passions of men, sanctioned by the voice of philosophy, and legalized by the decrees of legislation. These passions and appetites wholly unrestrained, because thus legalized and sanctioned, would originate, direct, and control all the future conduct of men. What these passions would dictate, we know from what they have always dictated. What they would accomplish, we know from what, when let loose, they have heretofore accomplished. If any man is at a loss on this subject, he may find a faint image of what he seeks, in a den of thieves or a horde of banditti. To complete the picture, let him cast his eye onward to a lair of wild beasts, and a sty of swine. With all these objects in view, he would find a faint image of the degraded, ferocious, guilty, suffering state of this miserable world, accomplished by these Godwinian means of perfection. Virtue itself, therefore, according to the scheme of this writer, would become the cause of exterminating all virtue from the breast of man, as well as of rooting all enjoyment out of the present world.

3. We have here a specimen of the success with which human philosophy directs the moral concerns of mankind.

The Scriptures have required us to 'love our neighbour as ourselves;' and have directed the application of this principle in such a manner as to give it its utmost efficacy, and to produce by means of it the greatest mass of human good. 'God,' says Dryden, 'never made his work for man to mend.' A philosopher, laying hold on this principle and understanding it only in the gross, has undertaken to direct its application anew, and in a manner better suited to his own feelings. The consequence (as we have seen) is, the gold is changed into dross in a moment, the food into poison. That, which as the Scriptures taught and directed it, nay, that which left to itself, to its own inherent tendencies, would produce nothing but happiness, would, as taught by this infidel philosopher, destroy all the good of man. The benevolence of the Scriptures would make heaven; that of Godwin would produce a hell. Such are the effects of human philosophy when, resisting the ordinance of God, and forgetting that 'the foolishness of God is wiser than men,' she boldly interferes with the system of his truth and providence. The scene before her 'is as the garden of Eden,' filled with life, beauty, and happiness; brilliant and glorious as is the heaven-devised landscape, and fraught as Paradise with 'every thing good for food,' or 'pleasant to the eye.' She is still unsatisfied with her allotted condition, and with the scheme of her destined enjoyment. Not desirous of becoming, but conscious of having already become, 'as gods, knowing good and evil,' she puts forth her presumptuous hand, and, resolved to add to her stock of blessings such as she knows to be prohibited, seizes in an evil hour the forbidden good. How wonderful, how distressing the change! In a moment the fascinating scene has vanished; and Paradise, with all its beauty, happiness, and splendour, has fled for ever. Where bloomed the tree of life, and flowed the waters of immortality, nothing remains but a world 'of thorns and briers,' an immeasurable waste of sorrow and death.

SERMON LXXX.

REGENERATION.—ITS ATTENDANTS—CONSISTENCY OF BENEVOLENCE WITH SEEKING SALVATION.

Who will render to every man according to his deeds: to them who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory, and honour, and immortality, eternal life.—Rom. ii. 6, 7.

In the last Discourse I considered one favourite objection against the doctrine of disinterested love; viz. 'If we are required to love others as ourselves, we ought to do as much for them as for ourselves: particularly, we ought to make the same provision for them and their families, which we are bound to make for ourselves and our families.'

This objection, I endeavoured to show, is so far from being grounded in truth, or from being a general consequence from the doctrine of disinterested love, that, as the world is constituted, love dictates the contrary conduct. Disinterested love prompts those who possess it to produce the greatest mass of happiness in their power. But the scheme proposed, instead of producing more happiness, would destroy that which now exists, and subvert whatever is desirable in the present state of things.

In this Discourse I propose to consider another plausible objection against this doctrine, viz. that 'we are commanded to seek eternal life, as the proper reward of our faith and obedience; and that this reward is promised to those who believe and obey by God himself.' This command, and this promise (it is alleged), being given by God himself, cannot be denied to be right. That we ought, therefore, to seek for everlasting life, must, of course, be admitted. But this (it is asserted), is aiming at a reward; is a conduct springing from self-love; and is not disinterested. 'It follows then,' say the objectors, 'either that disinterested love is not required in the Scriptures; or that the requisitions of the Scriptures are inconsistent with each other.' This objection, it will be observed, lies in the conclusion only. The premises are just and true. If the conclusion follows, I will give up the doctrine.

Lord Shaftesbury formerly advanced, with great labour and parade, a similar doctrine, but for a very different purpose. He maintained that disinterestedness is virtue, and the only virtue. At the same time he denied that it could consist with any hope of reward, or any fear of punishment. These, he declared, made virtue mercenary, mean, and selfish. True virtue, according to his scheme, consists wholly in doing good for the sake of that good; for the pleasure found in the good done, considered by itself, and wholly unconnected with any consequences, without any regard to advantages arising from it, or to disadvantages springing from the contrary conduct.

This celebrated writer, it is true, teaches elsewhere the opposite doctrine; and asserts, that 'all the obligation to be virtuous arises from its advantages, and from the disadvantages attendant upon vice; and that such advantages are a great security and support to virtue.' These, and other things of the like nature, he declares with no less confidence than the former opinions. It would be easy therefore to refute him by his own declarations. But this, though it might answer the purposes of mere controversy, would not satisfy a Christian audience. Were infidels required to be consistent with themselves, they never would appear in the field of debate.

The conclusion which Lord Shaftesbury drew from his principle was, that 'the Scriptures, so far as they have influence, annihilate, by threatenings and promises, all virtue.' Hence he inferred, and, as it would seem, in his own view irresistibly, that 'the Scriptures cannot be the word of God.' Both these views of this interesting subject are, I apprehend, radically erroneous, and founded in false and imperfect conceptions of disinterested love.

In the text it is declared that 'to those who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory, honour, and immortality, God will render,' as a reward, 'eternal life.' To seek for glory, and immortality, therefore, is in a high degree pleasing to God; and must of course be truly and eminently virtuous conduct. If this conduct consists with disinterestedness, and arises from it, it must be acknowledged, on the one hand, that disinterestedness is not impeached by the objection already recited; and on the other, that the Scriptures, while they require and encourage us to seek eternal life, do not render virtue mercenary, nor destroy, nor in any degree lessen, either virtue itself, or the obligations to virtue.

Before I enter upon the direct proof of this doctrine, it ought to be remarked that the scheme of Lord Shaftesbury confutes itself. His favourite doctrine is, that virtue consists wholly in doing good for its own sake, without any regard to any advantage which may follow from it, or to any disadvantage which may arise from a contrary conduct; such regard being, in his view, a destruction of virtue. Now let me ask, What is the difference between doing good for the sake of the pleasure attending it, and doing good for the sake of the pleasure following it? According to Lord Shaftesbury, virtue consists in doing good for the sake of the pleasure which it furnishes. Suppose then the virtuous action to be done now, and the pleasure furnished by it to be enjoyed an hour hence, or to-morrow. Would it be in any sense more mercenary to do the action for the sake of enjoying this pleasure an hour hence, or to-morrow, supposing the pleasure to be the same, than for the sake of enjoying it at the time when the action is done? The pleasure, according to the supposition, is the same in kind and degree. Can it then be any more or less virtuous, to be thus influenced by a pleasure which will exist an hour hence, or to-morrow, than by the same pleasure existing at the present moment?

The truth in this case undoubtedly is, that it is neither more nor less virtuous to be influenced in the same manner and degree, by the same kind and degree of pleasure, found in the same object, whether the pleasure is to be experienced at one time, or at another. The nature of the pleasure which is enjoyed, and the nature of the object whence it is derived, render the action in which that pleasure is sought either virtuous or not virtuous. If we take pleasure in happiness wherever it is enjoyed, and in promoting it wherever this is in our power, if, at the same time, this pleasure is proportioned to the happiness enjoyed or promoted, we are of course the subjects of virtue; and that just so far as the pleasure is experienced. The time at which it is experienced is here evidently of no consequence, and cannot even remotely affect the subject. If then it is mercenary, mean, and selfish to be influenced by this pleasure expected at a future time, it is equally selfish, mean, and mercenary to be influenced by the same pleasure expected at the time when the action is performed.

That the pursuit of eternal life is wholly consistent with the nature of disinterested love, I shall now attempt to show by the following considerations:

1. Our happiness is a desirable object, and deserves to be sought in a certain degree.

Our happiness is in this respect exactly of the same nature with that of others; is as truly desirable, and as really deserves to be promoted, as that of any created beings whatever. In whatever degree it exists, it ought to be delighted in; in whatever degree it is capable of existing, it ought to be desired. As the fact, that it is our happiness, renders it no more valuable than that of others; so, plainly, it does not render it at all less valuable. It claims, therefore, to be promoted on the same grounds as any other happiness of the same value. As it is intrusted to our own peculiar care, it demands more from us, as that of others does from them. For ourselves we can do more than we can for others, and this of course is our duty.

2. Neither our present nor future happiness is necessarily inconsistent with that of others.

All the good which God has made it lawful for us to enjoy in this world is consistent with the good of others. Whenever it is promoted, therefore, there is a direct increase of the general happiness. To produce this effect is the great duty and dictate of benevolence, and must of course be right.

Our eternal good cannot fail to be consistent with the good of the universe. 'God has no pleasure in the death of the sinner; but would rather that he would repent and live.' Accordingly, 'he hath commanded all men everywhere to repent.' What he has thus commanded cannot but be right in itself. Accordingly, he hath directed that our 'prayers and supplications should be made for all men.'

What the Scriptures thus teach, reason wholly approves. We are all made capable of happiness. This capacity was not given in vain, but was intended to be supplied. Every man, who thinks soberly at all, feels, and acknowledges accordingly, that he is bound to promote, as much as in him lies, the happiness of every other man, both present and future; and no man would fail to be self-condemned if he were to indulge a wish, or even a willingness, that any one of his fellow creatures should be miserable hereafter. Nay, indifference to this subject would not fail of being followed by severe reproaches of conscience. But what it is the duty of all men thus to wish and to seek, what no man can oppose, or regard with indifference without guilt, it is peculiarly his duty to wish and seek for himself; both because the accomplishment of this work is committed to him by his Maker, and because this work can be done by him more effectually than by any other.

3. We are commanded to 'love our neighbour as ourselves;' that is, generally and indefinitely, as well as ourselves; and of course are at least equally required to love ourselves as we love our neighbour.

The rectitude of this law cannot be questioned even by Lord Shaftesbury; nor can he or any other man deny, that it exhibits to us disinterested love in the fairest form and the strongest manner. But, as has been already shown, we are bound by the dictates both of reason and revelation to seek the future and eternal good of our neighbour; to desire it, and to promote it as far as is in our power. By this very command, then, the law originally enjoining benevolence as the great duty of intelligent beings, a law to which reason unconditionally subscribes, we are absolutely obliged to seek our own eternal life.

4. Our eternal life is in itself an immense good.

The endless happiness of a rational being is of more value than can be conceived by any finite mind. Within a moderate period, it will amount to more than all the happiness which in this world has been enjoyed, or will ever be enjoyed here by all its inhabitants. Whatever is endless admits of no definite comparison with that which is not. But the happiness of a future state is not endless merely, it is also endlessly increasing, and will soon rise in degree, as well as duration, above the highest human comprehension. Such of course is the addition made to the common good of the universe, whenever the eternal life of an individual is secured. To neglect the pursuit of such happiness as this is madness; to oppose it is malignity, which no words can describe.

5. Eternal happiness consists in eternal disinterestedness, and its consequences.

The happiness of heaven arises from the disinterested love of God, communicated in various blessings to his children; in their disinterested communications of good to each other; and in the enjoyment derived by their minds from the exercises of virtue. It is acknowledged on all hands that it is desirable to live virtuously here. All the reasons which operate in this case render it at least equally desirable to live virtuously hereafter, throughout any and every period of duration in which such a life may be enjoined. It is by all men acknowledged, that it is useful to do good here, and at the present time. He who makes this acknowledgment cannot without gross self-contradiction deny, that it is equally useful to do good, wherever it may be done, and at every future period. If then it is proper, if it is virtuous, to desire and to seek to live a virtuous life, or to do good, in the present world, it is equally virtuous and equally proper to desire and seek to do the same things in a future state of being. All the labours then by which we may possess ourselves of such a life in the present world, must with equal propriety be directed to the attainment of such a life in the world to come.

But it is not only desirable and proper that we should do this in the present world; it is a plain, high, and in-

dispensable duty: and, in a sense, the sum of all our duty, so far as this world is concerned. It cannot but be perceived that it is in the same sense the sum of all our duty with respect to the future world.

This, however, is far from being the amount of the whole truth concerning this subject. As much as eternity exceeds time, as much as perfect virtue excels the present frail character of good men here, as much as endless virtue, as much as endlessly increasing virtue, outruns in its importance the transient virtue of this momentary life, so much more is it our duty to seek the good of a future life than that of the present. Indeed, man lives here only to become prepared to live hereafter. Our whole duty therefore ought, during the present life, to be performed with a supreme reference to that which is to come.

Thus the pursuit of eternal good is so far from being opposed to disinterestedness, from being mercenary, mean, and selfish, so far from destroying the nature of virtue, or lessening its obligations, that it is its genuine dictate, its spontaneous tendency, its most exalted aim. No virtuous mind, if properly informed, can fail of pursuing this object, and no object which respects ultimately the present world can call forth virtuous exercises of so elevated and excellent a nature.

6. By our eternal life the happiness of all virtuous beings is greatly increased.

'There is joy in heaven,' saith our Saviour, 'over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, who need no repentance. Whatever else may be the meaning of Christ in this passage, it is unquestionable that the inhabitants of heaven experience a real joy in the repentance of a sinner. Reason, as well as revelation, clearly teaches us, that virtuous beings cannot fail to find enjoyment in this subject, because repentance is an exercise of virtue, and the means of securing happiness. In the future virtue and future happiness of such a sinner, the same beings will at all times find similar enjoyment; increasing continually in degree as these objects of it increase. As these will at the commencement of a future existence be perfect, and will rise higher and higher in the same perfection for ever, so, it is plain, the enjoyment found in them will increase throughout every succeeding period. Thus every inhabitant of this world who secures his own eternal life becomes an everlasting and perpetually increasing benefit to the virtuous universe; a blessing which no words can describe, and whose value no numbers can reckon. Can it be necessary to ask whether it is virtuous to aim at this character?

7. God is glorified whenever we seek and obtain eternal life.

When Christ was born, a multitude of the heavenly host sung, 'Glory to God in the highest,' because there was 'peace on earth, and good-will towards men.' But if none of the human race should experience this good-will, that is, if none of them should obtain eternal life, the glory otherwise springing from this source would be prevented. To this glory of God every person then who secures eternal life contributes, by accomplishing in one instance that out of which the glory arises. The glory of God in this case is a whole, made up of the individual instances in which he is glorified. If, therefore, no individual sought his salvation, none would obtain it; and if none obtained it the work would not be done, and the glory of God in this important particular would not be accomplished. How important it is, may in some measure be discerned from these facts—that God sent his own Son to die that we might live, and his Spirit to renew us, that we might become heirs of life.

Thus have I endeavoured to show that the pursuit of eternal life is so far from being opposed to the nature of disinterested love, that it is one of its primary dictates; a conduct invariably springing from its influence; and that the Scriptures, instead of lessening or destroying virtue, by requiring this conduct of us, have increased the obligations to it, and directed it to its proper end.

Those who make the objections contended against in this Discourse, have in my view always failed of distinguishing between disinterestedness and uninterestedness. The distinction between them is, however, perfectly clear and incalculably important. To be disinterested is to be without a selfish interest in any given thing or things; to be uninterested is to have no interest in them at all. A disinterested man may take the deepest interest in any subject; and the deeper the interest, the more disinterested he may be. The uninterested man can have no interest in that subject, either selfish or benevolent. To be absolutely disinterested, is to be absolutely free from selfishness. To be absolutely uninterested is to be absolutely without any interest or concern in any thing. A perfectly disinterested man would experience a supreme delight in the perfect happiness of the universe. A perfectly uninterested man, if we can suppose such a one to exist, would feel no concern in any happiness whatever. The reason why these terms have been supposed to denote the same thing, may have been, that the word interested is frequently opposed to each of them. This word originally denotes the concern which we feel in any thing; but has long been figuratively and very commonly used to denote a selfish concern; probably because the interest which the human heart feels in most things is so generally a selfish interest.

It is not my design to contend that there is not a real and great pleasure found in the exercises of virtue; nor that the virtuous man does not always experience this pleasure in such exercises, and that in exact proportion to his virtue; nor that this is not a proper motive to engage him to these exercises.

The true nature of virtue is well described in this definition: the love of doing good; or the love of promoting happiness. In all the good, therefore, which was done by ourselves or others, and of course in all that is enjoyed by ourselves or others, whenever it is not inconsistent with some greater good, virtue delights of course. In its own proper nature it aims at such good, and for such it labours, whoever is to be the recipient. Its true excellence lies in this; that it is the voluntary and only source of happiness in the universe. In aiming at our own happiness there is no necessary selfishness. Selfishness consists in a preference of ourselves to others, and to all others; to the universe, and to God. This is sin, and all that in the Scriptures is meant by sin. In every individual sin this will invariably be found to be the essential and guilty character. Thus sensuality is the desire of self-gratification, at the expense of any and all other happiness. Thus ambition is the desire of aggrandizing, and avarice the desire of enriching, ourselves, in preference to the interests of all others.

From this spirit arises all our opposition to God, and all our injustice to his creatures. He who has seriously and entirely preferred God to himself, or the good of the universe to his own private, separate good, has in the complete sense become virtuous.

God wills our happiness. It is therefore right, it is virtuous in us to seek and promote it, both here and hereafter. In this conduct, there is no selfishness. We do indeed commonly pursue it, in preference to that of all others. Such a pursuit of it is sinful: and the spirit with which we pursue it is by turns every sinful passion and appetite, and the source of every evil purpose and effort, towards God and our fellow creatures. Our pride, impiety, rebellion, and ingratitude, our self-dependence, our impatience, and murmuring under the government of God, are all only different forms of this disposition. The parsimony, fraud, and oppression of the miser; the envy, intrigues, conquests, and butcheries of ambition; the rapacity, injustice, and cruelties of despotism; the sloth, lewdness, gluttony, and drunkenness of the sensualist; the haughtiness, wrath, revenge, and murders of the duellist—are nothing but selfishness, appearing in its true nature and genuine operations.

REMARKS.

In these observations we have another specimen of the havoc which philosophy has made of divine subjects, and of the great interests of man.

Few writers have been more admired and applauded than Lord Shaftesbury; and among all his writings none have been more applauded than the work in which the doctrine opposed by me is taught. Yet in this work we are informed, that to have any regard either to future rewards or punishments, is mean and mercenary; and of course, instead of being virtuous, or consisting with virtue, is only criminal. It must, therefore, be odious in the sight of God, and the proper object of his wrath and punishment. Accordingly, this writer informs us directly, that 'all reference either to future rewards or punishments lessens and destroys virtue, and diminishes the obligations to be virtuous.' The anger of God against a sinner is a dreadful punishment. The approbation of God, and his consequent love, are glorious rewards. But to regard this anger, to be afraid of it, to seek to avoid it, is (according to Lord Shaftesbury) mean and mercenary, odious and wicked. The contrary conduct must, of course, bear the contrary character. It must be honourable and generous, spirited, amiable, and virtuous, to disregard the divine anger, to have no fear of God before our eyes, and willingly to become the objects of infinite indignation. Equally mean and mercenary, and therefore equally hateful and guilty, is it in the eyes of this writer to prize the approbation of God, to desire an interest in his love, or to seek the attainment of either. Of course, to disregard both must, according to this scheme, be virtuous, honourable, and deserving of commendation. The real nature of all conduct God cannot but know intuitively; and without injustice, cannot fail to regard it according to its real nature, and treat the subjects of it as they actually merit. Hence, as he cannot but discern the meanness and mercenariness, the odiousness and guilt, of those who dread his anger, and seek to avoid it, who prize his approbation, and love and labour to obtain them, he is bound, he cannot fail, to punish them for this criminal conduct. As he equally discerns the virtue of those who disregard his anger, approbation, and love, he cannot fail to reward them.

If God is angry with any of his intelligent creatures, it is undoubtedly with those who have broken his law. That he has given a law to mankind, Lord Shaftesbury himself acknowledges; nor does he deny that mankind have in some instances broken this law. Indeed, it could not be denied with common decency. In this law, whatever it be, his pleasure is expressed and enjoined, as the rule of duty to rational beings. This rule is in his view, and therefore in fact, a wise, just, and good rule for the direction of their conduct. Conformity to it is conformity to what is wise, just, and good; or, in other words, is virtue, or excellence of character: while disobedience to it is opposition to what is wise, just, and good; or, in other words, sinfulness and turpitude of character. Every law, and this as truly as any other, annexes a reward to obedience, and a punishment to disobedience, otherwise it could not be a law. But to regard either this reward or this punishment is, according to Lord Shaftesbury, to be mean and mercenary, and so far, therefore, ceasing to be virtuous. If this reward and punishment are to have no influence on mankind, they are nugatory; and God has merely trifled with his creatures in annexing them to his law. If they are to have influence on mankind, the influence is merely such as to destroy, or at least lessen, both virtue and the obligations to it. God, who sees this to be true, if it be truth, has therefore, in annexing them to his law, and in endeavouring to influence mankind by them, attempted to destroy or lessen virtue, and to diminish their obligations to be virtuous.

Farther: As without rewards and penalties no law can exist, it is evident that God cannot make a law in which he must not of course, either merely trifle with his creatures, or destroy or lessen virtue, and diminish their obligations to be virtuous.

The reward promised to obedience in this and every other law is happiness; and the punishment threatened to disobedience is suffering, or misery. To desire the happiness of every rational being, and our happiness as truly as that of others, is the genuine dictate of virtue, and the indispensable duty of all such beings. It is the duty then of every other rational being to desire our happiness; and for this plain reason, it is in itself desirable. According to Lord Shaftesbury, then, we cannot, without being mean and mercenary, desire that which all other rational beings are bound to desire, and which is in itself desirable.

To be virtuous is the same thing as to be meritorious or to deserve a reward; and is the only real desert in the universe. The reward which virtue deserves is such treatment as is a proper retribution to virtuous conduct; such a kind and measure of happiness as it becomes the wisdom, justice, and goodness, of the lawgiver to communicate, as a proper expression of his approbation of that conduct. To be influenced by a regard to this happiness, although the very thing which his virtue has deserved, and which God has pronounced to be its proper reward, is, according to this scheme, to become mean and mercenary, and undeserving of the reward itself. The reward is holden out by God to encourage his creatures to be virtuous. In doing this, according to Lord Shaftesbury, he discourages virtue, and lessens their obligations to be virtuous.

There are two kinds of original good; enjoyment

and deliverance from suffering; or, as the case may be, from the danger of suffering. These two are the only possible objects of desire to percipient beings, and to intelligent beings as truly as any others. When virtue itself is desired, it is desired only for the enjoyment which it furnishes. Were there no such objects in the universe, there would be no such thing as desire; and consequently, no such thing as volition, or action. Percipient beings, and among them intelligent beings, would be as absolutely inactive as so many lumps of matter. But, according to Lord Shaftesbury, to regard future enjoyment or misery, and, for the very same reasons, to regard them when present, is to be mean and mercenary, and to cease from being virtuous. He who regards them, therefore, cannot be virtuous; he who does not must, of course, be a block.

In the meantime, not to regard enjoyment and suffering, when present to our view, is physically impossible. In order to be virtuous, then, we must, in every instance, accomplish a physical impossibility.

Finally: A moral government is entirely founded on motives. All motives are included in the two kinds of good mentioned above. In every moral government these motives are presented to the subjects of it by the law on which it is founded, in the forms of reward and punishment, both necessarily future, to obedience or disobedience. On the influence which these motives have upon the moral character and conduct of subjects, all moral government rests; nor can any such government exist for a moment without them. But to be influenced by them is, in every subject of such government, according to this scheme, mean and mercenary. God, therefore, in establishing a moral government over intelligent creatures, has directly endeavoured, by his authority, to render them mean and mercenary; and, so far as this influence extends, has prevented them from being virtuous!

It is, I presume, unnecessary to add any thing farther. More striking or more conclusive evidence cannot be given of the havoc made by philosophy in the moral system. If the doctrines of one of her most admired votaries end in these consequences, what absurdities are we not to expect from philosophers of every inferior order?

SERMON LXXXI.

REGENERATION.—ITS ATTENDANTS. BROTHERLY LOVE.

A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another.—John xiii. 34.

In the three preceding Discourses I have considered the nature of evangelical benevolence; and the two principal objections against the doctrine which teaches the existence and explains the nature of this attribute. At the present time, I propose to examine the last of those characteristics which were mentioned as attendants on regeneration; viz. Brotherly love; or the love which is due to the disciples of Christ.

Commentators have, to a considerable extent at least, considered this command of Christ as merely enjoining benevolence. They observe, that it is called 'new,' not because it had not been given before (for, they say, it had been published by Moses, and other writers of the Old Testament); but because of its peculiar excellence: remarking, at the same time, that the Hebrews customarily denoted the peculiar excellence of a thing by styling it new. With this view of the subject I cannot accord. The command given to the apostles, and, by consequence, to all the followers of Christ, to 'love one another,' was not in my view published by Moses, nor by any of the succeeding prophets. Certainly it was not published in form. There is not in the Old Testament, at least I have not been able to find in it, any command requiring good men to love each other as good men. The general benevolence of the gospel towards all men, whether friends or enemies, is indeed abundantly enjoined both by Moses and the prophets. But this benevolence regards men merely as intelligent beings capable of happiness; and is itself the love of happiness, as heretofore explained. The love required in the text is the love of good men, as such; as the followers of Christ, as wearing his image, as resembling him in their moral character. This love, in modern language, is called complacency, or the love of virtue. Instead of being benevolence, it is a delight in that benevolence; and is directed not towards the happiness of intelligent beings, but towards the virtue of good beings.

A command enjoining this love was, I think, never given in form, before Christ gave it in the text; and was therefore new in the proper sense at that time. That it is not called new on account of its superior excellence will be reasonably believed, if we remember that Christ in no other case applies the epithet in this manner; that the 'first and the great command of the law' is still more excellent, as is also 'the second;' which, while it may be considered as implying this affection, enjoins directly that universal good-will which is the object of brotherly love, and the voluntary source of all happiness.

'But,' it is said, 'St John expressly declares this commandment of Christ not to be new in the proper sense,' 1 John ii. 7, 'Brethren, I write unto you no new commandment; but an old commandment, which ye had from the beginning.' Without inquiring what St John intends here by the phrase, 'from the beginning,' it may be justly observed, that this passage has no reference to the subject in question. The command of which he speaks is in the preceding verse expressed in these words: 'He that saith he abideth in him, ought

himself also so to walk, even as he walked.' It will not be pretended that this is the command in the text.

In the following verse St John declares the command in the text to be a new commandment. 'Again, a new commandment write I unto you.' What the new command is to which he refers, is evident from the two following verses. 'He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light; and there is none occasion of stumbling in him.' The apostle does not indeed recite any command in form; but in the phrases, 'he that hateth,' and 'he that loveth his brother,' he shows decisively that he refers to the command, enjoining this love, and forbidding this hatred; or, in other words, to the command in the text. But the command to which he refers he declares to be 'a new commandment.'

There is, however, another passage in this writer, which at first view appears to be less easily reconcilable with my assertion. It is this: 'And now I beseech thee, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another,' 2 John 5. That St John here referred to the general benevolence required in the second command of the moral law, is I think clearly evident from the following verse; 'And this is love, that we keep his commandments. This is the commandment, that, as we have heard from the beginning, ye should walk in it.' The love of which he had spoken to the elect lady in the preceding verse, he himself explains in this. 'And this is love, that we keep his commandments.' As if he had said, The love which I have mentioned, is the disposition with which we keep the commandments of God; or, in other words, the general benevolence enjoined by the law. St Paul, speaking of the same thing, has expressed the same sentiment more clearly, as well as more concisely: Rom. xiii. 10, 'Love is the fulfilling of the law.'

Having as I hope removed all the objections of any importance against the interpretation of the text adopted above, I shall now proceed to a more particular consideration of this attribute.

I. *Brotherly love is an affection differing in many respects from benevolence.*

Thus, for example, Brotherly love is confined to good men as its objects; whereas benevolence extends to all mankind. Brotherly love respects only the moral characters of its objects; benevolence, their existence and capacity. Brotherly love is the love of the virtue; benevolence, of the happiness of those who are loved. Benevolence is virtue absolutely, or universally; brotherly love is only a branch of that virtue. Benevolence exists and operates towards those who have no virtue, and was thus exercised by God towards beings totally lost and depraved, viz. towards mankind while wholly under the power of sin. In a similar manner it is exercised by good men towards sinners, and towards such sinners as, by being enemies to them on account of their goodness, prove that there is no goodness in themselves. Brotherly love is exercised and is capable of being exercised only towards virtuous men, and towards them on account of their virtue only. Benevolence, being virtue in the absolute sense, must exist before it can be loved. Brotherly love is the love of that benevolence, or of virtue, after it is known to have existed.

According to these observations we find these affections clearly and abundantly distinguished in the Scriptures. Thus benevolence is called αγαπη, throughout the New Testament; and, as exercised particularly towards mankind, is termed φιλανθρωπια: Acts xxviii. 2; Titus iii. 4. Brotherly love is called φιλαδελφια: Rom. xii. 10; 1 Thess. iv. 9; Heb. xiii. 1; 2 Peter i. 7. Love to the brethren, or brotherhood, αδελφοτης, is enjoined in various places as a peculiar duty. Thus St Peter in his second Epistle, i. 7, says, 'Add to your faith, virtue (or resolution),—to godliness, brotherly love (φιλαδελφιαν), and to brotherly love, charity,' αγαπην, benevolence. Were brotherly love the same with benevolence, St Peter would certainly not have directed Christians to add benevolence to itself; nor would he here have called the same thing by different names, and thus perplexed his readers, merely for the sake of rounding a period.

Other directions generally resembling this, are given us abundantly in the New Testament.

II. *Brotherly love is the love of good men.*

To prove this, I observe, that 'the brethren,' spoken of in the New Testament, are always disciples of Christ. This name Christ himself gave them in form. In Matt. xii. 46, we are told, that 'his mother and his brethren came, desiring to see him.' Upon receiving notice of this fact from one of the company, he replied, 'Who is my mother, and who are my brethren? Then he stretched forth his hand towards his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren: for whosoever shall do the will of my Father who is in heaven, the same is my brother, my sister, and mother.' In Luke viii. 21, where the same story is recorded, his words are, 'My mother and my brethren are they who hear the word of God and do it.' Again, Matt. xxiii. 8, he says, 'Be ye not called Rabbi, for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren.'

In these passages Christ has declared that his disciples are his brethren; that these are composed of such as hear and obey the word of God; and that all such persons sustain this character. From him the apostles took this phraseology, and continued it through their writings.

'For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first born of many brethren.' Rom. viii. 29.

'To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ, who are at Colosse.' Col. i. 2.

'I charge you by the Lord, that this epistle be read unto all the holy brethren.' 1 Thess. v. 27.

These passages from St Paul, selected out of a multitude of the same import, are ample proofs that he used the language of Christ in the same sense. Peter, James, and John used the same language. It is therefore completely evident that the brethren, spoken of appropriately in the New Testament, are Christ's disciples, are saints, are faithful, are holy, are such as have been sanctified by the Spirit of grace. In this character only are they constituted the objects of brotherly love; the character itself being the thing which in them is required by Christ to be loved. It is indeed true now, as formerly, that 'all who are of Israel are not Israel.' Some who appear to be Christ's disciples are not really his disciples. But since our limited minds, are unable to distinguish appearance from reality, God has commanded us to govern both our views and our conduct by

appearance. So long, then, as men appear to be the disciples of Christ, we are bound to regard, and particularly to love them as his disciples.

III. *Brotherly love is therefore an affection directed toward the virtue of those whom we love:* in other words, it is *complacency in virtue.*

In the exercise of benevolence we love others whenever we wish them to be happy; and in this manner we love our enemies, and wicked men universally, however destitute of moral goodness. Our benevolence will indeed be particularly exerted in desiring earnestly that they may become virtuous, in order to their happiness; but we cannot approve nor love their moral character; because, by the supposition, it is wholly sinful, and therefore altogether odious.

In the exercise of brotherly love, on the contrary, we approve and love the moral character of all whom we love: delighting in their holiness, as an excellent and desirable object. As we approve of the character of Christ himself, so we delight in them, as possessing a share of the same beauty and excellence, as 'having the same mind, which was also in him.'

IV. *Brotherly love is, in the Scriptures, constituted a peculiar proof of sanctification.*

In the verse following the text, Christ says, 'Hereby shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.' Here our Saviour declares this affection to be a peculiar proof to the world that we are Christians; to be the touchstone by which his disciples will be examined and known by mankind.

Accordingly, the emperor Julian expressly warns the heathen under his dominion, that the Christians contributed not a little to spread Christianity by their singular love to each other, and by their mutual offices of exemplary kindness. At the same time he declares that, unless the heathen will follow this powerful example, their religion will never prosper. So remarkable even in that corrupted age was the brotherly love of Christ's disciples, as entirely to distinguish them from the rest of mankind. In other periods of the church it has prevailed as religion has prevailed, and decayed as religion has decayed: but in all ages it has existed and been discernible wherever genuine Christianity has been found.

As this attribute is peculiarly the proof of our religion to others, so it is made equally the proof of it to ourselves. 'He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light,' 1 John ii. 9, 10. 'In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God; nor he that loveth not his brother,' 1 John iii. 10. 'Hereby we know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that hateth his brother abideth in death.'

These passages teach, in the clearest manner, that if we love the brethren, we are children of God, or the subjects of evangelical virtue, and that if we love not the brethren we are not the children of God. If then our love to the brethren be probable, if a good reason exist to believe that we exercise brotherly love, there exists an equal reason to believe that 'we have passed from death unto life.' If we discover with certainty that we possess this love, we have arrived at full assurance of our sanctification, and of our title to eternal life.

V. *Brotherly love is universally exercised by benevolent minds.* In other words, *every mind which is evangelically benevolent will of course exercise brotherly love.*

Benevolence is the love of happiness. Brotherly love is the love of that benevolence. We love an intelligent being, as either capable of happiness, or actually the subject of it. When we perceive that he is benevolent, we farther love his benevolence, and him because he is benevolent.

Benevolence is virtue. Brotherly love, in the abstract denominated complacency, is the love of virtue. As virtue delights in happiness, so it necessarily delights in the causes of happiness. But virtue is the only original, voluntary, and supreme cause of happiness to the universe. Virtue, therefore, delights in virtue, as being the great cause of that which it supremely loves. As virtue is the voluntary cause of happiness, it is, of course, supremely excellent and lovely; and is accordingly loved by all virtuous beings.

Hence it is evident, that brotherly love, although not virtue in the original or abstract sense, is yet an affection eminently virtuous; and is therefore strongly enjoined and greatly commended in the Scriptures. This is the love which, without a formal command, David exercised towards the saints, whom he styles 'the excellent of the earth,' and 'in whom,' he says, 'was all his delight;' which the captive psalmist exercised towards Zion, the collection of the saints; and sooner than refuse which, he wishes 'his right hand may forget its cunning, and his tongue cleave to the roof of his mouth.' This is the love which inspired the prophets, particularly Isaiah, with zeal, and joy, and triumph, when beholding in vision the future prosperity of the church and its glorious extension over the habitable world.

The distinction between brotherly love and complacency, generally understood, is this: the former is exercised by the disciples of Christ towards each other; the latter by all virtuous beings, towards all such beings. This is the love which God exercises towards all his children; the love exercised by angels towards those for whom they cheerfully condescend to be 'ministering spirits;' viz. those 'who shall be heirs of salvation.'

Towards God, the complacency of his virtuous creatures is so eminent an exercise of affection, as in a manner to occupy the whole soul. When we remember the moral perfection of God, we are prone to forget his importance as the supreme intelligent, and the possessor of supreme happiness, and naturally confine our thoughts to the glorious excellence of his nature. We love him pre-eminently for this excellence, and scarcely recollect that he is an object of supreme benevolence. Indeed, whenever the beings loved, are wholly virtuous, we are apt to lose our benevolence in our complacency, and to be scarcely conscious of any other affection besides our delight in their excellence of character. When, indeed, we have received peculiar benefits from them, our gratitude is excited, and often powerfully. But our benevolence, though always exercised, is not unfrequently unobserved by our minds.

Thus have I summarily considered this attribute of a sanctified mind. I shall now proceed to derive from this subject a few—

REMARKS.

1. If the things which have been observed concerning this subject are just, it follows, that we ought carefully to try our moral character by this great scriptural standard.

By him who hopes that he is entitled to eternal life, no question can be asked, of higher moment, than whether he is a Christian. To resolve this question, the Scriptures point out no method more obviously, or certainly, effectual, than that which has been here mentioned. 'We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.' A good man is a peculiar object; and distinct from all others. The materials of which his goodness is constituted, are generally capable of being truly understood, and strongly realized. If seen, they cannot but be hated by a bad, and loved by a good, mind. Our love and hatred are engaged, almost only, by moral beings. Doctrines, precepts, and ordinances, the Sabbath, the sanctuary, the word of God, and the things opposed to them, may indeed, be in a certain sense objects of these affections; but this can exist only in a subordinate degree, and, perhaps, always with a reference to those moral beings, with whom they are connected. Thus the Sabbath is hated, or loved, merely as a season devoted to God, who appointed it. The same observation is equally applicable to other things of the like nature.

But intelligent beings; viz. God and his rational creatures; we love, or hate, for what they are. We love or hate them directly; and not for the relation which they bear to some other object of these affections. Men, particularly, being like or unlike ourselves, of our own party or an opposite, who act, or refuse to act, with or against us, with and against whom we act under the strong influence of sympathy, and who are realized by the powerful impressions of sense; are more easily, uniformly, and strongly, regarded with these emotions, in ordinary circumstances, than any other created beings. Our emotions towards them, therefore, are immediate; arise spontaneously; are vigorous; and mingle with all our views, of every kind. Good men love good men of course, and necessarily. Wicked men never exercise complacency towards good men, as such; they often love them with natural affection; or because they are their friends; or because they are useful to them; but not for their characteristical excellence, or for their resemblance to Christ. Good men love them, as the natural taste relishes sweetness or fragrance, the rose or the honeycomb. Good men love them for themselves; for the moral character which they possess; and independently of all other considerations. Wicked men in their consciences approve of goodness, and of good men; and cannot, without violence done to their consciences, disapprove of them. But in this approbation the heart has no share. The hearts of wicked men are radically opposed to virtue; and of course hate it, and, so far as their virtue is concerned, all those by whom it is possessed. Hence have flowed the calumnies, sneers, ridicule, resentment, opposition, and persecution, which good men have received from their enemies ever since the world began.

From these things it is evident, that the love of good men furnishes a criterion, uncommonly well calculated to decide our character, as being either good or evil. Whatever will aid us in a case of such magnitude must be of high importance; and ought to be employed for our benefit with earnestness and fidelity. From the Scriptures, and indeed from the nature of the case also, it is evident, that brotherly love furnishes us with peculiar assistance for the determination of a point, so interesting to every Christian. How attentively ought every man, then, and especially every one who hopes that himself is a Christian, to examine his character by this standard. Let each ask himself, 'Do I love good men? Do I love their goodness, their Christianity? Do I choose their company? Do I seek their conversation? Do I delight in their sentiments and conduct? Do I pray for their prosperity, their holiness, and their salvation?' If these questions can be truly answered in the affirmative; we are children of God. If not; we are still 'in the gall of bitterness, and the bond of iniquity.'

2. From these considerations we discern the peculiar wisdom and goodness of Christ in establishing a church in the world.

In the church of Christ, the body of good men are gathered together; united in one family; placed in one obvious view; and prepared to render, as well as to receive, brotherly love, and all its kind offices. Every affection flourishes by exercise and repetition only. Where the proper objects of our affections are found, they are exercised of course: where such objects are not found, they decay, and die, of themselves. In families, the natural, domestic affections of man find their proper objects. Conjugal love, therefore, parental tenderness, brotherly and sisterly kindness, and filial piety, shoot up here, and thrive, and blossom, and bear fruit; and bear it abundantly.

In the church, the family named after Christ, are assembled the objects of brotherly love, or evangelical complacency. Here such as are the subjects of this exalted attribute, find those presented to them, on whom it may be exercised and repeated. Accordingly, here, and in the nature of things here only, can this affection live and prosper. Here, on the one hand, virtue is daily seen, approved, and loved; and on the other, complacency interchanged, strenghthened, and enjoyed. While those who are thus the objects of love, are by every motive, which can reach a virtuous mind, invited, animated, and compelled, to render themselves more deserving of this affection by improving and adorning those excellencies, which are its immediate objects. Brotherly love becomes, here, a peculiarly refined and glorious friendship; a bond of perfection, uniting them more and more unto the end. Thus, by the establishment of a church in the world, has Christ provided for the existence, continuance, and improvement, of this elevated affection. In the mean time, as brotherly love exists in this heaven-appointed family; so in the bosom of the same family it operates, unceasingly, in all the amiable and useful methods, directed by the Scriptures, and pointed to by itself with a magnetic influence. Here it reproves all the variations from truth, all the deviations from rectitude, to which imperfect man, even in his best estate, is liable on this side of the grave. Here it approves, and confirms, every thing that is vindicable and lovely. Here it prays for the strength, amendment, comfort, peace, and joy, of its brethren. Here it weeps with them in their sorrows, rejoices in their joys, and smiles on all their delightful progress in holiness; refines in the view of their refinement, exults

in their advancement to immortal life, and expands its wings for the final flight to everlasting glory.

3. This subject forcibly impresses on our minds the excellence, glory, and happiness of heaven.

In this apostate and melancholy world, wise men, in all ages, have seen and felt that virtue has been a stranger, a pilgrim, and in many instances an outcast also. Her friends have been few and commonly powerless; her enemies mighty and strong, bitter and distressing; her cause unpopular and hated; her arguments lost in deaf ears; and her entreaties repelled by hearts of marble. It is reasonable, it is desirable, it is 'devoutly to be wished,' and prayed for, that virtue may somewhere find a home; a settled residence; a kind welcome; real friends; and final safety. These blessings, she has rarely found in this foreign region, this unnatural climate; and, at the best, she has found them but for a moment. Accordingly, she has ever cast her eyes upward, towards another and better country. From that country she has received tidings, which cannot deceive, and which assure her of a welcome and final reception. She is informed, that there she was born and nursed; and that in this world she is only a visitor and stranger; destined to finish the pilgrimage allotted, and then to return to her native residence, there to dwell for ever. With rapture she has learned, that there all her friends will be finally gathered; and that her Father and everlasting friend is there ready to receive her to the arms of infinite and unchangeable love.

In that glorious world, a vast and immortal church, formed of those who are all brethren, inhabits the delightful regions, destined to be its eternal residence. In the innumerable millions, of which this great assembly, this nation of brethren, this kingdom of Jehovah, is composed, brotherly love is the commanding principle of action. In angels it has glowed, and brightened, ever since the morning of creation dawned over the vast abyss of darkness and solitude. In the general assembly of the first-born it is made a test of their character, and a foundation of their admission into heaven. 'Inasmuch as ye have done good unto one of the least of these my brethren,' is by Christ himself announced, as the peculiar term of admission; and 'inasmuch as ye did it not,' as the term of final exclusion. In the cold and dreary region of this world, the spark was scarcely kindled; and prolonged its existence with difficulty. The flax in which it was kept from final extinction, smoked merely, without rising into a flame. But it was never finally quenched. At the great examination, it was found still a living spark; and its existence was seen, acknowledged, and proclaimed. Transferred to heaven, it began there to kindle with new and immortal lustre; and was set in that constellated firmament of living and eternal splendours; which are all glorious with inherent light, although 'one star differeth from another star in glory.'

Of that brilliant world, that region where all things shine, and live, and flourish, and triumph, for ever, the beauty, the glory, the excellence, is eminently this divine affection. All are brethren; all are loved as brethren. All are divinely amiable and excellent friends. Every one possesses the virtue which is loved; and the complacency by which it is loved. Every one, conscious of unmingled purity within, approves, and loves himself for that divine image, which in complete perfection, and with untarnished resemblance, is instamped on his character. Each, in every view which he casts around him, beholds the same glory shining, and brightening in the endless train of his companions: one in nature, but diversified without end, in those forms and varieties of excellence, by which the original and eternal beauty delights to present itself to the virtuous universe. Here every one, conscious of being entirely lovely, and entirely loved, reciprocates the same love to that 'great multitude, which no man can number, of all nations, kindreds, and tongues,' and which fills the immeasurable regions of heaven. Out of this character grows a series ever varying, ever improving, of all the possible communications of the beneficence, fitted in every instance only to interchange, and increase the happiness of all. In the sunshine of infinite complacency, the light of the new Jerusalem, the original source of all their own beauty, life, and joy, all these happy nations walk for ever; and, transported with the life-giving influence, unite in one harmonious and eternal hymn to the great author of their enjoyment; 'blessing, and honour, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, be unto him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb, for ever and ever.' Amen.

SERMON LXXXII.

CONSEQUENCES OF REGENERATION.—ADOPTION.

Beloved, now are we the sons of God.—1 John iii. 2.

In a series of Discourses, I have considered the Attendants of Regeneration: viz. Faith, formerly explained; Repentance; Love to God; Love to Mankind; and Brotherly Love. I shall now proceed, according to the scheme formerly proposed, to examine the consequences of this change of character.

Of these the first in the natural order is adoption. That adoption is a consequence of regeneration will not be denied. The observations, which I shall make concerning the subject, will be included under the following heads:

I. *The nature;*

II. *The reality;*

III. *The importance;* and,

IV. *The consequences; of adoption.*

I. *The nature of adoption may be explained in the following manner.*

A child is, in this act, taken by a man from a family

not his own; introduced into his own family; regarded as his own child; and entitled to all the privileges and blessings, belonging to this relation. To adopt children in this manner has, it is well known, been a custom generally prevailing in all ages, and probably in all nations. Thus children were adopted among the Egyptians, Jews, Romans, and other ancient nations; and the same custom exists in the Christian nations of Europe: in our own country; among the American aborigines; and, so far as my knowledge extends, throughout the world.

Of the same general nature is that transaction, in the divine economy, by which mankind become the children of God.

II. *The reality of adoption may be thus illustrated.*

Mankind are originally strangers to the family of God; enemies to him, to his law, to his kingdom, and to all his interests. From this situation they are invited to come, and enter into his family; to take his name upon them; to share in his parental care, tenderness, and blessings. Such of them, as comply with the invitation, are received into his family; and become entitled to his parental love, and all the offices of affection to which it gives birth. From this period, they are styled the children of God. From this period, they are permitted, and required, to address him as their Father; a character, which he has been pleased to assume; and to consider themselves as his children; and as entitled to the character of his children.

Of this subject the Scriptures give us the following exhibition.

1. God announced the adoption of makind into his family soon after the apostasy.

At the birth of Enos, we are told that 'men began to call upon the name of the Lord.' In the margin, and, as it would seem, with greater correctness, 'men began to be called by the name of the Lord:'* that is, they began to be called his children, and to take upon themselves the name of God, as being now their parent; just as adopted children take upon themselves the names of those human parents, by whom they have been adopted. The style by which they began to be known at this early period, has been continued through every succeeding age of the church. In Gen. vi. 1, 2, we read of 'the sons of God.' These, I apprehend, are persons of the same class with those who, in the time of 'Enos, began to be called by the name of the Lord;' and were now publicly designated by this title. That such persons were meant by the phrase, the 'sons of God,' is sufficiently manifest from the use of it elsewhere. In Job i. 6, it is said, 'the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord:' and in Job xxxviii. 7, that, at the creation, 'the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy.' In these passages, angels are undoubtedly the persons intended. When mankind, in those early days, received the same appellation, it was designed to indicate, that they belonged to the same family, and were by adoption children of the same heavenly Parent.

In the communications, made by God to Abraham and his family, the same scheme is more particularly and explicitly pursued. God, in the covenant of grace, declared to this earthly father of the faithful, 'I will be your God; and ye shall be my people:' phraseology, exactly equivalent, in the mouth of the speaker, to the following; 'I will be your Father; and ye shall be my children.' In conformity to this scheme, Moses was directed, Exod. iv. 22, to preface his message from God to Pharaoh with 'Thus saith the Lord, Israel is my son, even my first-born.' In the same manner, Moses declared the same relation, Deut. xiv. 1, 'Ye are the children of the Lord your God.' In Psal. lxxxii. 6, it is said to the rulers of Israel, 'All of you are children of the most high.' In the latter days of their kingdom, when they had become deeply depraved, they were still called by the title of children. Thus they are styled 'rebellious children;' 'corrupters;' 'lying children, that will not hear the word of the Lord.'

By the prophet Hosea it was again predicted, that 'they should be called the sons of God' when gathered again, after their dispersion. 'It shall be said of them, Ye are the sons of the living God.'

This character, thus insisted on through the several ages of the Jewish church, is more particularly, and strongly, insisted on in the New Testament. Here the important fact of our adoption is declared in the most explicit manner, and in a great variety of forms. In Eph. i. 5, it is said, that Christians 'were predestinated unto the adoption of children, by Jesus Christ, to God, according to the good pleasure of his will.' Agreeably to this determination, it is declared, John i. 12, that 'to as many as received Christ, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them, who believe on his name. Who are born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.' To persons of this character St Paul says, 'but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.' These passages are amply sufficient to show the scriptural views of the reality of adoption. It would be useless, therefore, to quote a multitude of others, of similar import.

2. The same doctrine is forcibly taught in the ordinance of baptism.

The ordinance of baptism is a solemn symbol of regeneration. By the affusion of the water upon every subject of this ordinance is exhibited, in a very affecting manner, the effusion of the spirit of grace upon his heart; and by the cleansing influence of the water, the purification of his soul by the blood of Christ. In the administration of this ordinance, every subject of it is baptised, by the command of Christ, εις το ονομα, 'into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.' In this manner, baptism is a direct exhibition of our adoption in the family of God, and our rightful assumption of the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Accordingly, Christians are, in the Scriptures, entitled, after these names, godly, Christian, and spiritual. The ordinance, it is true, is, as from the nature of the case it must be external and symbolical. But the symbol is easy, intelligible, and plainly indicative of the adoption of Christians into the family, which is named after Christ.

III. *The importance of adoption may be illustrated from the following considerations.*

1. The act of adoption produces a real relation in us to God.

In reading the Scriptures, a book so fraught with figurative language, it is no unnatural, and, I believe, not a very uncommon thing, for persons to regard whatever is said on this subject, as a mere collection of

* Taylor.

fine phraseology, intended to express, with strength and beauty, the dignity of the Christian's character, and the desirableness of his situation; and not to denote a real and important part of the scheme of redemption. This, however, is an erroneous mode of thinking concerning the subject. We are, in fact, strangers to the Divine family; and have ceased to be, in any sense, useful to ourselves, and dutiful children of God. We have allied ourselves voluntarily to strangers, and 'become aliens from the commonwealth of' the spiritual 'Israel.' In this manner, we have wandered, and remained far off from God; and, but for his mercy, employed to bring us back, had widened our distance from his house and favour for ever. In this situation, we were related to him, only as forward and rebellious creatures; and were objects only of his eternal indignation. But when we are adopted into his family, we become his children anew; are acknowledged as such; and shall be treated as such throughout eternity. The act by which we are adopted, and which creates this relation, is also a publication of it to the universe; solemnly announcing to all the subjects of the divine kingdom, that henceforth we are regarded by God as his children; that he will be 'a father to us;' and that we 'shall be his sons and daughters;' that the name, the duties, and the privileges of children will henceforth be rightfully ours.

2. This relation is very near, and very interesting.

In the original condition of mankind, they stood related to God by creation and preservation. This, considered as the state of intelligent beings, is a relation of high and interesting importance. Adam accordingly, on account of this relation is, together with the angels, dignified with the title of a 'son of God.' See Luke iii. 38.

This relation is often insisted on with much magnificence by the ancient heathen sages; who exhibited their views of it in a variety of bold and strong images. Particularly, they represented the soul of man as an emanation from God; as a part of the divine mind; separated for a season, to return again, and be reabsorbed by the original source of perfection; as a beam of divine light; a particle of ethereal fire; sent forth from the uncreated sun, to be re-united hereafter to its parent orb. It will be easily seen from these representations, what stress they laid upon our divine original; and it will be not less easily seen, that the more perfect views of the original mind, furnished by the Scriptures, enhance exceedingly the honour and importance derived to us from this source.

But though it is honourable to an intelligent being, that God was pleased to bring him into existence, and endow him with such noble faculties; yet in the adoption of the covenant of grace, a much nearer, dearer, and more exalted relation is formed, and finished. In this proceeding, God takes rebels, sinners, and outcasts, and with immense exertions, and with means most wonderful, brings them back into his family and favour. They were before created, and preserved: now they are redeemed, sanctified, and forgiven. An act of creative power was before exerted, to bring them into being; and of preserving power, to continue them in being: but now Christ has been made man; has lived, suffered, and died; has descended into the grave; risen again; sat down on the right hand of God; and begun an eternal intercession; that they may be restored to the character of children, and to the blessings which flow from infinite love. The spirit of God has, also, with infinite condescension, patience, and kindness, sanctified, enlightened, quickened, and purified them unto the end. The Father of spirits has formed, and completed, a new dispensation in the universe, a dispensation of grace and forgiveness, for their sakes; has forgiven and justified them; and re-admitted them to his kingdom and everlasting love. These are all new, great, and glorious things; things which have been done for no other.

Correspondent with the degree of that which is done, or suffered, by any intelligent being for any other, is their mutual love. He for whom most is done, and to whom most is forgiven, will naturally love the most. This is directly taught by Christ in his parable of the two debtors, recorded Luke vii, 40, 'And Jesus, answering, said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee; and he said, Master, say on. There was a certain creditor, who had two debtors; the one owed five hundred pence; the other, fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me, therefore, which of them will love him most? Simon answered, and said, I suppose, he, to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou has rightly judged.' In proportion, then, to what has been done for the redeemed, will be their love, and the cause of it also, throughout eternity.

On the other hand, he, who does, or suffers much for others, loves them, also, in proportion to what he has done and suffered. This truth is abundantly evident, in all human concerns. A father loves his child when sick and distressed, and needing much at his hands, more tenderly than those of his children who are healthy and prosperous. A friend, in the like circumstances, loves his friend more than before; and a patriot his country.

The same doctrine is also taught by Christ, in the parables of ten pieces of silver, and the hundred sheep; and is appealed to by St Paul in that memorable passage; 'he that spared not his own son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not, with him, also, freely give us all things?' But God has done more, Christ has suffered more for the redeemed, than has been done, or suffered, for any others. Of course they are loved more, in proportion to their importance in the universe, than any others. For this, as one reason, 'there is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, who need no repentance.' The fact, that they have been once lost, and have been found again; that they had been once dead, and live anew; and that their restoration has been accomplished by so much exertion and suffering; will render this event an object of peculiar interest, and them objects of peculiar tenderness, throughout eternity.

Thus the redeemed are brought into a near relation to God; nearer than that of mere intelligent creatures, in proportion to the greatness of the things, which have been done, and suffered, to bring it into being.

3. This relation is eternal.

Those who are once redeemed, sustain this character for ever. The song, which ascribes 'blessing, and honour, and glory, to the Lamb who was slain, and who hath redeemed us to God by his blood,' is begun in the present world, and continued throughout all its sucessive ages. But it does not terminate here. It is renewed in heaven; and will be continued throughout its everlasting duration. In that happy world, they will be

joint heirs with Christ to 'the inheritance, which is undefiled, and fadeth not away.' There they will 'behold his glory,' even 'the glory which he had with the Father before ever the world was.' Throughout their interminable existence they will ever sustain the peculiar character of redeemed creatures; will be regarded by God, and the virtuous universe, as the trophies of Christ's mediation, as monuments of forgiving and sanctifying love. In this character they will regard themselves; and will feel its import with a gratitude, suited to the greatness of the blessings, which they have received.

It is this consideration, which stamps the peculiar value on the relation in question. All that is temporary and perishable is, in its nature, comparatively of little importance. Time, necessarily fading in itself, imparts its own character to every thing under its dominion. The remembrance, that an enjoyment will come to an end, embitters it, even while it is in possession; and after a period, which must soon arrive, it will be destroyed for ever. No possession, therefore, ought ever to engage the ardent attachment of an immortal mind, unless made sure by the seal of eternity.

4. This relation will become more and more interesting for ever.

The mind, which is received into heaven through the mediation of the Redeemer, will more and more understand the nature of the blessings to which it has been admitted. From the sufferings of those who are lost, it will learn the greatness of the evils from which itself has been delivered; and from their obstinate continuance in sin, the hopeless nature of its own former state, had it not been for the atonement of Christ, and the sanctifying agency of the Holy Spirit. In the happiness of heaven it will see, and feel, the vastness, and multitude, of the enjoyments to which it has been introduced; and in the perfection and loveliness of itself, and of all its companions, the transcendent excellence of that character, which was mercifully begun in it here, to be improved for ever. In proportion as its views of these subjects expand, it will discern, more and more clearly, the importance of those wonderful things, which have been done to deliver it from endless sin and misery, and to instate it in endless virtue and happiness. In this manner it will advance continually, together with all glorified saints, towards the comprehension of what 'is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and will more and more know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge.' As the sense of these divine subjects increases in the heart, its admiration, complacency, and gratitude will rise continually higher; its beauty and amiablenesss daily increase; and itself become daily a more delightful object of the divine approbation.

IV. *The consequences of adoption are great and desirable.*

I have observed above, that the relation, produced by this event, is real. Every real relation involves real rights and obligations; duties to be performed on our part; and on the part of God, blessings, to the communications of which he has been pleased to oblige himself by his own gracious promises. The relation introduced into existence by the act of adoption, between him and his redeemed children, involves in its consequences a long train of rights and obligations, duties and blessings. Of these a few only can be mentioned at the present time; and even these must be mentioned in a summary manner.

The consequences of adoption respect either the present world, or the world to come.

In the present world, God,

1. Provides sustenance for his children.

God provides for the wants of all creatures; not only for mankind, but for animals. 'The young lions seek their meat from God; and he satisfieth the young ravens, when they cry.' But the provision which he makes for the wants of his children, is distinguished from that which he makes for others, by this important consideration; that it is exactly that which is best for them. In kind, in degree, in manner, it is just such as most promotes their real welfare. Were any difference to exist in their circumstances; had they more, or had they less; or were their supplies to be varied in any other manner; or were their situation, in this respect, to be at all different from what it actually is; their true interest would be less perfectly consulted. 'All things,' in this respect, 'work together for the good of them that love God; and they that seek the Lord do not want any good thing.'

The provision, made for them, differs also from that made for their fellow men, in another important particular. They are assured by his promise, that this provision will always be made for them while they live. They have, therefore, an indefeasible right to expect all the blessings of this nature which they need: a right founded on the unchangeable covenant of grace; on 'the truth of God, which is as the great mountains, stedfast and immovable; and on his promises, which endure for ever.' Every one of them may, therefore, say with David, 'The Lord is my Shepherd: I shall not want. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life.'

Finally, there is yet another difference between the provision made for their wants, and that made for others; viz. that the good furnished to them is a series, not of enjoyments merely, but of blessings. As such, they are not only permitted, but required to regard them. They may, therefore, without fear or danger, partake of them as such; and relish entirely whatever comfort they convey. They are sweetness without a sting; fragrance without a thorn, planted beneath to embitter the enjoyment. The pleasure which they contain, is also enhanced unceasingly by the delightful emotion of gratitude, with which they are always attended.

2. He protects them.

The exposure of mankind, from the cradle to the grave, to evil in an endless variety of forms, even when the danger is wholly unseen and unimagined, has ever been the favourite topic of the moralist, and a standing dictate of all human experience. Every day instructs us, that against this exposure no human foresight can effectually provide. 'Except the Lord keep the city, the' most diligent 'watchman waketh in vain. But he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.' Of his children 'the Lord is the keeper. The Lord is their shade upon their right hand. The sun shall not smite them by day, nor the moon by night; the Lord shall preserve them from all evil; he shall preserve their souls. The Lord shall preserve their going out, and their coming in, from this time forth and even for evermore. Therefore, when they pass through the waters, he will be with them, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow them; when they walk through the fire, they shall not be burnt; neither shall the flame kindle upon them.' In all the

situations of life, his 'eye is upon them for good.' They may fall, indeed, because it is necessary, because it is best, for them; 'yet they shall rise again, and shall not be utterly cast down.' At the same time, means of defence will be provided for them, in seasons apparently hopeless, and in ways utterly unexpected. Enemies are restrained; evils averted; dangers dissipated; friends raised up; the cause of providence changed; and thus, even when they are 'encompassed with the terrors of death, and the snares of hell, God is their fortress, their high tower, the rock of their salvation.'

3. He instructs them.

This work he accomplishes by his providence, by his word, by his ordinances, by his ministers, by the life and conversation of Christians, by the divine example of his Son, and by the peculiar communications of his Spirit. In all these ways, he furnishes them with whatever knowledge, and whatever useful impressions they need to receive; and trains them up, as children, in an effectual preparation for the perfect state of manhood, to which they will arrive in his heavenly kingdom.

This, however, is the peculiar office of the Spirit of truth. As he originally revealed the truth of God concerning our salvation; so, throughout their earthly pilgrimage, he discloses to the children of God the divine import of his own instructions, and gives them eyes to see, ears to hear, and hearts to understand and obey, his own glorious precepts. He teaches them the true, evangelical use of religious ordinances, of trials, of afflictions, and of blessings; dissolves their doubts; removes their perplexities; shows them the path of life; takes them by the hand, and guides them through the mazes of this earthly wilderness to the heavenly Canaan. All those who are the Sons of God, are, as St Paul teaches us, 'led by the Spirit of God.' By him they are kept from all fatal ignorance, and from every ruinous error.

4. He corrects them.

Of this necessary and benevolent parental office St Paul gives us a detailed account in the twelfth chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews. 'My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him; for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he, whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Furthermore, we have had fathers of our flesh, who corrected us, and we gave them reverence. Shall we not much rather be in subjection to the Father of spirits, and live? For they, verily, for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. Now no chastening seemeth for the present to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them, who are exercised thereby.'

In the account here given by the apostle concerning the correction of such as are adopted, summary as it is, we have a complete view of all that is most interesting in this subject. We are taught particularly, that correction is a distinctive privilege of God's children; that those, who are not corrected, are not his children; that we are always corrected, with an intention to do us good, and not arbitrarily, nor wantonly; that for this reason, as well as on account of the prerogatives and perfections of God, we are bound to receive our corrections with reverence, submission, patience, and fortitude; that the end for which we are corrected, is that we may be 'made partakers of his holiness, and live;' and that, if we receive our corrections in this manner, they will 'yield us the peaceable fruits of righteousness,' and thus terminate in our immortal life.

The corrections which God administers to his children, are administered in the reproofs, alarms, and threatenings of his word and ordinances, and the chastisements of his providence; and generally in all their distresses. By these they are checked in their downward progress of sense and sin; warned of approaching danger; quickened to more vigorous efforts in their duty; weaned from the world; and by degrees prepared for heaven.

5. In the future world, he provides for them a glorious inheritance.

Affectionate parents, in the present world, not only prepare their children to live usefully, by giving them a proper education, but to live comfortably, by furnishing them, when it is in their power, with sufficient means of subsistence. God, in the same manner, takes a parental care of his children, and provides the means of enabling them to live happily for ever. To this end, he renders them perfectly holy; and thus furnishes them with dispositions, in possession of which they can live happily; dispositions which prepare them to be useful, amiable, honourable, esteemed and loved by all wise and good beings, particularly by himself; dispositions which ensure them peace of mind, self-approbation, and the consciousness of being excellent and lovely. To a mind thus purified and exalted, he unites a body, spiritual, incorruptible, glorious, and immortal; the proper tenement of so noble an inhabitant. Thus formed, and perfected, he removes them to his heavenly kingdom, and there places them in circumstances, and amid companions, of such a nature, as to enable them to improve in knowledge, excellence, honour, and happiness, for ever.

SERMON LXXXIII.

CONSEQUENCES OF REGENERATION.—SANCTIFICATION.

And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly.—1 Thes. v. 23.

Having considered, in the preceding discourse, the nature, reality, importance, and consequences of adoption, I shall now proceed to the next subject of inquiry, in a theological system; viz. Sanctification. That this

is a consequence of regeneration is too obvious to every one who reads his Bible, to be questioned.

The word *sanctify*, used in the text, and elsewhere in the Scriptures abundantly, is employed to denote two things, which are commonly, and properly, made distinct objects of consideration in moral science; the act of regenerating man, or making him holy in the first instance; and the combination of all successive acts of a similar nature, by which man is improved in holiness through life. It is scarcely necessary to be observed, that the latter of these subjects will now be the theme of investigation.

The text is a prayer of St Paul, for the sanctification of the Thessalonian Christians. As he prays, that they 'may be wholly sanctified;' it is evident, that they were sanctified in part only at their regeneration; and at the time also in which this prayer was uttered. It is further evident, that they were to be sanctified in a still greater degree; because this event is prayed for by the apostle, under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. The reality of this work is thus completely evident from the text; and is indeed so generally acknowledged by Christians, that it would be superfluous to attempt a proof of it, at the present time. I shall, therefore, proceed directly to the consideration of this subject under the following heads:

I. *The agent;*

II. *The instruments;* and,

III. *The process; of sanctification.*

I. *The agent in our sanctification is the Spirit of God.*

This truth is amply declared in the Scriptures, 'God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through the sanctification of the Spirit,' 2 Thess. ii. 13. 'Elect,' says St Peter, 'according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience,' 1 Pet. i. 2. 'But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.' 1 Cor. vi. 14.

The most extensive and complete account, however, which is given us of this subject in the Scriptures, is contained in the eighth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans. Here Christians are said 'not to walk after the flesh, but after the Spirit:' 'to be under the law of the Spirit of life:' 'to be after the Spirit:' 'to mind the things of the Spirit:' 'to be spiritually minded;' and thus to possess 'life and peace:' 'to have the Spirit dwelling in them:' 'to be led by the Spirit;' which to them becomes the 'Spirit of adoption;' that is, the Spirit by which they 'are children of God, and cry unto him, Abba, Father:' 'to have the witness of the Spirit:' 'to have the first fruits of the Spirit:' 'to have the assistance of the Spirit in their prayers;' and, universally, to be under his guidance, and influence, through the whole Christian life.

The same agency, indeed, like that which was exerted in the creation of the world, and like the divine agency generally considered, is attributed to the Godhead universally; to the Father and to the Son. The text is an example of the first of these forms of ascription: 'The very God of peace sanctify you wholly!' Of the second we have an instance in the beginning of the Epistle of St Jude. 'Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called.' Of the last of these forms of ascription we have a specimen in 1 Cor. i. 30, 'Jesus Christ, who unto us, of God, is become wisdom, righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption:' and another in Heb. ii. 11, 'For both he who sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified, are all of one: wherefore he is not ashamed to call them brethren.'

The reason why this work is thus differently ascribed, is, that it is considered in these canonical discourses, in different manners, and with relation to different objects.

By the Father we are sanctified, as we are chosen by him unto sanctification, as by his good pleasure and free grace the atonement of Christ and the sanctifying agency of the Spirit, exist. By the Son we are sanctified, as his death is the only means by which we ever become holy: and by which the Spirit came into the world, for the benevolent purpose of making us holy. By the Spirit we are sanctified, as the immediate agent in applying to us the blessings of Christ's redemption; particularly in renewing and purifying our hearts and lives.

Thus, although this work is immediately performed by the Spirit, as the proper agent; yet we are truly, though more remotely, said to be sanctified by the Father, by the Son, and by the Godhead universally considered.

The manner in which this work is performed in the mind of man, must, like other questions concerning the agency of intelligent beings, remain in a great measure concealed from such minds as ours. My observations concerning it will, therefore, be very few. In my own view, the work of sanctification, so far as the agent is concerned, is no other than a repetition of the same agency, by which we are regenerated. Our regeneration, according to my own apprehensions, is accomplished, as I mentioned at large in a former discourse, by the communication to our minds of a new relish for divine things. Our sanctification, as distinguished from it, consists, supremely, in enhancing this relish; in rendering it more intense, more uniform, more vigorous, and universally more operative. The communication of this relish, or disposition, makes us holy at first; or in our regeneration. Subsequent communications of the same nature, render us more and more holy afterwards. As the effect, in both cases, is the same; it cannot be reasonably doubted, that the cause is the same; nor that it operates in the same manner. If this disposition is in the mind, the source of holy volitions and virtuous conduct; the stronger, the more prevalent it is at any succeeding period, the more virtuous will be the life.

II. *The instruments of our sanctification are generally the word and providence of God.*

The word of God is the means of our sanctification in all cases, in which it contributes to render us better; whether it be read, heard, or remembered; whether it be pondered with love, reverence, wonder, and delight; or whether, with similar affections, it be faithfully obeyed; whether its instructions and impressions be communicated to us directly, or through the medium of divine ordinances, or the conversation, or the communion, or the example, of our fellow Christians. In all these cases, the thing which is seen, which is illustrated, which is exemplified, which is in any manner brought home to the heart, and thus rendered the means of improving us in virtue, is no other than the word of God;

however numerous or however diversified the modes are in which it is presented to the mind.

As the word of God is loved by a regenerated mind; it is easily discernible, that its influence on such a mind will be very different from that which existed in the preceding state, commonly termed the state of nature.

Particularly, the Scriptures will be more frequently and extensively read. A book which we love, is often taken up; is often perused, and dwelt upon with pleasure. Such a book, therefore, will be much more thoroughly studied, and extensively understood, than one which is disrelished. It is, also, now more highly reverenced; and for this reason will be more read, and better known.

Its instructions and precepts, at the same time, coincide with the great scheme of moral conduct formed by the mind; as its only general directory; harmonizing with its views, affections, aims, and determinations. They are, therefore, welcomed as means of light; as objects of complacency; as sanctions of favourite designs; and as guides, aids, and motives, to a life, chosen and loved.

The Scriptures are also regarded by such a mind, as being, in a proper sense, the word of God; of him by whom itself was created; under whose law and government it is placed; to whom all its duty is originally owed; and to whom it is, of course, answerable for all its conduct. Thus considered, the Scriptures appear to such a mind invested with infinite authority, conveying supreme obligation, and rightfully controlling the heart and the life. With an efficacy still more peculiar, are they regarded as the word of the Father, the Redeemer, and the Sanctifier of man: as the word of a forgiving God; of a Redeemer, dying for its own sins; of that infinitely benevolent Spirit, who is its own sanctifier. Under these titles, the most venerable, and the most endearing which the universe has ever known, God speaks in his own word to every Christian with a power which nothing can equal, with a tenderness and endearment to which there is no parallel. Whatever he utters, is not the prescription of a perfect creator and lawgiver only; but the counsel and pleasure, also, of a father, and an everlasting friend: infinitely the most faithful and useful of all friends; infinitely the most venerable and affectionate of all parents. From such a source what counsel, what command, what persuasion will not completely influence, and control, the heart of filial piety?

Finally, the Scriptures are regarded by such a mind, as containing all things necessary to life and to godliness. The precepts are an ample summary of all the directions necessary for our practice; the ordinances, for our worship; and the instructions for our faith, and the prudent conduct of our religious life. The mind resorts to them, therefore, as to a complete compend of all the directions which it needs, or ever can need, in the present world. Every thing which it contains, is right; is sufficient; is decisive. To every thing it yields, therefore, with implicit confidence; and, whatever may be the rules which it finds here, is satisfied and safe.

The providence of God becomes the means of our sanctification in all the ways in which it makes solemn and religious impressions on the mind. The great, majestic, and awful events, which take place in the creation around us, excite strongly admiration and reverence towards that glorious Being, who holds the universe in his hands and controls all its beings and events with such amazing power and wisdom. The order and harmony with which all things move to their proper ends; the succession of 'summer and winter, seed-time and harvest;' and the terrible things which God 'does in righteousness, when his judgments are abroad in the earth;' awaken in the soul of the Christian most affecting views of the divine government, of its vastness, its comprehensiveness; its astonishing grandeur; and its invarying opposition to iniquity.

The dispensations of God to his church are a most impressive source of religious thoughts and affections to the Christian. These are all dispensations, involving the peculiar interests of his own brethren; his chosen friends; with whom he ever 'weeps, when they weep, and rejoices, when they rejoice.' These display, also, in a manner wholly peculiar, and, although often obscure, mysterious, and even perplexing; yet, if it be not his own fault, always interesting and profitable, the most venerable and endearing attributes of his heavenly Father. Every Christian will easily recollect, that, in the history of God's providence towards the disciples of Christ, in their sufferings and deliverances, their exposure and protection, the communications made to them of grace, mercy, and peace, their consequent exemplary faith, their hope and joy, their victory and triumph, their edifying life and their peaceful death, he has found means of improvement, always touching his heart, and contributing in an eminent degree to amend his life. Here he has found his doubts and fears, his stupidity and sloth, his murmurings and backslidings, most efficaciously reproved; his faith and fortitude, his reverence and submission, his hope, and love, and joy, unusually strengthened. From accounts of these things he has risen to more fervent prayers, more ardent praises, more vigorous resolutions, and more faithful obedience. What is true of these things, existing in other times, and other countries, is equally true of the same things, as they respect the Christians around him. Here the events are brought before his eyes; and are presented to him with the force possessed only by the immediate objects of sense. The truth, here, may be no more satisfactorily exhibited; but the impression made by it, is necessarily enhanced. A deeper interest is, therefore, naturally felt; more lasting traces are impressed on the memory; and a more powerful influence is diffused over the life. All the happy effects, derived from the preceding source, flow, therefore, from this with a more intense and controlling efficacy.

But, above all, the dispensations of God to himself, and to his family, are the most strongly realized, and most regularly directed to his own spiritual improvement, by the renewed man. These all are more perfectly understood; come more immediately to the heart; and operate with a more commanding influence on the life. In these he is taught by the finger of God, as a child trained to his service, and fitted by degrees for eternal glory. 'Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving kindness of the Lord.'

It will be remembered, that to both these sources of improvement in the divine life, the heart of the Christian is opened by the disposition which he receives in regeneration. It will be remembered, that he regards

them all with a taste, a relish, congenial to them; that he beholds them with enlightened eyes; that he applies himself to them with unceasing diligence; that he considers this application to them as his indispensable duty, and his pre-eminent interest. All of them, therefore, operate upon his understanding, affections, and life, in a manner unknown by other men: and where sinners would experience nothing but dulness, distrust, murmuring, and opposition, he cannot fail to find, for these reasons, the most efficacious means of rendering him wiser, and better, and happier.

III. *The process of sanctification may be summarily exhibited in the following manner.*

1. It is progressive through life.

The first sanctifying act of the Spirit of God is employed in regenerating the soul. Succeeding acts of the same nature, are employed in purifying it, through all the successive periods of life. All these acts are, I apprehend, of exactly the same nature; and differ from each other in no other respect, except that the regenerating act is first, and the sanctifying acts, as they are termed, are successive to it. All, united, constitute that which in the Scriptures, and often in the common use of language, is called the work of sanctification. But as there is frequent occasion to distinguish the first act from the others, we customarily term this the renewing, or regenerating act; and sometimes regeneration and renovation; and denote the succeeding acts by the words sanctifying and sanctification. All however, are, in my view, exactly of the same nature. The agent is the same: his goings are the same: and the effects are the same. The reason why the first act is thus distinguished, is, that the change from sin to holiness is an event so remarkable, so wonderful, so new in the providence of God. The future changes from one degree of holiness to another, although really wonderful, are less so; and less contrary to rational hope. They are, therefore, grouped together in the Scriptures, and in common language, under the one general name of sanctification. These acts, as I have observed, continue through life. Under the influence of them, and with the aid of those means which are appointed for this purpose in the divine government, the Christian 'grows in wisdom and in grace,' to the end.

To aim at this progress is accordingly made the duty, and described as the character, of a good man, throughout the Scriptures. 'This one thing I do,' saith St Paul, 'forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth to those things which are before, I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus,' Phil. iii. 13. 'Beware,' says St Peter, 'lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,' 2 Pet. iii. 18. 'Besides this,' says the same apostle, 'giving all diligence, add to your faith, virtue, to virtue, knowledge, to knowledge, temperance, to temperance, patience, to patience, godliness, to godliness, brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness, charity. For, if ye do these things, ye shall never fall,' 2 Pet. i. 5, 6, 7, 10.

2. This process is not uniform.

By this I intend, that it is not the same in manner or degree, every day, month, or year. In the religious life of St Paul, as we are informed, 'the law of the members' prevailed at times; and, at times, 'the law of the mind.' In that of David, and that of Hezekiah, as well as in that of Solomon, sin, at particular seasons, appears evidently to have triumphed throughout considerable periods.

When we remember the nature and circumstances of men, this fact will be far from appearing wonderful. The nature of man is in many respects various. From whatever cause it arises, our views are at times brighter, our vigilance more active, our resolution stronger, our temper more serene, and our energy more vigorous, than at other times. This is visible in all that we speak, or think, or do, whatever may be the objects of our attention. That a state of things in us, which so materially affects ourselves, in our very nature, should have an important influence on our religious interests, is to be expected of course. The changes are here wrought in ourselves; and we, the persons thus changed, are those, whose religion is concerned. As we are changed, therefore, the state of our religion must, in a greater or less degree be changed also. When our minds are bright, and prepared to take bright views of any subject of contemplation; their views of religion will naturally be bright. When our affections are in a general state of ardour; our love to divine things will naturally be vigorous; as well as our hatred to sin and temptation. When our resolution is generally firm, we shall naturally be 'steadfast and immovable in the work of the Lord.' On the contrary, when our apprehension is dull and heavy, our spirits low, and our resolution timid and wavering, all our efforts will be poor, feeble, and in a great measure fruitless. Our views will be obscure, our affections will lag, and our progress will either not exist at all, or be slow, heavy, and discouraging.

Sometimes, also, we are beset by more numerous and more powerful temptations. Snares are set for us with greater art and secrecy. Sophistry more plausible and seducing is employed to warp our principles, affections, and conduct. Obstacles apparently insurmountable block up our way. Discouragements, terrifying, and at seasons overwhelming, daunt our resolution. The inducements to backsliding come upon us suddenly; find us off our guard; and overpower us, before we summon either our understanding, or our principles, to our aid.

At the same time, our advantages for improvement in the Christian life, are, at some times, far less, and less productive of safety and improvement, than at others. Our peculiar and most useful friends, those who best understand our character, wants, and dangers, are sometimes removed from us to such a distance, that we cannot enjoy their counsels, reproofs, consolations, or example. We are prevented from uniting with them in the public or private ordinances of the gospel; and are deprived of the peculiar blessings of intimate Christian communion.

At times, also, we are peculiarly unfaithful to ourselves, and to God; are less watchful; less prayerful; less strenuous in our opposition to temptation, and in the performance of our duty. The world lays stronger hold on our affections. We venture on forbidden ground; draw near to the objects of seduction: become fascinated with charms before undiscovered, and overpowered by combinations of harmony, fragrance, beauty, and splendour, of sprightliness, gayety, and joy; or alarmed by an assemblage of enemies, dangers, and terrors, of contempt, shame, and ridicule; so as to be enticed to sin, on the one hand, and terrified into it, on the other.

At other periods, most of these things are reversed. Time, at these seasons, rolls on, to us, with brighter mornings, with more unclouded days, with more serene evenings; and nights with more undisturbed tranquillity and peaceful repose. At such seasons, our views of all divine subjects are clearer and more just. Our affections are more alive; our aims more noble, unmixed, and heavenly; our resolution more vigorous and uniform; our conduct more approved in its progress, and followed, in review, by purer peace and self-approbation. God, also, for reasons wholly unknown to us, or imperfectly comprehended by us, sometimes withdraws the light of his countenance, and the blessings of his Spirit; sometimes communicates these and other blessings more uniformly and abundantly; and generally regulates his providence, towards us, in such a manner, that we are greatly improved and prospered, in some instances; and, in others, are afflicted, brought to a stand, or suffered to decline.

But, with all these inequalities in the course of the Christian, his holiness, like 'the house of David, waxes stronger and stronger;' and his corruption, like 'the house of Saul, becomes weaker and weaker.'

3. The process of sanctification is universal.

By this I intend, that it affects the whole man: his views, affections, purposes, and conduct; and those of every kind. It extends alike to his duties of every kind: towards himself, his fellow creatures, and his Maker. It affects, and improves, indiscriminately, all the virtues of the Christian character: love to God and to mankind; faith, repentance, justice, truth, kindness, humility, forgiveness, charity, generosity, public spirit, meekness, patience, fortitude, temperance, moderation, candour, and charitableness of judgment. It influences ruling passions and appetites; habits of thought and affection, of language and practice. It prompts to all the acts of piety: to prayer, praise, attendance upon the sanctuary and its ordinances, our sanctification of the sabbath, Christian communion, and Christian discipline.

Generally, it affects every part of the Christian's character and life, and all it affects, with continual advantage. Yet, as has been already remarked, the operation is not uniform. All the Christian virtues increase; yet they do not all increase alike; nor does any one of them increase in the same manner at all times. In the Scriptures, the improvement of the mind in the Christian character is, with great beauty and correctness, compared to the growth of children. Children grow from their birth; and may be truly said to be always growing: yet the increase is not always alike, nor always visible. They grow, also, in every part of their frame; increasing upon the whole, both in size and stature, throughout all the members. Yet at some times, and in some of the members, they cannot be seen to grow at all: while at other times, and in other members, the increase is rapid, and easily discernible. The means of growth, also, are very various, and variously operative. From day to day, from week to week, and sometimes from year to year, the progress cannot be perceived. And, in some instances, one part is found to increase, another to be at a stand, or even to diminish; and thus the symmetry, proportion, and beauty, of the frame to be sensibly injured. In all these particulars, the parallel between the growth of Christians, and the growth of children, is exact.

4. The progress of sanctification is conspicuous in the life.

From the commencement of Christianity in the soul, the Christian course is that of a general reformation. The religion, that 'brings' not 'forth fruits meet for repentance,' is not the religion of the Scriptures. It is not the beginning of spiritual life. It is not the beginning of immortal life. The virtue of the gospel is a living principle, producing every good fruit; rendering the man wiser, and his life and conversation better, unto the end. The natural passions and appetites of some Christians are, indeed, strong; and their evil habits, antecedently to regeneration, have become powerful. The temptations of others are peculiarly great: and they labour under peculiar disadvantages for resisting them, as well as for making progress in the Christian life.

As the work of sanctification itself proceeds, according to the exhibition which I have made of this subject, in irregular and very various gradations; so the external fruits of it, seen in the life of the Christian, are subject to the same gradations. 'The wind bloweth,' not only 'where,' but in what manner, 'it listeth;' and no particular description can be satisfactorily given of its progress.

The varieties of this work, which I have all along referred to the life of a single person, become far more numerous and diversified when referred to Christians in general. Here, both the original and incidental differences are multiplied almost without end: and it is impossible to mention even a small part of them in the compass of a single discourse. Still the same general doctrines are applicable, and useful, to all Christians; because all have a common nature, and a common interest.

REMARKS.

1. The considerations, suggested concerning this important religious subject, furnish every professing Christian with an interesting rule for the examination of his own character.

It has been here exhibited, as the true process of sanctification, that this work is carried on through the whole of human life; as the continual, though not uniform, state of the Christian character, to be advancing, under the influence of the divine Spirit, 'towards the stature of the perfect man.' With this scheme in view, it becomes every professor of religion faithfully to inquire, whether he perceives in his own mind such a progress. It will readily be seen, that Christians who have lately become such, must have fewer, and more imperfect, means of making this inquiry, and determining the point satisfactorily, than those, who are farther advanced. The longer children have been growing, the more perceivable will be the change of their stature. The longer Christians have been Christians, the greater advances in religion will they have had opportunity to make. The child may have grown in reality, through a short period; while yet his growth is incapable of being perceived. The young Christian may, in like manner, find less proof of his advancement; or doubtful proof; or even no proof at all; and yet have no sufficient reason for discouragement. Still he ought to make the inquiry; and to make it with persevering diligence. If he be faithful in his duty, he will, in all probability and at no great distance of time, find comfort-

ing evidence of his growth in grace; and usually the sooner, the more faithful he is in pursuing this examination.

The professor, who has longer declared his devotion to God, is bound still more earnestly to make this inquiry. One, at least, of the best proofs which can be furnished, of the existence of grace in the soul, is evidence of its growth; and one of which we ought never to lose sight, even for a day. If we go on from month to month, and from year to year, without any improvement in the Christian life; our case must be dark and distressing indeed. Much more distressing must it be, if, instead of advancing, we sensibly decline. Christians may, and will, fall into temptation, and sin; and sometimes into sins which are great and peculiarly dreadful. Thus did David; thus did Solomon; thus did Peter. These are fearful grounds of humiliation and sorrow; but even these, when followed by contrition and amendment, are far less discouraging and hopeless, than that slow, regular decline, that chilled, perishing state, which admits of no intervenings of warmth, no returns of health and vigour. The pleurisy, or the gout may kill; and often greatly alarm, and endanger; but they frequently, nay, most usually, terminate their violence speedily, and give place to returning strength. The consumption, on the other hand, although its attacks are gentle, gradual, and scarcely perceivable, insinuates itself with a fatal progress into the constitution; and, if not exterminated in season, regularly ends in death. I will not say, that a hectic in religion is hopeless; but it must be allowed, on all hands, to be terrible. Let it be observed in this place, however, that Christians sometimes are really advancing, when they do not perceive it; and when their progress, although hidden from themselves, is visible to those around them. This, together with other mysteries, God will unfold hereafter; and will show them, that the dispensation has been the means of his glory, and of their own final good. All Christians ought to learn, from this fact, to consult their fellow Christians, as well as themselves, on this great subject; and not to depend entirely on their own investigation.

If, on the other hand, professors of religion find themselves advancing in faith, repentance, and holiness; if God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, is more and more an object of delightful contemplation to their minds; if they take more and more delight in prayer and praise, in the Sabbath, the sanctuary, and their ordinances; if the word of God seems more and more preferable 'to the most fine gold;' if they love more and more to 'do good unto all men;' if they find an increasing delight in the character, company, conversation, and prosperity, of their fellow Christians: then they may, indeed, sing of mercy; and enjoy a lively hope, that they are fast overcoming the world, and preparing for the glories of the heavenly kingdom.

2. The same considerations furnish abundant encouragement to the Christian.

Think how much God has done to accomplish this work; and you can find no room for despondency. I well know, I readily confess, how prone all men are to yield to temptations; to love the world; to indulge appetite and passion; to embrace error; to cherish self-justification; to find ways of sinning, which in their own eyes are safe and blameless; to reconcile and unite virtues to their counterfeit vices; and thus, in a great variety of modes, to backslide, and sin, and fall. How hopeless, with these things in our view, would seem final, persevering holiness, and a safe arrival in the heavenly kingdom?

But the agency of the spirit of God, in our sanctification, puts all these terrible evils to flight; and assures us, that 'he, who hath begun a good work in us, will perform it unto the day of Christ.' He is every where present to every Christian; knows every want, and danger; and is ever ready to do all that is necessary and useful for the followers of Christ. No evil can escape his eye; no enemy resist or elude his power. With infinite benignity and tenderness he dwells within and without us, to guard, relieve, heal, sanctify, and save; to give us strength to endure, and power to overcome. Under his influence and direction, we shall successfully 'fight the good fight, keep the faith, finish our course with joy, and receive that crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give to all them that love his appearing. Thanks be to God for this unspeakable gift.' Amen.

SERMON LXXXIV.

CONSEQUENCES OF REGENERATION.—PEACE OF CONSCIENCE.

Peace I leave with you: my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you.—John xiv. 27

Having examined the nature of adoption and sanctification, I shall now proceed to consider another consequence of this change in man; viz. evangelical peace.

These words are a part of Christ's first discourse to his apostles, after the institution of the Lord's supper. He was now about to leave the world. His death he had often predicted to them in the plainest language: yet so strong were their expectations of a reigning, conquering Messiah, that they seem never to have believed these predictions. So far as they were able, they appear to have interpreted them in any manner, rather than the true one; and, when they could not misinterpret them, to have concluded, that they involved some mystery, which it was beyond their power to unriddle.

However, as the time drew near, and the events, which led to this great one, began to thicken, they be-

came apprehensive and alarmed. What evils were before them they seem not to have realized; but they appear to have been fully sensible, that something terrible was at hand, and to have become deeply discouraged by loose and undefined forebodings.

Christ understood, perfectly, the state of their minds; and with his own peculiar tenderness, commenced the benevolent work of furnishing them the necessary relief. This he accomplished in three discourses: the first included in this, the second in the two following, and the third in the seventeenth, chapters. Never were consolations so well devised, or so well administered. The discourses are beautiful beyond all parallel; supremely instructive; exquisitely tender; and replete with considerations of the most supporting nature. The last of them is a prayer; more interesting, more sublime, more wonderful, than ever was, or ever will be, uttered in the present world; and may fairly be regarded as a specimen of that intercession which the divine advocate makes for his followers 'before the throne of the Majesty in the heavens.'

Among the considerations which endear these discourses of Christ to his children, the most affecting one is, they are his dying words; his last addresses before he ascended the cross. They succeeded the institution of the sacramental supper: they preceded the crucifixion. Never was there an occasion so interesting, so solemn, so divine; nor was any mind, beside that of Christ, ever so perfectly fitted to understand, and feel, the nature of this occasion, or so able to employ it to the best of all purposes. He seems, here, to have poured out his soul with supreme love, and infinite endearment. The whole Saviour is brought out to view: the God becomes visible in his most lovely and glorious character.

The apostles were now to be left by him; to go, unbefriended and unprotected, into a world of enemies; and to meet all the evils which could be inflicted on them by bigotry, malice, and persecution. To support them in this state of suffering, he promises them a rich variety of blessings; particularly, the presence and everlasting love of his Father and himself; reminds them of his own sufferings, and of the fortitude with which he had endured them; and assures to them the consolations of the Spirit of truth, as a most desirable and delightful support under all external distresses.

Of all the blessings contained in these promises, none seems to be better suited to their situation and their wants, than that which is announced in the text. When contentions multiply, and enemies invade from without; when friends withdraw, and comforts diminish; when enjoyments lessen, and hope retires; nothing can be more timely, more desirable, more welcome, than peace within; peace quieting all the tumults of the mind, soothing the wounds of a troubled conscience, and allaying, on the one hand, fear; on the other, suffering.

That we may understand the value of this legacy, left by the Redeemer not to his apostles only, but to all his followers, it will be useful to consider,

I. *The nature of the peace which he gave;* and,

II. *The manner in which he gave it.*

I. *I will endeavour to explain the nature of the peace which Christ gave his disciples.*

Peace is always opposed to war; and, when begun in any instance, involves the cessation of the preceding conflict. With a direct reference to such a conflict Christ was pleased to bestow the blessing mentioned in the text; and called it by a name, fitted to show both the nature of the evils to be remedied, and the nature of the remedy.

Such a conflict actually exists between man and himself; his fellow men; and his Maker. Against God this hostility manifests itself in ten thousand acts of resistance to his pleasure. While he claims the supreme love and implicit obedience of every intelligent creature, man denies both his claims and the rights on which they are founded; and boldly sets up, in opposition to them, claims and rights of his own, which he determines to support to the utmost of his power. For this end he commences a progress of revolt and contention, which occupies most of his time, and most of his thoughts; and, at death, leaves, not unfrequently, the controversy undecided.

With his fellow men his contention arises from two sources: his own selfishness, and theirs. The mind in which selfishness reigns, always wishes, intends, and labours, to make every other interest subservient to its own; or, at the least, to prevent it from disturbing, precluding, or diminishing its own. From this source have sprung all the private and all the public contentions which have destroyed the peace of neighbourhoods, and ravaged the world; the sufferings and the sighs, the tears and the groans, which have spread from one end of heaven to the other.

Nor is man less busily employed in conflicting with himself. The passions and appetites of the human heart have ever opposed the dictates of conscience. The conscience was intended by God to regulate the moral conduct of the man; and strenuously, and firmly, asserts its right to this most important, and most neessary, control. Still more strenuously the passions rebel against it; force the man to submit to their own dictates; and hurry him into a course of disobedience. In this progress of guilt, conscience holds out her dreadful mirror to his terrified eye; and exhibits him to himself, odious, deformed, and fearfully exposed to the anger of God.

To this distracted, miserable being, peace is announced, in the text, by him who knew all the wants, sufferings, and dangers of our race. Upon a strict examination, the legacy will be found to be exactly suited to the state of those, for whom it was intended.

1. It is a happy state of the mind, or intellect.

Every person, who has at all entertained serious and solemn thoughts concerning religious subjects, must have often perceived a multitude of doubts springing up in his mind, at different times, concerning the word of God; the evidence by which its divine origin is evinced, and the nature of the doctrines and precepts which it contains. These doubts may, at times, grow out of ignorance; usually they spring from the heart; from its disrelish to the truth itself, and its opposition to its author. Every doubt on this subject is attended with some degree of distress. The soul is unwilling that there should be any such truths; and that God should have such a character as to be capable of being the author of them. Especially is this observation applicable to those doctrines which exhibit ourselves as guilty, condemned, and ruined; and God as pure, holy, and sovereign. Against these doctrines mankind have contended in all ages; have doubted their truth; have denied their

import; and have exploded the evidence by which they were sustained. In the place of these doctrines the mind substitutes others which are more palatable to itself. For their obvious and real meaning, which it is determined not to admit, it substitutes others; kindred, perhaps, and plausible, but oblique and incapable of being supported. In this manner it struggles to get loose from the truth of God; sometimes by believing that he has made no revelation of his will to mankind; sometimes by determining, that he has made no such revelation as is commonly received; and generally by adopting a creed, essentially different from that which is contained in the Scriptures. Every part of this creed it makes more pleasing to itself, less terrifying, less humiliating, and yet, as it hopes, equally safe.

Still, revelation, in spite of all these labours and struggles, continues to be supported by no small evidence. The obvious meaning of the doctrines which it contains, will, at times, appear but too probably the true meaning. In spite of the mind itself, its arguments and persuasions, God may, and, it frequently fears, will be found to be just such a being, as he seems to be exhibited in the Scriptures. Its own character, also, it almost daily suspects (and conscience perpetually enhances the suspicion) is just such as the Scriptures have declared; and its danger neither less real, nor less terrible. Thus the soul becomes 'a troubled sea, which cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.'

Nor is either this opposition, or the distress which springs from it, less excited by the tenor of the scriptural precepts, than by that of the doctrines. In the view of such a mind the precepts appear to be unnecessarily numerous, nice, and rigid; enjoining many things which it thinks might better have been omitted; and prohibiting many things which, it conceives, would have been much better allowed. The life which they require, it pronounces to be unnecessarily strict, difficult, and discouraging; and regards as being of a gloomy and melancholy nature. Hence it supposes, and at times believes, that God cannot have intended that his precepts should be understood in their obvious meaning; and that some other meaning, attended with many softenings and involving many limitations, is to be attributed to them; or that, at the worst, a partial, imperfect obedience to them will ultimately be accepted.

Under the influence of these wishes, and the views to which they give birth, accompanied by fears, that the things thus opposed may all be the real pleasure of God; the views erroneous, and the wishes sinful; such a mind wearies itself to find out a more palatable moral system; is harassed by suspense, and distressed by painful apprehensions.

But when the hostility of the heart towards its Maker, and towards his truth, is dissolved by the mild influence of the Spirit of grace; and the soul is endued with love to its Maker; the character of God, and the doctrines and precepts of his word, are seen with new optics; and appear, therefore, in a new light. It is the nature of evangelical love to delight, alike, in the truth and its author. Both are thenceforth seen with the eyes of good-will. Of course, God appears to the mind invested with his proper character and supreme glory; as the sum of all excellence; as infinitely great, and wise, and good. It is seen to be impossible for him to deceive, or to be deceived. Whatever he declares is, therefore, admitted without reserve. The divine origin of the Scriptures is readily believed, because the evidence which supports it, is such, as to satisfy any candid mind; and because the mind in question, has now become possessed of real candour. The true and obvious meaning of the doctrines and precepts, wherever it is seen, is readily received, because it is relished, and because God is believed to have made his precepts 'plain to him that understandeth,' or, in other words, is possessed of piety. The things, to be believed, the mind now loves to believe. The things required it now chooses to do. The nature of the doctrines, and the reasons on which the precepts are founded, it will, indeed, at times be unable to unravel. But here its faith and obedience will be implicit; because it knows, that God does not prescribe without the best reasons, and that his instructions, however mysterious, must be always true, and always desirable. What it understands it welcomes. What it does not understand it receives with a humble submission to him who has said, 'The secret things belong to God; but the things that are revealed belong to men.'

From such a mind, it is easy to see, suspense and perplexity must vanish of course; together with all the agitation, fear, and pain with which they were attended. The weapons of its warfare have been laid down; its toils are ended; its alarms are over; its struggles are relinquished; and a delightful repose has succeeded to its multiplied, long-continued, and painful efforts; a repose doubly delightful in its own nature, and a charming contrast to the various troubles by which it has been so often and so deeply distressed.

2. It is a happy state of the affections.

It has been already sufficiently indicated, that the affections are originally alienated from God, and opposed to his government and pleasure. The spirit of apostasy is, primarily, a spirit of pride and self-dependence; which always exalts itself against its Maker. The angels who fell, fell by refusing to 'keep their first estate;' την ἑαυτων αρχην; *their own office*, or *principality*; and by *deserting* (απολιποντας) *their habitation*; οικητηριον, *their station*. They refused to continue even in that exalted rank of existence, and to execute the duties of that high station assigned to them by the goodness of God. The same spirit predominates in fallen men. They too are dissatisfied with their own station, and their own duties. All apostate beings say to God in their hearts, 'we will not have thee to reign over us.'

Equally hostile to the divine government is the lust of the flesh—sensuality; and the lust of the eyes—avarice. Concerning these three great controlling affections of the human mind, it is alike true, that 'they are not of the Father, but of the world;' and that, wherever they reign, the 'love of the Father' cannot exist.

From the indulgence of this spirit, continually spring up in the soul haughty claims upon its Maker for an increase of its enjoyments, and exemption from its duties: claims which God never satisfies, unless in the way of judgment and indignation. The soul, therefore, is discontented with its allotments; questions his wisdom, goodness, and truth; murmurs against his providence; refuses to perform its own duty; and thus carries on a continual, ardent, painful conflict with its Maker.

A controversy with such a being as God, cannot fail of being attended with perpetual anxiety and alarm. He, who is the subject of it, dreads the presence of God; is terrified by all the threatenings of his word;

trembles at the approach of death; shrinks from the judgment; and looks towards a future retribution with horror.

Of these evils there is but one possible termination; and that is submission to God. Whenever this is accomplished in earnest, they dissolve, like an enchantment in Arabian tales. The Creator, before dreaded and hated, is changed at once, to the view of the soul, into an affectionate Parent, reverenced, loved, and delightfully obeyed. This awful enemy becomes instantaneously an everlasting and almighty friend; this hard master, a divine and boundless benefactor. His character is then contemplated with awe, indeed, but with delight also. His commandments, no longer grievous, are preferred to thousands of gold and of silver. His presence, no longer terrible, is continually coveted; and communion with him in prayer and praise is daily sought, and delightfully found.

In this manner the affections become serene, cheerful, and pleasant. The storm subsides into a calm; and the darkness of the soul is illumined with a perpetual sunshine.

3. It is a happy state of the conscience.

When the affections have thus bowed to their Creator; when the soul has sincerely said, 'thy will be done;' conscience, unopposed and undisturbed, dictates whatever is to be done, and smiles its approbation, whenever it is performed. In the various retrospects, which the Christian takes of his progress, at the end of a day, a week, a month, or a year, he is enabled to look on, and approve; and to feel a supporting hope, that he is approved, in some good measure, by his God. His thoughts, affections, and designs, cease to be objects of dread; and self-examination to be a duty which he cannot perform. To himself he is no longer a stranger. Prayer, he no longer dreads. From his moral character he no longer shrinks. At his future destiny he ceases to shudder. A daily, welcome, cheerful visitor at the internal fire-side, he finds there nothing but peace, harmony, and pleasure.

4. It is a happy state of the life.

In a world like this, it will not be imagined, that external peace can be perfect. Although the man in question is possessed of a peaceful spirit only, yet in those around him he will not always find the same disposition. In him there is no cause of hostility; but in them it will not, of course, be extinguished. While he is surrounded by beings of this description, therefore, he cannot expect undisturbed peace. Yet amid the discord and violence of this world, his moderation, his kindness, will either allay, or quietly and firmly endure the storm. Men of candid dispositions, beholding his conduct, will approve and commend; and men of prejudice and passion will often be overcome, and desist from their persecution.

Yet even here he will find many persons of a character kindred to his own. Of the approbation, the love, and the kind offices, of these men he is assured. The esteem of wisdom, and worth, is invaluable; is accompanied by sincere love; is followed by a perpetual train of kind offices; and is, therefore, an ample compensation for the contempt, hatred, and obloquy, of all the unreasonable and unworthy. Should he meet, then, with many troubles from men of this character; he will still find a rich enjoyment from the approbation and goodwill of the wise and virtuous; 'a table' of rich viands, 'spread' before him 'in the presence of his enemies; a cup, running over' with blessings.

At the same time he is still more refreshed and comforted by a sense of the approbation of God. A humble hope of forgiveness is accompanied, of course, by a hope of the divine complacency. The 'favour' of God even in this world 'is life, and his loving-kindness better than life.' A disposition to obey this great and glorious Being is always delightful; and his 'law sweeter' to an evangelical taste 'than honey, and the honey comb.' Although men, therefore, although all men, should rise up in hostility against him; he would say with David, 'the Lord is on my side, I will not fear. What can man do unto me? I have set the Lord always before me: because he is at my right hand I shall not be moved.' The Lord God is his shield: he cannot fail, therefore, of being safe. The Lord God is his sun; his life will, therefore, be cheered with the light of heaven.

II. *The manner, in which this legacy is given, is taught in those remarkable words of our Saviour,* "*Not as the world giveth, give I unto you.*"

The world gives with an intention to gain at least as much, as it gave; and thus gives for its own benefit; not for ours. The world gives by halves; and often resumes what it has given. The world gives grudgingly; with a meanness which embitters the boon to those who receive it. The world gives in pretence, and not in reality; its gifts being, at best, of little value, and of momentary duration. Finally, the world reproaches us as being deeply indebted for its largesses; and imperiously demands servile acknowledgments, and base compliances, as a proper return for the obligation which it has conferred.

Christ, on the contrary, gives with perfect liberality, and unlimited bounty; cheerfully; never resuming what he has given; for our benefit only; really, and not in pretence; with absolute sincerity, and supreme nobleness of disposition. His gifts, also, while they are of high value in themselves, endure for ever. At the same time he never reproaches us on account of his blessings; and demands of us no unworthy sacrifices.

REMARKS.

From these observations we learn,

1. How to estimate this legacy of Christ.

To a being in the situation of man, as described in the former part of this discourse, such a gift is plainly and pre-eminently necessary. Condemned, loathed, and afflicted by his Maker, he has no friend to whom he may betake himself for consolation, and no refuge to which he may fly for safety. Whatever he does, God is present to see, and to retribute. An enemy here, he is an enemy every where: an enemy from whom there is no concealment, defence, nor escape. Still the circumstances of the unhappy man would be less dreadful, if he could find peace and support within. But, there, conscience arms herself against him: while his rebellious passions bring their pain in hand, and are frequently followed by remorse and despair. When he looks abroad, he sees his fellow creatures at war with him also; and from them seeks in vain for an alleviation of his sufferings.

In this situation Christ proclaims to him peace with God, with mankind, and with himself; 'peace passing all understanding;' peace which 'the world can neither give, nor take away.' Henceforth, nothing is desirable

in his sight, but that which God chooses; nothing lovely but that which God loves. To know the divine will is, in his view, to know all that is necessary; and to obey it, all that is useful. He is assured of the divine protection, and is therefore safe: for he knows, that no enemy can endanger his welfare, or disturb his repose.

In the mean time, 'his soul' has 'returned to its rest,' and is quiet. The storm is past; and is succeeded by serenity and sunshine. If he finds enemies abroad, he disarms half their rage by his own meekness: the rest he sustains, pities, and forgives.

In times of danger, when God comes out against mankind, to 'judge the world in righteousness,' he enjoys the unspeakable consolation of believing, that this awful Being is a friend to him. When, therefore, the tempest rages, the famine desolates, or the pestilence hurries its victims to the grave; 'when a thousand fall at his side, and ten thousand at his right hand; it shall not come near him.'

Afflictions will, however, reach even him. It is necessary, that he should be chastened: and chastening in its very nature is grievous. But, for this grief the peace of the gospel provides a sure and delightful alleviation. The pain, he knows is inflicted by the 'Father of his spirit; that he may become a partaker of his holiness, and live.' He receives it, therefore, with patience and resignation; and thus strips disease of its languor; robs pain of its sting; and lights up a cheering lamp in the dark chambers of sorrow.

In death, that melancholy and distressing day to the wicked, his eye penetrates the gloom, and descries the glorious morning which dawns beyond it. On the other side of this narrow, gloomy valley, spreads a world of peace: where no storm ever blows; no enemy ever invades; and no danger ever threatens. There all are friends. God is his friend; Christ is his friend; and none but his friends are found among the 'innumerable company of angels,' or 'the general assembly of the first born.'

2. How greatly is this blessing enhanced by the consideration, that Christ has given us his own peace.

'Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you.' In this declaration, we are reminded of the glorious character of him who bestows the legacy, and of the wonderful things, which he has done to procure it for us. Christ is divinely great and excellent; and the gift is suited to his character; is excellent, noble, and divine. It is the rich fruit, the genuine evidence, of virtue; a seal impressed by the Saviour on the soul, as unquestionable proof that it has become his; a living witness, that he has there taken up his residence, as in a temple in which he is pleased to dwell. It is his 'still, small voice,' whispering in delightful accents that he is there; and that he is there on his own most benevolent purpose of purifying it for heaven, and quickening it with immortal life. The giver is divine; the gift is divine; the end for which it is given, is also divine.

The things, which he has done, and suffered, to procure this gift for man, are infinitely great and endearing. For this end, when he was 'in the form of God, and thought it no robbery to be equal with God; he made himself of no reputation; was made in the likeness of men; and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.' In the peace which Christians enjoy, they are presented with a perpetual memorial of these wonderful efforts of him who thus 'in his flesh abolished the enmity; and made, preached, and became, peace to them who were afar off, and to them who were nigh.' Whenever this delightful serenity of soul is enjoyed by us, we cannot easily avoid recollecting, that with boundless benignity the Son of God became man; lived a life of unceasing humiliation and suffering; died on the cross; rose from the dead; ascended to heaven; and there intercedes for ever, that this blessing may be ours. What love can be compared to this? What character was ever so lovely, so endearing, so peculiarly divine?

As the peace of Christ, also, this glorious possession assumes a new character of excellence and worth. In him this peace was the result of consummate wisdom and supreme rectitude: a divine harmony of perfect intelligence and immeasurable love. It was a possession completely independent. None could give it: none could take it away. In the pure, serene, eternal mind of the Saviour it dwelt of course, inseparably, and for ever. It was the necessary and immortal offspring of immortal excellence: the co-eternal splendour of light eternal. 'Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever he had formed the earth and the world; then was it by him, as one brought up with him: and was daily his delight, rejoicing alway before him; rejoicing' with a divine prescience 'in the' future 'habitable parts of the earth, and' placing 'its delights in the sons of men.'

In his mediatorial residence among the children of apostate Adam; amid all his sorrows and labours, amid all the opposition, rejection, and persecution which he experienced; amid all the living anguish, and dying agonies, which he suffered; this celestial companion, this divine inmate of his bosom, perpetually sustained him; and diffused fortitude and serenity around his soul. Thus sustained, thus tranquilized, he smiled in agony, and triumphed in death.

To us, as to him, it is peace 'passing all understanding; peace which the world cannot give, nor take away.' Grace and mercy descend first in the train of infinite blessings, 'from God our Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ;' and peace enters our doors immediately behind them. A guest, fresh from heaven, and from the presence of God, peace bears all the characteristics of the world from which she descends; of the region in which she was born; of the family to which she is allied; and of the parent from whom she sprang. Gentle and serene, beautiful and lovely, she becomes a willing companion to every humble, faithful follower of the Lamb; to every genuine child of God. Her own angelic disposition she breathes insensibly into the soul; her softness and gentleness she infuses into the heart; and her living smiles she spreads over the aspect. At once, the man is changed into a new creature. His soul, before, the region of darkness and storm, is cleared, at once, of the clouds, by which it was overcast. Its tempestuous passions cease to rage and ravage; and a heavenly sunshine illumines the world within. The universe, to him heretofore a vast kingdom of war and opposition, is converted into a delightful residence of quiet and harmony; in which an immense multitude of the inhabitants, such as 'no man can number,' are become his friends, and in which the hostilities of the rest will only 'work together for his good.' God, also, seen by him before 'in clouds and darkness,' which were 'very tempestuous round about him,' has unfolded to him the light of his countenance; and given him a lively and transporting earnest of serene, unclouded, everlasting day.

SERMON LXXXV.

CONSEQUENCES OF REGENERATION.—JOY IN THE HOLY GHOST.

For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.
Rom. xiv. 17.

On the last Sabbath, I considered the nature and importance of Spiritual Peace. I shall proceed to examine another consequence of regeneration; viz. Joy in the Holy Ghost.

In the text, the apostle declares, that 'the kingdom of God' is formed of 'righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.' By this kingdom he intends, plainly, not the kingdom of creation, nor the kingdom of providence, nor, in a strict sense, what is usually called the kingdom of grace. The word kingdom is here used in a figurative manner; and denotes 'the effects of that secret, invisible, incomprehensible influence over the hearts of mankind, which is exerted by the Spirit of grace in the work of sanctification.' This influence is the great engine of the divine government over the hearts of intelligent beings; and is often with the utmost propriety termed in the gospel the kingdom of God. Of this influence, 'righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost,' are effects, primarily important; and in the text are, figuratively, called by a name which, in simple language, would properly belong to the cause of their existence. In a similar manner is the term used by Christ, Luke xvii. 20. 'The kingdom of God cometh not with observation; neither shall they say concerning it, Lo here, or lo there: for the kingdom of God is within you.'

Of these three great effects of the energy of the divine Spirit, the first, viz. righteousness, here used for holiness or evangelical virtue, is, in the soul, the cause of the two last. From righteousness, in this sense, spring, of course, the peace and joy of the spiritual character. 'Joy in the Holy Ghost,' therefore, is obviously a consequence of regeneration. In the text, as well as in the order of nature, it is subjoined to peace; although we are ever to remember, that they always exist together in the same mind, and at the same time.

In examining this subject, the following considerations have occurred to me, as particularly deserving the attention of a religious assembly.

I. *The joy, spoken of in the text, is not a mere natural joy.*

By natural joy, I intend, the pleasure which is found by the mind in natural or physical good, whether possessed or expected. Such is the pleasure which we experience in property, health, friends, food, and other gratifications of a similar nature. Such is the pleasure found in the contemplation of beauty, novelty, and greatness; in the multitude, variety, and sublimity of the works of creation and providence; or in the skill, power, and wisdom displayed by their Author. Such, also, is the satisfaction, experienced in the mere belief, that God is reconciled to us, and become our friend and benefactor.

All these I acknowledge to be innocent and lawful enjoyments. I acknowledge them to be enjoyments which we are not merely permitted, but required, to experience; and to be enjoyments also, in greater or less degrees experienced by every sanctified mind. Still they may be possessed in a manner, merely natural; and by a mind, utterly destitute of the evangelical character. When the Christian rejoices in these things, he rejoices virtuously; because he regards them with just views. But when a sinner rejoices in them, he regards them with erroneous views, and with emotions destitute of virtue. Evangelical joy in these things is one of the fruits of the Spirit. But nothing, experienced by a sinner, can be a peculiar characteristic of a Christian. Nor is any genuine fruit of the Spirit ever found in an unsanctified mind,

II. *Joy in the Holy Ghost is, however, joy in God.*

God is the only solid foundation of joy to the universe; and is seen and acknowledged in this character by every virtuous being. In this most pleasing and magnificent manner, he is every where exhibited in the Scriptures. 'Rejoice in the Lord, O ye righteous!' says the Psalmist, Psalm xxxiii. 1. 'Thou shalt rejoice in the Lord,' saith the prophet Isaiah, 'and shalt glory in the Holy One of Israel,' Isa. xli. 16. 'I will greatly rejoice in the Lord; my soul shall be joyful in my God;' saith our Saviour, Isa. lxi. 10. 'Be glad, then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the Lord your God;' saith Joel, chapter ii. 23. 'Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vine; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flocks shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stall: yet I will rejoice in the Lord; I will joy in the God of my salvation,' Hab. iii. 17, 18. The same language is adopted by the Virgin Mary, and by St Paul, in the New Testament; and is applied by Christ to the apostles; and to the whole body of Christians; either as an account of facts; or as a precept, directing their duty.

To revelation, reason joins her fullest testimony; and easily discerns, when informed of the true character of God by revelation, that in him the proper, rational, supreme, and eternal joy of his intelligent creatures must ultimately centre; and that he is the object, to be thus enjoyed, as well as the source whence this enjoyment flows. The eternal, unchangeable, almighty, all-knowing, the infinitely just, faithful, true, benevolent, and merciful mind is, in an infinite degree, a more beautiful, lovely, and glorious object in itself, than any, or than all, others. Of such a mind all the conduct, all the manifestations, are accordant with its true and essential nature; are beautiful, glorious, and lovely, like itself. These amazing considerations are also enhanced, in a manner literally boundless, by the great fact, that from this mind sprang all the objects of admiration and delight which are found in the universe.

In the power of God, we are presented with an ever-

lasting and unlimited source of joy; when it is considered as perfect sufficiency for every great and good purpose; for the accomplishment of whatever wisdom can approve, or virtue delight in; and for the accomplishment of this in the manner, which is perfectly desirable.

In the knowledge of God, there is an endless source of delight; as the original spring, whence have flowed the innumerable beings and events of the universe, together with their attributes, operations, and effects. In the perpetually diversified structure, the wonderful purposes, and the no less wonderful uses of these, is the state of the infinite mind, as the origin of whatever is great and good, presented to us in a manner, perfect in itself, and endlessly delightful to every virtuous beholder. The mineral, vegetable, and animal kingdoms, even of this world, are full of these displays; and the structure, powers, and operations of a single being furnish a field of investigation, altogether too wide for the comprehension of any human understanding.

In the bounty of God, we behold an amazing source of gratitude, and of the pleasure always found in that most amiable and delightful emotion. We here discern ample provision made for our continuance in being; for our daily wants; and for all our reasonable wishes. Our food and raiment are most liberally supplied; our innocent desires most richly gratified; our taste delighted with the beauty, novelty, and grandeur of the world around us; our eyes charmed with the glorious prospects of the earth and the heavens; and our ears feasted with melody and harmony.

In the mercy of God, the soul is assured that its sins may be forgiven, and its nature renewed; is presented with the most illustrious proofs of divine love, and the overflowings of infinite tenderness towards a world of apostates. It is here furnished with the greatest and best gift of God, evangelical virtue; and, beyond the grave, is secured in the endless possession of unmingled and unfading happiness. From sin, its own most debased character, and from misery, its proper reward, it is here presented with a final deliverance; is instamped with the image of God, and admitted to the kingdom of the blessed.

In the truth and faithfulness of this perfect being, the soul is furnished with entire security, that his declarations are steadfast and immovable; and that his promises endure for ever. The encouragement given to it, therefore, of both present and future good, is encouragement on which perfect reliance may be placed, and with regard to which disappointment can never arise either here or hereafter. When we remember, that one of these promises to Christians is, that 'all things shall be theirs;' and another, 'that all things shall work together for their good;' the importance of this consideration appears to be literally infinite. On these declarations the virtuous universe reposes with absolute safety, and with reliance which will strengthen for ever.

The justice of God is seen to be the immensely grand and awful, yet the immensely beneficial administration of the vast kingdom of Jehovah. In the exercise of this glorious attribute are secured all the rights of intelligent creatures, and their infallible and complete protection from every ultimate wrong. The least right, and the least wrong, of the least individual, are as firmly assured, as the greatest interests of angels and archangels. By this amazing mind nothing is forgotten or unregarded. Lazarus, at the gate, is as effectually remembered, as David on the throne; or Gabriel, standing before God in the highest heavens.

Alone, and to a world of sinners, the justice of God would be only great and terrible; but harmonizing with mercy in all its dictates, it renders, even to our view, the character of the great possessor transcendently excellent and amiable. What would become of the universe, were God to be unjust? What creature would for a moment be safe; what interest uninvaded.

Of these glorious attributes, we need not, in order to find displays, cast our eyes abroad into incomprehensible systems of worlds and beings. At home, by our fire-sides, in our friends, in our families, in our bodies, and in our minds, they are seen with high advantage and supreme endearment. Are we fed? The hand which feeds us is that of our heavenly Father. Are we clothed? He made the flax to grow; he formed the fleece; he gave the silk worm skill to spin her mysterious thread; and brought to us the necessary and beautiful materials to form our attire. Are we in health? He preserves in their pristine strength the numerous powers of our bodies; sends the stream of life through our veins; and animates our hearts with wonderful and unceasing energy. Do we see? He contrived the eye. Do we hear? He fashioned the ear. Do we think, and choose, and feel? He lighted up the lamp of reason in our minds. Are we, and ours, virtuous? He poured out the spirit of sanctification upon our minds. Have we enjoyments? He provided them. Have we hopes? They all sprang from his bounty, and are secured by his unchangeable promise.

All these divine considerations are enhanced beyond measure by the nature of those attributes, which may be termed qualifications of these. The omnipresence of God teaches us, that all these perfections are every where present; every where ready to be employed in the production of good. His immutability proves to us, that these perfections will never be changed in their nature, degree, and operations; and that, as he has thus acted, so he will always act in the same manner. The eternity of God shows us, that these perfections will know no end; and that, therefore, the enjoyments of his children will endure for ever. Thus what God is here, he is every where: what he is now, he will be through eternity.

In the venerable and endearing characters of the Father, the redeemer, and the sanctifier of mankind, God appears as the source of peculiar joy. As the Father of mankind, he appears as a sovereign and lawgiver, offended by our rebellion, but with infinite kindness proffering to us forgiveness and reconciliation; as sending, for this benevolent end, his beloved Son, to expiate our sins, and his Holy Spirit to renew our hearts and lives; and, thus, as opening his arms, unasked and undesired, to receive his penitent and returning children.

In the endearing character of the Son, he appears with boundless benignity, as 'making an end of sin, finishing transgression, and bringing in everlasting righteousness;' as becoming man, that we might again be united to God; as dying, that we might live; as rising from the dead, ascending to heaven, assuming the government of all things, and interceding before the throne of infinite majesty, that we might rise, hereafter, incorrupti-

ble and immortal; might follow him to the heavens; enjoy the infinite blessings of his administration; and be accepted as his faithful friends at the final day. Christ is the corner stone of this living and glorious building, formed according to the glowing language of St Peter, of 'living stones, a spiritual house of God, eternal in the heavens.' On him, the sole foundation, the vast structure is erected, to stand for ever.

By the Spirit of truth is this mighty work completed. With infinite kindness and patience he awakens, convinces, renews, and purifies the soul; forms it for endless holiness and endless life; and conducts it through this earthly wilderness to the land of promise beyond the grave.

In all these things united, is the love of God seen with supreme advantage, as immense, unchanging, and eternal; as endeared with all possible tenderness, as overcoming the most perverse obstinacy, as forgiving the greatest guilt, as flowing out to enemies and apostates condemned by unerring justice, and discarded by the virtuous universe.

To the Christian, in all these respects, is God the source of supreme and unceasing joy. As a Christian, he has become a new creature, entered into a new creation, and enrolled himself as a subject of a new and immortal kingdom. This kingdom is a kingdom in which will be progressively accomplished universal, entire, and everlasting good. For this end it was created. To this end it is uniformly conducted by the all-pervading, all-ruling hand of Jehovah. The subjects of it are universally 'children of light.' Their intercourse is an endless succession of diversified virtue and loveliness. Purity, dignity, and excellence, are their inherent characteristics, and everlasting happiness and glory their final destination. In all that they are, in all that they do, and in all that is done to them, God himself rejoices with intense and eternal joy.

With this new kingdom the Christian has begun an everlasting connexion. His union to the members of it and his intercourse with them, instead of terminating, will unceasingly become more intimate, more endearing, more exalted. The views of their minds and his are destined to become perpetually more and more just and comprehensive; their affections and his to be more pure, intense, and noble; their mutual friendship to be more sweet and serene; and their conduct to be, in an unceasing gradation, such as is proper to be exhibited in the house and presence of God.

In accordance with this state of things, therefore, will the whole scheme of the Christian's future being be formed. His plans will of course be concerted in such a manner as to embrace and promote eternal purposes. They will be the plans of an immortal being, destined to act with immortal beings in a boundless field of existence; the plans of a dutiful and faithful subject of the infinite ruler; of a child, warmed with perpetual and filial piety to his divine parent; of a brother, finally united to 'the household which is named after Christ; of a redeemed, sanctified, returning prodigal, brought back, with infinite compassion and infinite expense, to the house of his father, and welcomed with exquisite joy by the family of the first-born. To glorify God, to bless his fellow creatures, and to be blessed by both, will be the combined and perfect end for which he lives. This end he will pursue in a world where no obstructions ever arise, where no toil ever wearies, where no disappointments ever intrude, where no temptations ever arrest, and where no enemies ever alarm; where his affections cannot be too intense, nor his pursuits too ardent; and where his only professional business will be to be virtuous and happy. As a citizen of this new and heavenly kingdom, the Christian begins his course of spiritual life. All these things are already become his. God is his Father, Christ his Redeemer, the Spirit of grace his Sanctifier, and all the children of virtue are his brethren. In the present world he is only a stranger and a sojourner; he regards it, therefore, as a mere lodging, and fixes his eye on heaven as his home.

With this new character, all things with which he here converses assume to his eye a new aspect, and are filled with the presence and agency of God. 'The heavens declare his glory, and the firmament showeth his handy-work. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge.' 'The year,' in all its revolutions, 'is crowned with his goodness.' The spring is his beauty, blooming in endless varieties of elegance and splendour. Summer and autumn are manifestations of his bounty, filling his creatures with good. The winter is a solemn display of his majesty. Then 'the Lord hath his way in the whirlwind, and in the storm; and the clouds are the dust of his feet.'

In his own blessings the Christian sees God in a manner still more delightful. His blessings are not mere enjoyments; they are gifts, unspeakably endeared by the hand from which they flow. When he is in prosperity, 'the Lord is his Shepherd, who maketh him to lie down in green pastures, and leadeth him beside the still waters; who prepareth a table before him in the presence of his enemies; who anointeth his head with oil; who causeth his cup to run over, and goodness and mercy to follow him all the days of his life.' Is he in adversity? 'The rod and staff of the same Shepherd support and comfort him.' Is he in doubt and darkness, where he is scarcely able to trace the path of life? He hears 'a voice behind him, saying, This is the way; walk thou therein.' Is he mourning in Sion? 'God appoints to him beauty for ashes, and the oil of joy for mourning.' Is he sick? God is his physician: and has already taught him to say, 'Why art thou cast down, O my soul; and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.' Has he come to a dying bed? Christ has vanquished death and the grave, and has taught him to sing at their approach, 'O death! where is thy sting? O grave! where is thy victory?' Has he friends? 'God has raised them up.' Has he children? They 'are an heritage from the Lord.' Is the land of his nativity safe? God is 'a wall of fire round about it.' Does religion flourish? God is 'the glory in the midst of it.' The church to which he is united is 'a garden, which the Lord hath planted.' Is it enlightened, quickened, and edified? It is 'not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts.' Is it comforted? The consolations have come down from the heavenly Comforter. Is it protected? 'The Lord hath created upon Mount Zion, and upon all her assemblies, a cloud and a smoke by day, and a light of a flaming fire by night.'

Thus to the Christian all things in heaven and earth are full of God. Wherever he walks, wherever he is,

he is surrounded with his presence; and in that presence there is 'abundance of joy.' To him in his meditations and in his worship he instinctively turns, as the supreme object of his affections and of his obedience. In loving, fearing, and serving him 'with all the heart,' he finds his chief delight; and becomes continually able, with more and more propriety and truth, to say, 'Whom have I in heaven, but thee? and there is none upon the earth whom I desire beside thee.'

III. *The Christian rejoices in spiritual things universally.*

Spiritual things are those in which the power of the Spirit of grace is peculiarly visible, and which, therefore, have a peculiar tendency to improve us in the Christian character. In all things of this nature the Christian finds a peculiar joy. Particularly in the word of God he discovers multiplied streams of pure and increasing pleasure. Here all the transporting things already mentioned are made known to mankind. Here are disclosed the character, designs, and works, of the Creator; the rebellion, guilt, and condemnation of man, and his restoration by forgiving, redeeming, and sanctifying love. Here the means of grace and salvation are revealed, the truths which we are to believe, and the precepts which we are to obey. Here 'life and immortality are brought to light' by the Redeemer, and the path which leads to them is pointed out by the finger of God. The Bible is a window in this prison of hope, through which we look into eternity. It is the door of heaven opened by a divine hand, through which we cast our view into that glorious region, and behold the beauty, splendour, and happiness, which reign and triumph there for ever.

Here the Christian finds himself most mercifully checked, in the hour of temptation, by the threatenings of the law, and divinely allured to righteousness by promises and invitations. Behind him, justice displays its flaming sword, to prevent him from returning to the bye-paths of sin. Before him, mercy calls, with the music of heaven and the smile of infinite love, to quicken his course in the highway of holiness.

In the worship of the same glorious Being, the same delight is experienced, and with enhanced enjoyment. In his closet, like Moses, he 'converses with God face to face;' and, while he spreads all his wants and woes, all his sins and dangers, all his hopes and joys, before him, is assured of an 'open reward.' In his family, when his nearest connexions are around him, he finds every comfort endeared by these beloved objects, and sweetened by the remembrance that his house is a house of God. In the sanctuary he unites with his fellow Christians to ask counsel at the mercy-seat, and to present before it prayers and praises, refined and exalted by evangelical sympathy. Here, also, all his virtuous affections and purposes are purified and strengthened by the heavenly influence of the holy day, and the holy place. Here grace is given, and glory anticipated.

At the table of Christ, and in the celebration of baptism, his soul is refreshed and revived by the sight of the dying Saviour expiating his sins, and of the Spirit of God, symbolically poured out as a divine cleansing, to purify his heart from moral pollution. Earth here borrows the aspect of heaven, and sublunary things are invested with no small degree of immortal beauty.

In the church of God, he sees a real, though imperfect, picture of 'the general assembly of the first-born.' All Christians are his brethren, and fellow travellers with him towards the heavenly kingdom in 'the strait and narrow way that leads to life.' Their character, their hearts, their interests, their designs, are one. They are members of one family. They have 'one Father, even God;' they have 'one Lord,' even Christ; they have one Sanctifier, and one Comforter, even 'the Spirit of grace.' Their hopes and fears, their doubts and discoveries, their joys and sorrows are the same. On all the same divine image is instamped, the same evangelical beauty is visible. 'Lovely and pleasant in their lives, in their death they are not divided.'

IV. *The Christian finds an exalted pleasure in the good enjoyed by others.*

In his view, no truth is clearer than that 'it is more blessed to give than to receive.' With this truth he cheerfully accords; and finds, in doing good to others, an humble share of the same delight which is enjoyed by the universal Benefactor, in the overflowings of infinite beneficence to the creation. Nor is his enjoyment less exquisite, when good is done by those around him. In them, as in him, real disinterested beneficence is a proof of sanctification. If the beneficence be not disinterested, he still possesses the joy of seeing his fellow creatures made happy.

In the diffusion of the divine beneficence, also, he experiences a perpetual delight, while he beholds the illustrious exhibitions of the goodness of God, and shares in the comfort of all on whom it descends. Especially is this enjoyment exquisite, when sinners are 'brought out of darkness into marvellous light, and from the power of Satan unto God.' Then souls, guilty and debased, condemned and ruined, are redeemed from everlasting sin and woe. Then heaven is enlarged by the accession of new inhabitants; and the joy which is felt in that benevolent world over repenting sinners, trembles delightfully through his own bosom. The sight of a sanctified mind, of a redeemed and forgiven sinner, of endless virtue and immortal life begun, is the fairest and most enchanting prospect ever seen in the great kingdom of Jehovah.

V. *The joy of the Christian in this world is the beginning of everlasting joy.*

'To be spiritually minded is both life and peace.' This mind is the mind of every Christian. Of course, 'life and peace' eternal are begun in him, while he resides in this evil and melancholy world.

There are indeed many interruptions, diminutions, and preventions, of this glorious possession accomplished by remaining sin, and its inseparable companion, 'sorrow of heart.' But in the midst of all these he finds consolation, often abundant, almost unceasing, and always sufficient for his wants. The promises of the gospel are continually before him. God, he knows 'will never leave him, nor forsake him.' Christ, he knows, will 'always be with him unto the end.' He may indeed be 'cast down,' but he will not be 'destroyed;' he may be 'afflicted,' but he will not be 'forsaken.' The Father of his spirit may indeed 'smite him in his wrath for a small moment, yet with everlasting kindness will he have mercy on him.' In every gloomy and distressing day, there will be gleams of sunshine, and openings of a serene, unclouded heaven. 'In the dry and thirsty ground, where there is appa-

rently no water,' and in the midst of a desolation visibly without limits, 'the wilderness will suddenly rejoice and blossom as the rose.'

His piety is a seed sown here in an unkind, barren soil indeed, and under a wintry climate; but it will live, and grow, until it shall be transplanted to a happier region, beneath a more friendly sky; where it will shoot forth in its native strength and beauty. The flame of divine love kindled feebly in his heart will never cease to burn, until it shall rise and glow with unextinguishable ardour beyond the grave. The light which here dawns in darkness, and feebly illumines the surrounding gloom, will perpetually 'shine brighter and brighter, unto the perfect day.' All his sins and sorrows will continually lessen, and recede, and fade; all his graces, consolations, and hopes, will expand and improve; until the imperfect good which he finds in this 'vale of tears,' shall be lost in the everlasting beauty, happiness, and glory of heaven.

SERMON LXXXVI.

REGENERATION.—ITS CONSEQUENCES.—INCREASE OF GRACE.

The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.—PROV. iv. 18.

IN the last Discourse I considered at large the fourth consequence of regeneration. I shall now proceed to examine two other consequences of this great change in man, commonly termed, increase of grace and perseverance to the end.

In the text, the progress of the renewed man in holiness of character, is compared to the dawning light of the morning; which, barely perceptible at first, increases by gradations also barely perceptible, until the sun, ascending above the horizon, sheds over the face of the earth the full beams of day.

By this image we are naturally taught the following things:

I. *That the holiness of the Christian is a beautiful object:*

II. *That it increases as he advances in life:*

III. *That it continues to the end.*

I. *The holiness of the Christian is a beautiful object.*

The views which David, who uttered the instructions contained in this chapter, and which Solomon, who under the influence of inspiration repeated them to us, formed of this evangelical subject, are sufficiently manifested in the text. It is here compared to the most beautiful of all the objects in the natural world, presented to us in the most beautiful form; viz. the light of the sun succeeding the darkness of the night, and advancing, through a most elegant and delightful progress, to the splendour of the perfect day. What this illustrious object is in the natural system, the holiness of the Christian is in the moral system.

In a similar manner it is spoken of throughout the Scriptures. It is styled by Christ 'the pearl of great price.' It is said by David to be 'more precious than thousands of gold and of silver.' It is said by Job, that 'it cannot be gotten for gold; that silver shall not be weighed for the price thereof; that it cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir, the precious onyx, or the sapphire; that no mention shall be made of coral, or of pearls; that the price of wisdom is above rubies;' and that its fame has been repeated in the regions of death and destruction. It is styled by Moses 'the beauty and glory of God' himself. 'Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children; and let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us.'

In conformity to these declarations, those who possess this character are styled, 'the excellent of the earth, in whom God delights;'—'chosen;'—'wise;'—'children of God;'—'followers of Christ;'—'born of the Spirit;'—'the precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold;'—'children of light;'—'heirs of God; and brethren of Christ.' In all these appellations, the moral beauty, the loveliness of mind possessed by Christians, as it appears to the eye of God, is strongly conspicuous; and its inestimable value is exhibited in the most forcible terms of which language is capable.

When we consider this subject in its own proper nature, and as viewed by human reason, we cannot but acknowledge the justice of the scriptural representations. The spirit infused into man at his renovation has been heretofore exhibited as the only voluntary source of happiness. This being admitted, as by unbiased reason it must be, no other words can adequately describe either the excellence, the beauty, or the loveliness of this disposition. Its value is of course proportioned to the good of which it is the spring; and to this no limits can be affixed. In whatever degree it exists, and however humble it may be, it still partakes of the common nature. The gold may exist in particles of dust; still it is gold; and superior, both in value and lustre, to all the dross in the universe. He who consecrates his faculties, however small they may be, to the glory of God, and the good of the intelligent creation, possesses the angelic character; and is not an angel only because his powers are inferior, and his disposition mixed, and hitherto imperfect.

But there is something still to be added to the beauty of the Christian character. The Christian, as has been uniformly taught in these discourses, is in this world imperfectly holy. From his remaining sin arise to him many circumstances incompatible with a state of perfection. Many temptations, many difficulties, and many sorrows spring up in his progress towards heaven, which a glorified spirit cannot know. In his struggles with these, in the resolution with which he meets and en-

counters his spiritual enemies, in his contentions with 'the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life,' in his steady dependence on God, in his faithful prayers for divine aid; in his patience, submission, and fortitude under sufferings, in his firm faith in the divine promises, and in his cheerful resignation of himself into the hands of God, there is often manifested a beauty and amiableness of character which is probably seen in no other world beside this; but which must be approved and admired in every world where wisdom is allowed to decide.

In all the meek and lowly virtues of the Christian character, there is something pre-eminently delightful and endearing. I know not whether there is any character more strikingly beautiful and lovely than that of a penitent. Children, it seems to me, never interest us so deeply by amiableness, and are never regarded with such peculiar endearment, as when they come to us with an ingenuous, cordial sorrow for their faults, a cheerful confession, and unfeigned designs of amendment. Such, in a peculiar degree, is the charming aspect of Christian penitence. On it, 'the High and Lofty One, who inhabiteth eternity,' has declared himself pleased to 'look,' and over it the joy of heaven is exquisitely enhanced.

II. *The holiness of the Christian increases as he advances in life.*

The very nature of the subject leads us, in a sense irresistibly, to the adoption of this doctrine. The regeneration of the Christian, is his moral infancy. If we suppose him to live through even a moderate period after he is renewed, it is incredible that his holiness should not increase in strength. The evangelical powers (if I may call them such), as certainly increase by the progress of time, and by successive exercise, as the natural powers. Indeed, the increase of the natural powers is, of course, an increase of those which are evangelical. Every illumination of the mind, every new degree of capacity which it acquires by thinking, for more just and comprehensive thought, renders the intellect more vigorous for every future exertion. The word of God is to the Christian the chief object of intellectual investigation. The truths which it reveals are those on which he especially loves to dwell, and about which his mind is peculiarly enlightened by successive inquiry. It is here that his capacity is enlarged, and his intellectual strength increased.

In a manner equally natural, his affections also improve in their energy. Parents love their children more intensely, because they have loved them long. In the same manner friendship is continually strengthened by time; and in the same manner all our other affections. What is true of these is equally true of evangelical affections. They also in their own nature become more firm, more vigorous, more operative, from the mere fact that they are often exercised. So far as experience teaches us, or reason is able to divine, all the powers of intelligent beings by a common law, increase in their strength whenever they are regularly exercised.

With these dictates of reason those of the Scriptures perfectly harmonize. Were this not the fact, however plain the conclusions of reason might seem, they would probably fall short of satisfying a solicitous inquirer into this subject. By the Scriptures every question concerning religion is to be decided; and happily the decision in the present case is complete. There we are taught, that 'the good seed,' the word of God, when sown in good ground, 'springs up, and bears fruit thirty, sixty, and a hundred-fold.' There we are informed, that Christians 'abound more and more' in the various graces of the gospel; that the faith of the Thessalonians 'grew exceedingly;' that the love of every one of them 'abounded' towards their fellow saints; and that the faith of the Romans increased in such a manner as to be 'spoken of throughout all the world.

The prayers of St Paul also for his fellow Christians; prayers dictated, as you well remember, by the Spirit of God; perfectly coincide with this scheme. 'The Lord,' said he to the Thessalonians, 'make you to increase, and to abound, in love one towards another, and towards all men.' To the Colossians he says, 'We do not cease to pray for you, that ye may be filled with the knowledge of his will, in all wisdom, and spiritual understanding; that ye may walk worthy of the Lord, unto all well pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God.' Of the same tenor are his petitions for Christians of other churches.

With these declarations and prayers, the commands given us in the Scriptures concerning this subject entirely agree. 'Giving all diligence,' says the apostle Peter, 'add to your faith virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity.' And again, 'Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.' 'This thing I do,' says St Paul to the Philippians, 'forgetting the things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press towards the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.' 'Brethren, be followers together of me.' Generally, it may be observed, that the precepts and exhortations given by St Paul to the several churches, are of the same nature; the great object of them being to promote the advancement of Christians in holiness.

Finally: Of this advancement, thus made the subject of declarations, prayers, and precepts, the Christian is amply assured by promises abundantly found in the Scriptures. If he faithfully endeavour to improve himself in the divine life, if he humbly and fervently ask the blessing of God upon his labours, he knows that on the one hand the 'grace of God will be sufficient for him; and on the other,' that this almighty friend 'will never leave him, nor forsake him.' That holy and good Spirit, the immediate author of all his spiritual blessings, will dwell in him, will lead him, will help his infirmities; and finally and safely conduct him to the possession of his heavenly inheritance. Thus, while he faithfully 'waits on the Lord,' he will 'renew his strength; will run, and not be weary; will walk, and not faint.'

The truth of the doctrine under consideration may now be considered as removed beyond every doubt; if, indeed, any doubt can be supposed to have arisen concerning the subject. Still it is of no small importance that we not only receive the general proposition, but understand also the particulars of which it is constituted; the things of which this improvement of the Christian character consists. I observe, therefore,

1. That the Christian increases in divine knowledge. Particularly, he will improve in the knowledge of God.

By this I do not intend, that he will advance in the philosophical knowledge of this great and glorious Being. In this knowledge he indeed may, and usually will, increase; and so may multitudes of those who are not Christians. The knowledge here intended is especially of a spiritual nature; that which is called by Solomon, 'the knowledge of the Holy;' the knowledge which our Saviour declares to be 'eternal life;' the knowledge which is possessed only by those who love God, and is essentially derived from their affection to him. As the Christian reads the Bible, which will ever be one of his favourite employments, he will find God, the great subject of it, everywhere exhibited to his view; and exhibited continually in lights ever varying from each other. In the succession, and in the comparison, of an endless multitude of passages, all of them diverse, and all of them instructive, he will continually gain new apprehensions of the greatness and wisdom, the goodness, mercy, and truth, of the Being from whom he derived his own existence, and from whom he received all his blessings.

These apprehensions will be enlarged and improved by his attention to the works of creation and providence. The works of God are always full of instruction to those who read and love his word. Every person who peruses the Psalms with attention, must have observed how much instruction, and what elevated affections and purposes, David acquired from this source. Here, like David, every devout mind will see clearly elucidated, the truth, reasonableness, and wisdom, of very many scriptural doctrines; the propriety, and excellence, of very many precepts; the cogency of very many motives to his duty; and the fulfilment of very many predictions and promises. These, in innumerable instances, although unregarded by men of this world, will force themselves hourly and irresistibly on the eye of the Christian; for they are all congenial with his wishes, hopes, and designs, and to dwell upon them will be his peculiar delight.

The dispensations of God to himself, his family, his friends, and his country, will in a peculiar manner cast a new light over all these interesting subjects. Whatever immediately concerns ourselves and ours, becomes of course an object of our minute attention. As it is more thoroughly studied, so it is necessarily better understood, than the same things contained in dispensations to others. In our own blessings and afflictions many exhibitions are made to us of the character of God, and many proofs of his wisdom, goodness, and truth, are realized, which will hardly be derived from any other source. Here our Maker is seen in a thousand lights of providential care and kindness, as our Preserver and Benefactor; as the proper object of ultimate hope and confidence, of which we should have known little or nothing from any other source. At the same time this knowledge is deeply endeared to us, or solemnly impressed, by the events which disclose it; and is therefore deeply felt and long remembered. Hence it becomes a part of our current thoughts, and is ready to be applied on every proper occasion, to every useful purpose. In this manner the mind becomes enriched with a train of the most useful views, solid arguments, and important doctrines, which raise it from its former level to a nobler elevation on the scale of intelligent being, and furnish it for higher enjoyment and more extensive usefulness in the kingdom of its Maker.

In a similar manner Christians improve in the knowledge of their duty. All the duty of the Christian is originally learned from the Scriptures. As his acquaintance with the sacred volume enlarges, the precepts which comprise the whole of his duty are more and more known, remembered, compared, and made to elucidate each other. These from time to time he applies to his own practical concerns; and thus, as they pass under his eye from day to day, he learns more accurately the nature, extent, and spirituality of the precepts themselves, and the safest and best modes of applying them to the conduct of his life. In this manner the scriptural precepts may be said to be always at hand, always ready for use, so as to guide him safely and happily in many cases where others would be compelled to struggle with doubt and perplexity.

It ought to be added, that the knowledge of the Christian, acquired immediately from Scripture and from his own experience, is greatly increased by the conversation of his fellow Christians, and by the valuable books written by wise and good men concerning the subjects of religion.

Finally: Christians greatly improve in the knowledge of themselves.

The importance of self-knowledge is so obvious, that the ancient heathen considered the precept which enjoins it as having descended from heaven. They were not deceived: for the Scriptures directly require us to 'examine ourselves,' to 'prove ourselves,' and to 'know ourselves.' A part of this knowledge, and that indispensable, is conveyed to us in the sacred canon; and this the Christian makes more and more his own, by continually searching for it in that invaluable book. But indispensable as this knowledge is, it is comparatively of little importance to the Christian, until he has learned its proper import, by applying it to his own spiritual condition, to the discovery of his true character, to the detection of his sins, to the investigation of his duty, to the excitement of his fears, to the establishment of his hopes, the alleviation of his sorrows, and the increase of his joys. This knowledge the Christian can gain only by self-examination; by looking daily into his heart, by scrutinizing his life, and by comparing all that he thinks, and feels, and says, and does, with the rules of his duty prescribed in the word of God.

In this manner the best of men will learn, that they are in many respects widely different beings from what an ordinary and gross attention to this part of their duty would induce them to believe. They will discern that they commit many sins, where otherwise they would suppose themselves guilty of few; that many actions which they have before thought innocent, are really sinful; that sinful actions are much more criminal than they have been accustomed to believe; that their virtuous actions are fewer, less meritorious, and less acceptable to God, than they have been ready to suppose; and that themselves are much farther than they have been aware from the perfection required by the Scriptures. In this very manner, there is reason to believe, St Paul arrived at these just views of his own character which are expressed in the latter part of the seventh chapter of his epistle to the Romans; and in this

manner Christians in every age and country have acquired almost all the self-knowledge which they have ever possessed.

By these efforts the good man acquires much more just as well as more humble apprehensions of what he is; discerns that 'in many things' he and all others 'offend;' that in every thing he 'comes short of the praise,' that is, the approbation, 'of God;' that in his best services there is much to lament, and much to be forgiven; and that new zeal, watchfulness, faithfulness, and prayer, are daily demanded of him, both by his interest, and by his duty. At the same time he clearly perceives the indispensable necessity of being more humble, submissive, diligent, prayerful; less censorious towards others; less attentive to the little, and more to the great concerns of the Christian life; more patient, gentle, meek, and amiable; and more strenuous in his opposition to every lust, temptation, and enemy.

2. The Christian improves in all his affections.

By the great change which was made in his character, when of a sinner he became a Christian, styled in the Scriptures, regeneration, and denoted by several other names of an import generally similar, his affections were for the first time turned from the world to God. At this period his spiritual views were very limited and imperfect, and his affections in an infantine state. Every exercise of them was a kind of novelty; a thing to which he had not been accustomed, and therefore performed, if I may be allowed the term, crudely. Ardent, and even violent, they might be, and at times probably were, but not steady and firm; partaking more of the sudden and desultory character of the natural passions, than of the settled energy of an established habit; and resembling more in their operations the unequal efforts of a raw recruit, than the regular advance of a veteran. In every such case there is usually much of earth mingled with a little of heaven. Joys and sorrows, hopes and fears, at this time often, perhaps usually, abound, and those in some instances excessive. But we are apt to look in vain for a stable, uniform course of life; the energy, which is customarily ready to act, and act with vigour; the serious consideration, by which it is taught to operate usefully; and the serenity, by which it is most naturally accompanied. In vain shall we here search, in ordinary cases, for that sober fear, which, always awake, most usefully warns us of the approach of temptation, and the danger of sin; for that fixed hope, which 'quietly' as well as humbly 'waits for the salvation of God;' for those calm and determined purposes of duty, which are unremittedly carried into execution; and for those milder and more endearing joys, and that more regularly recurring peace, which are found by a mind well disciplined to the Christian life. Hope here is apt suddenly to give place to fear, and sometimes to despondency; zeal to be succeeded by indifference; and the most brilliant sunshine to be overcast by clouds and gloom. It will be readily admitted, that such a state is in many respects undesirable.

As the Christian advances in his progress, all these things often, to say the least, are materially changed. The exercise of his pious affections, instead of being new and occasional, becomes by frequent repetition a habit. His love to God is by degrees changed into the settled temper, the fixed energy of his soul. More calm, more uniform, though less violent, it acquires a strength, a stability, which nothing violent ever possessed. Where new and ardent converts will tremble, and bend, and even be overturned, he will stand immovable; and will thus prove, that he is 'deeply rooted in faith.' Of the same fixed nature will be his affections towards his fellow men. The benevolence, which is the fulfilment of the second command of the moral law, holds an even course in the mind of the Christian with his love to God, and increases in its stability and energy in the same manner, by becoming habitual. Originally the exercises of this affection, those at least which were vigorous, and therefore objects of particular attention to the mind, were occasional, and in a comparative sense solitary. Like all other occasional things, they were at times weaker or stronger, according to the circumstances by which they were attended. They were also brought into existence, often at least, against motives of considerable efficacy, against the intrusion of other affections of a worldly nature; the power of prejudice, the calls of business, the care and the apprehended interests of one's family, the spirit of a sect or party, and the pride of self-consistency. The man, also, has hitherto known very imperfectly the pleasure which springs from the exercise of benevolence, and therefore very imperfectly realizes the pleasure which he may find in exercising it again. His former passions and habits still retain much of their ancient hold upon him, and still influence not a little of his conduct. Hence, his benevolence is in many instances greatly impeded, and in many others prevented perhaps from operating at all.

From all these disadvantages the Christian, in his progress through life, gradually escapes, and acquires gradually the contrary advantages. His love to his fellow men becomes by degrees a habit more and more fixed, uniform, and ever ready to operate. With every exercise it gains strength. The pleasure which it yields is more uniformly found, and exists in a higher degree. Hence it is more regularly exercised, and in all its exercises is more efficacious.

The same things are equally true of the Christian's opposition to sin. By the superior knowledge which he acquires of the nature of this 'evil and bitter thing,' and by his experience of the pain and sorrow which are its regular consequences, he learns to regard it with habitual hatred and fear. His eye therefore is watchfully open to mark the approach of temptation, and 'the appearance of evil.'

In a similar manner also increases the Christian's attachment to his duty. Attachment to our duty necessarily bears a direct proportion to our hatred of sin; for every voluntary or negligent omission of known duty is itself a sin. All our duty also is obedience to God; and our love to it increases of course with our love to God. 'This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments.' The pleasure also of performing our duty, and the strength of habit generated by it, will lend their whole force to increase this attachment. But the time forbids me to expatiate on this part of the subject.

3. Christians improve also in purity and amiableness of life.

If the things which have been observed under the former heads be admitted, this will be perceived to follow of course. He whose affections become better, will, in a sense necessarily, live a better life. Whereve love to God prevails in greater degrees, devotion, pub

lic, private, and secret, will regularly be performed in a manner more regular, more sincere, more pure, and more acceptable. Wherever love to man increases in strength, truth will be more exactly spoken, justice more uniformly done, beneficence more widely diffused, and the forgiveness of enemies more cheerfully yielded. In persons of whom this is the character, the pain of self-denial will in a great measure vanish; and to communicate to others our property and our services will be attended with little or none of that reluctance but too commonly visible even in good men. In a word, the Christian is taught by his own experience, as he had before been taught by his Saviour, that 'it is more blessed to give than to receive.'

It is however carefully to be remembered, that all these desirable things are wrought in the Christian's mind and life by the power of the Holy Spirit. We 'work out our salvation with fear and trembling,' when 'God works in us to will and to do of his good pleasure.' Without the influence of this divine agent, nothing comparatively would be done; but with it, the Christian will himself labour both vigorously and successfully. For his encouragement let him remember, that whenever he is himself willing to lay strong hold on his duty, and will seek for the assistance of this glorious agent, he has the best reasons to believe that it will not be denied.

It ought also to be added in this place, that realizing views of the approach of death, judgment, and eternity, will have a powerful influence to quicken the efforts which the Christian makes for his advancement in holiness.

In conformity to these observations, we see Christians actually growing better and better as they advance through life. We see them more pious, more benevolent, more self-denying, more humble, more weaned from the world, more spiritually-minded, and universally possessed, in higher degrees, of the disposition which fits them to become inhabitants of heaven. It obviously costs them less to be meek under provocations, and patient under injuries, to part with their property, or employ their labour, for charitable purposes. The smaller troubles of life sit lighter upon them, and the greater they endure with more resignation and fortitude. Universally, they are more solicitous concerning their duty, and less studious of their own convenience. There is therefore more to be approved, and less to be blamed, in the conduct of their lives.

It is not intended here that this is the regular and uniform tenor of the Christian life. The improvement of the Christian character is unquestionably, to a greater or less degree, irregular and interrupted; in some Christians indeed, less, and in others more. Some backslide in a melancholy and shameful manner, and for periods comparatively long; while others appear to advance with a steady and regular approximation towards the measure of the perfect man.

Neither is it intended, that cold, careless, lazy Christians, will find the blessings which have been mentioned in this Discourse. 'The diligent hand maketh rich' in spiritual as well as in temporal good. He who wishes to secure these blessings must on the one hand watch and pray, and on the other, 'do whatsoever he findeth to do with his might.'

Among the attainments made by such as have been Christians for a length of time, I will mention one; and will then conclude the Discourse. This is, that they are almost universally more catholic than those who are young. By catholic here, I do not mean what in modern times is frequently meant by the word. This honourable term, like many others, has been purloined by men without worth, to denote and to ornament a part of their own unworthy character. It has been employed to designate a shameful indifference to truth and error,—to virtue and sin. This is a direct contrast to the spirit of the men of whom I have been speaking. These men are more attached to truth, and more opposed to error; more ardent in their love to virtue, and their hatred of sin. But they are possessed of more gentleness and more charitableness in their thoughts, more candour in their judgments, more sweetness in their dispositions, and more evangelical tenderness and moderation in their conduct. They are less ready to censure, and more pleased to commend. Truth they prize more for its own sake, and are less solicitous to ask from whom it comes. Error they oppose in all men, especially in themselves and their friends. Little things they value less, and great ones more. On the names so numerously found in the Christian world, and so highly valued by many who inhabit it, they place little importance. On the parties and sects which disgrace that world, they look only with disapprobation and regret. To real and evangelical worth they attach high consideration. Over the feuds and janglings, which have so extensively prevailed among the professed followers of Christ, and often about subjects of little moment, they cast an eye of compassion; and lament that those whom Christ has loved, for whom he died, who will finally be placed at the right hand of the Judge, and who will be united for ever in the friendship of heaven, should be kept asunder, alienated, engaged in contention, and at times even embarked in hostilities, for reasons which they will blush to recite before the last tribunal, and which will awaken shame, if shame can be awakened, in heaven itself.

These men furnish one illustrious practical proof, that the holiness of Christians increases through life.

SERMON LXXXVII.

REGENERATION.—ITS CONSEQUENCES.—PERSEVERANCE.

The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.—Prov. iv. 18.

In the preceding Discourse I observed, that the text naturally teaches us the following doctrines:

I. *That the holiness of the Christian is a beautiful object;*

II. *That it increases as he advances in life ;*

III. *That it continues to the end.*

The two first of these doctrines I have already examined. I will now proceed to a consideration of the third.

As this doctrine has been and still is vigorously disputed, it will be necessary to make it the subject of a particular examination. In doing this I shall first adduce several arguments as a direct proof of the doctrine ; and shall then answer the principal objections.

1. It is irrational to suppose that God would leave a work, towards which so much has been done, unaccomplished.

To effectuate the salvation of such as believe in Christ, God has sent him to become incarnate, to live a life of humiliation and suffering, and to die upon the cross. He has raised him from the dead, exalted him to his own right hand, and constituted him at once an intercessor for his children, and the head over all things unto the church. He has also sent the Spirit of grace, to complete by his almighty energy this work of infinite mercy, in sanctifying, enlightening, and quickening the soul, and conducting it to heaven. Now, let me ask, Is it not in the nature of the case incredible, that Jehovah should commence and carry on this work with such an amazing apparatus of labour and splendour, and leave it unfinished? Is it not incredible, that an omniscient and omnipotent Being should form a purpose of this nature, should discover in this wonderful manner that he had it so much at heart, and should yet suffer himself to be frustrated in the end? Who can reconcile this supposition with the perfections of God?

2. The continuance of saints in holiness follows irresistibly from their election.

It is unnecessary for the purposes of this Discourse, that I should inquire into the metaphysical nature of election. It is sufficient for my design, that saints are declared abundantly throughout the Scriptures, to 'be chosen of God.' Thus, Rev. xvii. 14, the angel declares to John, concerning the followers of the Lamb, that they are 'called, chosen, and faithful.' Thus, Luke xviii. 7, Christ, speaking of his followers, says, 'And shall not God avenge his own elect,' or chosen? Thus St Paul, Rom. viii. 33, 'Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?' Thus St Peter, in his first Epistle, chap. ii. 9, 'Ye are a chosen generation:' and thus throughout the Scriptures.

It is to be remembered, that this appellation is given to Christians universally. In the passages already quoted it is plain, that the names elect and chosen, which you know are the same in the Greek, are equivalent to saints, or Christians ; and accordingly are addressed to them without distinction. The same observation is, with the same truth, applicable to the numerous passages of Scripture in which this language is adopted.

Of all these persons it is often said, that they were 'chosen from the beginning ;' or 'from before the foundation of the world.' Thus St Paul, 2 Thess. ii. 13, addressing the members of that church, says, 'God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth.' Thus also Eph. i. 4, the same apostle, addressing the Christians at Ephesus, says, 'According as he hath chosen us in him (that is, Christ) before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, and without blame before him in love. Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children, by Jesus Christ, to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.' From these passages, and from many others of similar import, it is clear, that Christians are 'chosen by God unto salvation from the beginning ;' or, 'from before the foundation of the world.' But can it be supposed that a purpose of God, thus formed, will be frustrated? As this is declared of Christians as such, it is evident that it is alike applicable to all Christians. If, therefore, any Christian ceases to be holy, this purpose of God, solemnly adopted and declared, will in one instance be frustrated, and in every instance in which this event takes place. Thus far, then, God will be finally disappointed of one end of his government really proposed by him, and expressly announced to the universe. Who can believe this concerning the Creator?

3. If Christians continue not in holiness unto the end, the intercession of Christ will be frustrated.

In John xvii. Christ, after having prayed for his apostles, says, verse 20, 'Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also who shall believe on me through their word ; that they all may be one : as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee : that they also may be one in us.' In this petition Christ prays the Father, that all those who should believe on him through the word of the apostles, that is, all Christians, may become partakers of that divine union which in the heavens is the most perfect created resemblance of the ineffable union of the Father and the Son. If then any Christian fails of sharing in this union, the prayer of Christ here recited will not be answered.

4. If the holiness of Christians does not continue unto the end, the joy of heaven over their conversion is groundless, and in vain.

Our Saviour informs us, that 'there is joy over one,' (that is, over every) 'sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, who need no repentance.' No error exists in heaven. All the perceptions of its inhabitants are accordant with truth ; all their emotions are founded in truth. The joy excited there by the continuance of ninety and nine just persons who need no repentance (that is, persons perfectly just,) in their holiness, is a joy founded on the everlasting holiness of these persons, and the everlasting happiness by which it is inseparably attended. The joy excited by the repentance of a sinner is, however, greater than even this. As this is unconditionally asserted by Christ, it is unnecessary for me, in the present case, to inquire into the reasons of the fact. But a joy excited by the repentance of a sinner, whose everlasting holiness, and consequent everlasting happiness, is uncertain ; nay, who may never be holy nor happy at all, beyond the first and feeblest efforts and enjoyments of a Christian in his infantine state, cannot be founded in truth, nor dictated by wisdom ; nay, it cannot be accordant with common sense. Upon the plan here adopted, the object on which this joy is founded, although a penitent to-day, may be a reprobate to-morrow ; may thus finally lose both his holiness and his happiness ; and, becoming a more guilty, may, of course, become a more miserable wretch than if he had never repented. In this case there would be, upon the whole, no foundation for joy at all ; and the inhabitants of heaven would, in many instances, instead of rejoicing rationally, and on solid grounds, be merely tantalized by the expectation of good which they were never to realize.

What, in this case, would be the conduct of rational men in the present world? We have instances enough of their conduct in cases substantially of a similar nature, to furnish us with an unerring answer to this question. They would, as in all cases of such uncertainty they actually do, indulge a timorous, trembling hope, that the case might end well; and the penitent might persevere, and finally become safe. They would experience a degree of satisfaction that this first step had been taken, because it was indispensable to the rest; and would feel a continual anxious suspense, lest others equally indispensable should not follow. What wise and good men in this world would feel, on such an occasion, wiser and better men in the world to come, must, of necessity, also feel, and feel much more intensely, because they comprehend the subject in a manner so much clearer, juster, and more perfect. Of course, their suspense, their anxiety, must exist in a far higher degree. Such a suspense, such an anxiety, must, one would think, imbitter even the happiness of heaven.

Frustrated expectations of great good also are, in this world, sources of extreme sorrow. The same fact must, in that benevolent world, be a source of the same sorrow. But how often, according to this scheme, must such expectations be there frustrated? Can this be reconcilable with a state of unmingled happiness?

5. That the holiness of Christians should not continue to the end, is inconsistent with many scriptural declarations.

'We know,' saith St John, 'that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren,' 1 John iii. 14. It is impossible for any person to know that he has passed from death unto life, unless he has actually thus passed. But St John declares, that himself, and such other Christians as love the brethren, have this knowledge; or, perhaps more conformably with the apostle's real design, all Christians know this, who know that they love the brethren. The love of the brethren is certain, absolute proof, that all those in whom it exists have passed from death unto life. And this proof exists, whether perceived by him who is the subject of this love, or not perceived. But every Christian loves the brethren, and that from the moment in which he becomes a Christian. Every Christian, therefore, has actually passed from death unto life. This, however, cannot be true, unless every Christian perseveres in holiness unto the end. Every Christian does, therefore, persevere.

'Being confident,' says St Paul, 'of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.' The word here rendered 'perform,' signifies to finish, or complete. St Paul was confident, therefore, that the Spirit of God, who had begun a good work, viz. the work of sanctification, in the Philippian Christians, would continue to complete it by various steps, until it was brought to perfection. But St Paul, under the influence of inspiration, could not mistake concerning this subject. His confidence was founded in truth. The work, begun in the Philippian Christians, was completed. Of course it will be completed in all other Christians.

'Verily, verily, I say unto you,' says our Saviour, 'he that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is (hath) passed from death unto life.' John v. 24. In this passage it is declared, that 'he that heareth the word of Christ, and believeth on him by whom he was sent, has passed from death unto life.' What is meant by this phrase is also decisively explained, when it is said, 'every such person hath everlasting life;' and when it is farther said, 'he shall not come into condemnation.' But every Christian, when he becomes a Christian, hears the word of Christ, and believes on him that sent him: therefore, every Christian has everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but has already passed from death unto life.

Declarations of the same import abound in the Scriptures. It cannot be necessary to multiply quotations any farther. If these are not believed, none will be believed.

6. The doctrine against which I contend is inconsistent with many scriptural promises.

Such a promise is contained in the passage last recited. 'He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, shall not come into condemnation.'

Another is contained in the following words, John vi. 37, 'Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out.' Every Christian has come to Christ, in the very sense of this passage. Should he then be rejected afterward, he would be as really cast out as if rejected at first; and the promise would not be performed.

Another example of the same nature is found in Mark xvi. 16, 'He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved.' Every Christian has believed; every Christian will therefore be saved.

Another is found in John x. 27, 28, 'My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish; neither shall any pluck them out of my hand.'

Another in the 9th verse of the same chapter: 'I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved.'

All these are promises uttered by Christ himself; and it will not be denied that he understood the import of his own promise, nor that he will faithfully perform it to the uttermost.

Finally: St Paul has declared his views concerning this subject, in a manner which one would expect to terminate the controversy. 'Moreover,' says this apostle, 'whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified.' This is both a declaration and a promise; and in both respects, is unconditional and universal. In the most express language it asserts, that every one who is effectually called is justified, and will, in the end, be glorified also. But every Christian is thus called.

I shall now proceed to consider the principal objections against the perseverance of Christians.

1. It is objected, that this doctrine is inconsistent with free agency.

This objection, as to its real import, I have had occasion to consider in several preceding Discourses. If the answers made to it then were just and sufficient, they must admit of a satisfactory application to this subject. The drift of the objection in every case is against the doctrine, that God can create a free agent who shall yet be a holy being. If he can create such an agent, and make him holy from the beginning; he can, undoubtedly, with equal ease and equal consistency, ren-

der such an agent holy after he is created. But it cannot be scripturally denied, that our first parents, or the angels, were created holy; nor that the man Jesus Christ was created holy. Nor can it be denied that all these were, in the fullest sense, free agents. The very acknowledgment that they were holy, is an acknowledgment that they were free agents; for holiness is an attribute of free agents only. It is certain then that God can render such agents holy at any time after they are created, without infringing at all the freedom of their agency. In other words, he can regenerate them; can sanctify them afterward, at successive periods; and can of course, continually increase their holiness to the end of their lives.

Farther: angels and glorified saints will persevere in holiness throughout eternity; and their perseverance is rendered absolutely certain by the unchangeable promise of God. Yet neither this perseverance, nor the certainty of it, will at all diminish the freedom of their agency. The perseverance of saints in this world may therefore exist to the end of life, and may be absolutely certain, without any diminution of the freedom of their agency.

2. It is alleged, that the Scriptures promise eternal life to Christians conditionally; and that this is inconsistent with the supposition, that every Christian will certainly persevere in holiness. For example: 'He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved:' and again: 'For we are made partakers with Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end.'

There are many passages of this nature in the New Testament. As the import of them all is exactly the same, it will be unnecessary to quote any more. Their universal tenor, whether given in the form of promises, cautions, exhortations, or commands, is this; that eternal life will not be allotted to any of mankind, except those who continue in obedience unto the end. Hence it is argued, that a discrimination is here intentionally made between such Christians as do, and such as do not, thus continue in their obedience. Otherwise, it is observed, the condition would be useless, and without any foundation in fact.

To this I answer: First, that a conditional promise, collateral to an absolute one, can never affect, much less make void, the absolute promise. The promises which I have recited, of eternal life to every Christian, are all absolute; as are also many others of the same nature. They cannot therefore be made void by these conditional ones.

Secondly, It is still true, that none but those who endure to the end will be saved; and equally true, that every Christian will endure to the end.

It is elsewhere said in the Scriptures, that if we 'do not believe, we shall be damned;' that 'if we do not repent, we shall perish;' that 'if we do not love the Lord Jesus Christ, we shall be anathema;' that 'without holiness no man shall see the Lord;' that 'he who hateth his brother abideth in death;' and that 'without love we are nothing.' From these passages it might with the same force be concluded, that some persons believe, who do not repent; that some repent, who are not holy; and that some are holy, who yet hate their brethren; and that thus a discrimination was intended to be made between believing Christians and penitent ones; and between both these, and such as are holy. The truth is, every Christian does all these things. These several descriptions were given, partly to show us the whole nature of Christianity; partly to teach us all our duty; partly to show us, that all of it is indispensable; and partly to furnish us with useful and necessary evidence of our Christian character.

At the same time, all these conditional promises and exhortations are, and were intended to be, powerful means of the very perseverance which is the principal subject of them. We are not constrained or forced to persevere; nor should we, on the other hand, persevere, were we wholly left to ourselves. Our perseverance is owing to two great causes: the influence of the Spirit of God on our hearts; and the various means furnished in the word, ordinances, and providence of God, accompanied with the divine blessing upon the use of them. Among these means, the very condition here suggested in so many impressive forms is of high importance, and has contributed to the perseverance of Christians in holiness ever since the Scriptures were published. Although, therefore, all Christians actually thus persevere; yet it is not improbable that, without the aid of those passages of Scripture here alluded to, multitudes might have fallen away. Christians have no other satisfactory knowledge of their Christianity, except their continuance in obedience. The earnest desire of possessing this knowledge, on the one hand, and the fear of being found destitute of the Christian character, on the other, cannot but serve as powerful motives (motives too powerful, in my view, to be safely omitted in the scriptural system) to produce in the Christian perseverance in holiness.

3. It is objected, that this doctrine naturally contributes to lessen the diligence of the Christian in his duty.

For an answer to this objection, I must refer you to the observations made in a former Discourse on the same objection to the doctrine of justification by faith. In that Discourse, the objection was applied to the doctrine now under consideration; and, if I mistake not, was satisfactorily obviated.

4. It is objected, that several passages of Scripture teach the contrary doctrine.

Among these is Heb. vi. 4—8, 'For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them unto repentance: seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame. For the earth, which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God; but that which beareth thorns and briers, is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned.'

It will be unnecessary for me to determine here, who are the persons meant by the apostle in this passage. He himself has decided that they are not Christians. Their character is fully expressed in the 8th verse, under the image of 'the earth which beareth thorns and briers;' while that of Christians is expressed in the 7th verse, under the image of the earth, 'which bringeth forth herbs, meet for them by whom it is dressed.' These are here studiously contrasted. The character of the former is, therefore, exhibited by the apostle as a direct contrast to that of Christians; who,

it is to be remembered, are represented everywhere in the Scriptures as bringing forth good fruit. This passage, then, teaches nothing opposed to the doctrine which I am endeavouring to support.

Secondly, It is not asserted by the apostle that those of whom he speaks ever actually fall away. The case is stated only in the form of a supposition; and he declares only that, should they fall away, there is no possibility of renewing them unto repentance. Whether such persons do in fact fall away, is therefore left uncertain.

Should it be thought, that the expressions in this passage amount to a description of Christianity; and that, therefore, Christians are meant in it; I answer, that neither of the expressions taken separately, nor all of them together, involve any necessary description of Christianity. It is true, that Christians sustain all these characteristics, except two; viz. partaking of the Holy Ghost, and the powers of the world to come (μελλοντος αιωνος, *the future age*); that is, the period of the Christian dispensation, thus denominated. These phrases indicate the miraculous powers possessed by many Christians when this passage was written, but never belonging to Christians as such. They, therefore, denote no part of Christianity. Judas possessed these characteristics. The remaining expressions are all indefinite; and as truly applicable to men who, still continuing to be sinners, have enjoyed peculiar Christian advantages, as they can be to Christians. The whole drift of this passage, therefore, even when construed most favourably for those whom I oppose, is only ambiguously in favour of their doctrine; and is, in my view, decided against them by the apostle himself. But it cannot be rationally believed, that a doctrine of this importance would, in opposition to so many clear, decisive declarations, have been left to expressions merely ambiguous.

Another passage pleaded for the same purpose is the declaration of Christ, John xvii. 12, 'Those whom thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost but the son of perdition.' To discover the true meaning of this passage, we need only recur to other declarations of the same glorious Person. 'Many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias; but unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow.' The widow of Sarepta is here, by the very same phraseology, included among 'the widows of Israel;' as Judas was included among those 'that were given to Christ.' Yet we know, and this passage declares, that she was not an Israelitish, but a Sidonian widow: and we know equally well, that Judas was never given to Christ as a Christian.

Again: 'There were many lepers in Israel, in the time of Elisæus the prophet; and none of them were cleansed, saving Naaman, the Syrian.' Naaman the Syrian was not an Israelitish leper; though, in the first apparent meaning of the passage, mentioned as such. Judas was not given to Christ, although apparently mentioned as thus given. The whole meaning of this phrase would be completely expressed thus: 'Those whom thou gavest me have I kept; and none of them is lost: but the son of perdition is lost.'

That Judas was never given to Christ we know from his whole history, and the repeated declarations of his Master. This passage, therefore, has not even a remote reference to the subject in debate.

Another passage of the same nature is 1 Tim. i. 19. 'Holding faith and a good conscience; which some having put away, concerning faith have made shipwreck.' The meaning of this passage may be easily learned from a correct translation: 'Holding fast faith (faithfulness or fidelity), and a good conscience; which some (that is, some teachers), having cast away, concerning the faith (την πιστιν, that is, the doctrines of the gospel), have made shipwreck.'

Generally, it may be observed, that the doctrine against which I contend is not supported in a single unequivocal declaration of the Scriptures. I know of none in which it is asserted in terms so favourable to it as those which I have considered. Whatever is said concerning the apostasy of any Christian professor, is decisively explained by St John. 'They went out from us, but they were not of us: for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us.'

REMARKS.

1. The faithfulness of God is highly conspicuous in the truths which have been now discussed.

Christians provoke God daily, and awaken his anger against themselves more and more continually. By every sin they persuade him, if I may be allowed the expression, to desert them, and to give them up to themselves. Still he preserves them from destruction. He has promised them life. He has established his covenant with them for an everlasting covenant; and it shall never be forgotten. On his immutability their safety stands immovable. In this manner it is exhibited by himself. 'For I (saith he) am Jehovah; I change not: therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.' This attribute is the seal, the certainty of every promise: and 'sooner shall heaven and earth pass away, than one jot or one tittle of that which is promised shall fail.'

2. From these observations we learn, that the promises of the gospel are absolutely necessary for the hope and support of Christians.

Christians in their very best estate possess such a character as, to say the most, furnishes a very feeble and distant hope of their perseverance in holiness; and their final success in obtaining salvation. In better language, if left to themselves, there is no rational hope that they would ever arrive at the kingdom of heaven. If God did not preserve them, they would fall daily, certainly, and finally. Without the promises of God, prone as Christians are to backslide, they would feel no confidence in their own success; but would sink into despondency and despair. To preserve them from this despondency, and the ruin which would result from it, God has filled his word with promises; which yield solid and sufficient support, consolation, hope, and joy. On these they rest safely, and cannot be moved.

3. We here learn, that the Christian life is a life far removed from gloom.

Many persons, hearing often of the self-denial, repentance, and mortification of sin, connected with Christianity, have supposed a life of religion to be only gloomy and discouraging; and have thus dreaded it, as destitute of all present enjoyment. In this opinion they have been confirmed by the sad countenances, demure behaviour, and cheerless lives, of some who have professed themselves Christians. All this, however, is remote from the true character of religion. Real

Christianity furnishes the fairest and most abundant enjoyment. It is delightful in itself; and, when not the immediate object of persecution, finds everywhere comforts, friends, and blessings. In God, the Christian finds a sure, an ever-present, an everlasting friend; in Christ, a Saviour from sin and sorrow; in the divine promises, an indefeasible inheritance of unceasing and eternal good.

Let none therefore, particularly let not those who are young, and who are easily deterred from approaching that which wears a forbidding aspect, be hindered from becoming religious by any apprehended gloominess in religion, or any sorrowful deportment of those who profess to be Christians. Christianity is but another name for joy. It can spread a smile even over this melancholy world, and lend a delightful consolation to suffering and to sorrow. All its dictates, all its emotions, all its views, are cheerful, serene, and supporting. Here it is safe; hereafter it will triumph. Sin only is misery. Sinners in this world have a thousand sufferings of which the good man is ignorant; and in the world to come will lie down in eternal sorrow.

SERMON LXXXVIII.

REGENERATION.—ITS EVIDENCES.—WHAT ARE NOT EVIDENCES.

Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves; know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?—2 Cor. xiii. 5.

Having in a long series of Discourses considered the doctrine of regeneration, its antecedents, attendants, and consequents; I shall now proceed to another interesting subject of theology; viz. the Evidences of Regeneration.

In the text, the apostle commands the Corinthian Christians to 'examine and prove themselves;' and states the purpose of this examination to be to determine 'whether they were in the faith.' He then inquires of them, 'Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?' In the original, except ye be ἀδοκιμοι, *unapproved;* unable to endure the trial of such an examination. From this passage of Scripture it is plain, that it was the duty of the Corinthians to examine themselves concerning their Christian character; and that this examination was to be pursued by them so thoroughly, as to prove, so far as might be, whether they were, or were not, in the faith; whether Christ did, or did not, dwell in them by his Holy Spirit.

That which was the duty of the Corinthians is the duty of all other Christians. That which is the duty of all Christians, it is the duty of every minister to aid them in performing. To unfold the evidences of religion in the heart is therefore, at times, the duty of every minister; and to learn them, that of every Christian.

In attempting to perform this duty at the present time, I shall endeavour to point out,

I. *Some of the imaginary evidences of religion.*

II. *Some of its real evidences.*

III. *Some of the difficulties which attend the application of the real evidences of religion to ourselves.*

I. *I shall endeavour to point out some of the imaginary evidences of religion.*

By imaginary evidences, I intend those which are sometimes supposed to be proofs of its existence, but have this character through mistake only; evidences which may be, and often are, found in the hearts and lives both of the saint and the sinner; things on which it is dangerous to rely, because they do not evince in any degree either a holy or an unholy character. It will not be expected that I should enter into a minute and detailed account of a subject which has occupied formal treatises, and filled volumes. Considerations of particular importance can alone find a place in such a system of Discourses. To them, therefore, I shall confine myself; and even these, I must necessarily discuss in a summary manner. With these preliminary remarks, I observe,

1. That nothing in the time, place, manner, or other circumstances, of a supposed conversion, furnishes ordinarily any solid evidence that it is, or is not real.

It is not uncommon for persons, and for Christians among others, to dwell, both in their thoughts and conversations, on these subjects; and to believe that they furnish them with comforting proofs of their piety. Some persons rest not a little on their consciousness of the time, at which they believe themselves to have turned to God. So confident are they with regard to this subject, that they boldly appeal to it in their conversation with others, as evidence of their regeneration. 'So many years since,' one of them will say, 'my heart closed with Christ. Christ was discovered to my soul. The arm of mercy laid hold on me. I was stopped in the career of iniquity. I received totally new views of divine things.' Much other language of a similar nature, is used by them; all of which rests, ultimately, on their knowledge of the time at which they suppose themselves to have become the subjects of the renewing grace of God.

There is reason to believe, derived, however, from other sources, that these apprehensions may sometimes be founded in truth; in other instances, there is abundant proof that they are founded in falsehood. But that which may easily be either false or true, as in the present case it plainly may, can never safely be made the ground of reliance; especially in a concern of such moment.

Other persons appeal with the same confidence to the

manner and circumstances of their supposed conversion, as evidences of its reality. Thus, one recites, with much reliance, the strong convictions of sin under which he was distressed for a length of time; the deep sense which he had of deserving the anger and punishment of God; his disposition readily to acknowledge the justice of the divine law in condemning him, and of the divine government in punishing him; his full belief that he was among the worst of sinners; and the state of despair to which he was brought under the apprehension of his guilt. Of all these things it may be observed, that, although convictions of sin generally, of the nature here referred to, always precede regeneration; yet, in whatever form or degree they exist, they are not regeneration. They cannot, therefore, be proofs of regeneration. He who has them, in whatever manner he has them, will, if he proceed no farther, be still 'in the gall of bitterness.'

But the same person, perhaps, goes on farther; and declares, that while he was in this situation of distress, when he was ready to give himself up for lost, God discovered himself to him as a reconciled God; and filled his mind with new, sudden, and unspeakable joy; that he had a strong and delightful sense of the divine mercy in Jesus Christ, of the wonderful compassion of Christ in consenting to die for sinners, in being willing to accept of sinners, and particularly in being willing to accept of so great a sinner as himself; that he found his heart going forth in love to God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, to the word and ordinances of God, and to the church of Christ; and that this state of mind was new to him, being constituted of emotions which he never felt before. On these things, therefore, he reposes, as supporting evidence that he is a Christian.

All this is, in my own view, a just account of what really takes place in the conversion of multitudes; and did it exist in no other case, would undoubtedly furnish the very evidence here relied on without any sufficient warrant. The defect in this scheme lies in the fact, that these very emotions are experienced by multitudes who are not Christians. That a person who has been the subject of extreme distress, under convictions of sin and the fear of perdition, should, whenever he begins to hope that his sins are forgiven, and his soul secured from destruction, experience lively emotions of joy, is to be expected as a thing of course: and that, whether his hopes are evangelical or false. All men must rejoice in their deliverance from destruction, whether truly or erroneously believed by them; and all men who have had a distressing sense of their guilt and danger, will, under a sense of such a deliverance, experience intense emotions of joy. All men, also, who really believe that God is become their friend, will love him. All will love the word of God who consider it as speaking peace and salvation to themselves. This joy, and this love, it is evident, are merely natural; and are felt, of course, by every mistaken professor of religion. Love to God, and to divine things, is a delight in the nature of these objects, independently of any personal benefit to which we feel entitled from them.

Another person places confidence in the greatness of the effects which his sense of sin, and his hope of forgiveness, produced both on his body and mind. He will inform you, with plain consolation to himself, that his distressing apprehensions of his guilt sunk him in the dust, and caused him to cry out involuntarily; deprived him of his strength, and for a time, perhaps, of the clear exercise of his reason; caused him to swoon; and almost terminated his life. Much the same effects, he will also observe, were produced in him by his consequent discoveries of the divine mercy. These overwhelmed him with transport, as his convictions did with agony. The extraordinary nature, and especially the extraordinary degree, of these emotions, furnishes this man with the most consolatory proof that he is a child of God.

On this I shall only observe, that as these emotions may be, and often are excited by natural as well as evangelical causes; so, when thus excited, they may exist in any supposable degree. The agonies and the transports, the agitations of body and mind, prove, indeed, the intensity of the feelings experienced; but they do not, in the least degree, exhibit either their nature or their cause; and cannot therefore be safely relied on as evidences of religion.

A third person will tell you, that while he was in a state of absolute carelessness, and going on headlong in sin, he was suddenly alarmed concerning his guilt and danger by a passage of Scripture, which came to his mind in a moment, without any thought or contrivance of his own; and perhaps that, after he had long wearied himself to find an escape from the wrath of God, another text of Scripture, also without any contrivance of his own, came as suddenly to his mind, conveying to him bright views of the divine mercy, and glorious promises of salvation. The reliance of this man is placed especially on the fact, that these texts came to his mind without any effort on his part, either to remember or to search after them. He therefore concludes that they were communicated to him directly by the Spirit of God; and that they conveyed to him a direct personal promise of eternal life. This is mere delusion. Passages of Scripture, and those just such as are here referred to, come often suddenly, and without any labour of theirs, to the minds of multitudes who are not Christians; and God is no more immediately concerned in bringing them to the mind in this case, than when we read them in the Bible, or hear them from the desk. What God speaks in the Bible he always speaks, and speaks to us; but he addresses nothing to us, when we remember, any more than when we read or hear his words. If we rely on the true import of what he says, we rely with perfect safety: but if we place any importance on the mode, in which at any time that which is said comes to our minds, we deceive ourselves. The whole of our recollection in these cases is a merely natural process; and is the result of that association of ideas by which memory is chiefly governed, and which brings to our remembrance in the very same manner, thousands of other things, as well as these texts of Scripture; of which, however, as being of little importance to us, we take no notice

Other persons depend much on the regularity of the process with which their distresses and consolations have existed; and in the conformity of them to such a scheme and history of these things as they have found in books, or received from the mouth of acknowledged and eminent Christians. In the sermon on the Antecedents of Regeneration, I observed that this work is in its process almost endlessly various. But, in whatever manner it exists, the manner itself is of no consequence. Should we have exactly the same succession

of distresses and consolations experienced by ever so many of the most distinguished saints, and yet our affections, instead of being evangelical, be merely natural; the order of their existence could never prove that we were Christians; for we should still be sinners. The nature of these affections, and not the order, is the great concern of all our self-examination.

2. Zeal in the cause of religion is no evidence that we are, or are not, Christians.

Men, we all know, are capable of exercising zeal in any cause, in proportion to the degree of interest which they feel in that cause. We also know that there is 'a zeal which is not according to knowledge.' All persons naturally ardent become zealous about every thing in which they are once engaged; and especially, when they are opposed. Christians are zealous in the cause of religion; Deists and Atheists in the cause of infidelity; Jews in that of Judaism; Heathens in that of idolatry. The Ephesians were zealous for the worship of the great goddess Diana; St Paul and his companions for that of the true God; the Anabaptists at Munster, for the wild reveries taught by their leaders; and thus concerning innumerable others. Nothing is more evident than that zeal was not, in most of these cases, any proof of piety in those by whom it was exercised.

As zeal itself, so the degree in which it exists, is no proof of vital religion. There have been multitudes of persons, whose zeal has prompted them to court persecution. It is not uncommon for members of small and despised sects to believe that the sufferance of persecution is a decisive characteristic of the true church of God; and to solicit it, as decisive evidence that they themselves are members of this church. With these views, they sedulously construe all the kinds and degrees of opposition with which they meet, into persecution. In this manner they regard the sober argumentation with which their opinions are refuted; the most dispassionate exposures of their folly and their faults; the most just operations of law, directed either against their crimes, or to the preservation of the rights of others; nay, even that abstinence from communion with them in their worship, and that refusal to farther their designs, which they, on their own part, claim as indefeasible rights of man. Such persons ought to remember, that all, or nearly all, classes of Christians, even those whom they most oppose, nay, that infidels, and atheists, have been persecuted, and that the modern Jews have been more persecuted than any other sect, party, or people, now in existence. The sufferance of persecution, therefore, is no proof that we belong to the true church. Still more ought they to remember, that St Paul hath said, 'Though I give my body to be burned, and have not love, it profiteth me nothing.'

3. No exactness in performing the external duties of religion, furnishes any evidence that we are, or are not, Christians.

Few persons have been more exact in this respect than the ancient Pharisees. Yet Christ has testified of them, that they were 'a generation of vipers.' Under the Christian dispensation, great multitudes of the Roman Catholics, notoriously profligate in many parts of their conduct, have in various periods of popery, been remarkably punctilious in the performance of these duties. That which was no evidence of Christianity in them, cannot be evidence of Christianity in ourselves.

Many persons are exact in this conduct from the influence of education and example; many from habit; many from the desire of religious distinction; many because they think this conduct a proof of their piety, and are uneasy without such proof; many because they think themselves in this way only, in the safe path to salvation; and many from other selfish reasons. In all these things, considered by themselves, there is no religion. Of course, the conduct to which they give birth cannot be evidential of religion.

4. No exactness in performing those which are frequently called moral duties furnishes any evidence of this nature.

Multitudes of mankind place great confidence in their careful performance of these external duties, as being evidential of their evangelical character, just as other multitudes do in those mentioned under the preceding head; and with no better foundation.

Justice, truth, and kindness, in their various branches and operations, are so important and useful to mankind, that we all readily agree in giving them high distinction in the scale of moral characteristics. Those who practise them uniformly and extensively, are universally considered as benefactors to the world, and as invested with peculiar amiableness and worth. Those who violate them, on the other hand, are, from the mischiefs which they produce, regarded as enemies and nuisances to the human race. At the same time, a high degree of importance is given to these duties in the Scriptures. They are greatly insisted on in the gospel, inculcated in many forms of instruction, commended in the most forcible language, and encouraged by the most interesting promises. The violation of them is condemned and threatened in the most pungent terms, and under the most glowing images.

It cannot be surprising that, influenced by these considerations, parents should make these duties a prime part of their instructions and precepts to their children. But when we remember, that the practice of them has in all ages, and in all civilized countries, been considered as equally and as indispensably necessary to a fair reputation, and to success in the common business of life, we shall readily suppose, that these must be among the first things imbibed by the early mind from parental superintendence, and must hold a peculiar importance in all the future thoughts of the man.

Thus taught, and thus imbibed, we should naturally expect to see them practised during the progress of life, as extensively as can consist with the imperfect character of human beings. When thus practised, and especially when eminently practised, we cannot wonder to find those whose lives they adorn regarded as persons of real virtue and excellence. What less can be expected? These are the very actions towards our fellow creatures required by God himself, and dictated by evangelical virtue; a part of the very fruits by which the Christian character is to be known. Why is not he who exhibits them a Christian? Oftentimes, also, they appear with high advantage in the conduct of persons distinguished by natural sweetness of disposition, peculiar decency of character, amiableness of life, and dignity or gracefulness of manners; and thus become delightful objects to the eye, and excite the warmest commendations of the tongue. It is not strange, therefore, that they should have gained a high and established reputation, and should be extensively regarded as unequivocal proofs of an excellent character.

What others so generally attribute to them we not unnaturally accord with, whenever our own case is concerned; and finding that we are believed by others to be Christians, on account of our good works of this nature, readily believe ourselves to possess the character. We are esteemed, loved, and commended, by those around us; and cannot easily believe that the worth which they attribute to us is all imaginary.

Still, such a performance of these duties furnishes no proof that we are Christians. For, in the first place, they may be, and often are, all performed from the very motives mentioned, under the last head, as being frequently the sources of exactness in the external duties of religion. Secondly, they are often performed by men who violate extensively, or grossly neglect, the duties of piety and temperance, and who, therefore, are certainly not Christians. Thirdly, they appear to have been all performed with uncommon exactness by the young man who came to Christ, to inquire 'what good thing he should do to have eternal life.' Yet 'he lacked one thing;' and that was 'the one thing needful.'

5. No degrees of sorrow or comfort, of fear or hope, experienced by any person, about his religious concerns, at seasons succeeding the time of his supposed conversion, furnish any evidence of this nature.

Sorrow springs from many sources beside a sense of our sins; and from such a sense it may be derived, and yet not be 'the sorrow which is after a godly sort.' We may easily and greatly sorrow for our sins, because we consider them as exposing us to the anger of God, and to everlasting ruin. Our comforts also may flow from other sources beside those which are evangelical. Some persons derive great consolation, and even exquisite joy, from a belief (and that whether well or ill founded) of their acceptance with God; some from the apprehension that they are eminent Christians; some from the unexpected influx of religious thoughts, and passages of Scripture coming suddenly into their minds; some from what they esteem peculiar tokens of divine goodness to them; tokens which they regard as proofs of the peculiar love and favour of God; some from what they term peculiar discoveries of the glory of God, and the excellency of the Redeemer, and of the joys of the blessed in heaven. All these they consider as immediately communicated by God to themselves, because they are his favourites among mankind. There are also other states of mind, in which consolations are experienced from other sources; consolations which may exist in high degrees, but which are too numerous to be mentioned at the present time.

What is true of the sorrows and comforts excited by religious considerations, is substantially true of the kindred emotions of fear and hope. These can also arise both from true and false apprehensions; and can be either merely natural or wholly evangelical, or of a mixed nature. As they actually exist in the minds of men, they are, to say the least, often undistinguished as to their real nature by those in whom they exist; and are, I believe, many times in a great measure undistinguishable. Their existence is so transient, they are frequently mingled with so many other views and emotions, and the eye of the mind is often so engaged by the objects which give birth to them, that it becomes extremely difficult to fasten upon their true character.

6. No evidence of our sanctification is furnished by our own confidence.

The truth of this declaration may be easily seen in the fact, that multitudes feel the utmost confidence that they are Christians, who afterward prove by their conduct their entire destitution of Christianity. All enthusiasts usually confide with undoubting assurance in the reality of their own religion; and generally pity, and often despise, men of an humbler and better spirit, because they do not enjoy such peculiar discoveries, such delightful exercises of devotion, such bright hopes and heavenly anticipations of future glory, as themselves. The Pharisee boldly said, 'God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men, or even as this publican.' Yet he was a worse man than the publican. A collection of the Pharisees said to Christ, 'Are we blind also?'

I propose hereafter to consider at some length what is commonly called *the faith of assurance.* It will be sufficient to observe at the present time, that I believe some men to be really and evangelically thus assured. If this be admitted, as it undoubtedly will be by the great body of Christians, it follows of course, that confidence in our good estate is no proof that we are not Christians. A man may confide with sufficient evidence; he may also confide without it. It is plain, therefore, that his confidence, considered by itself, furnishes no proof that it is well or ill founded.

I cannot however do justice to my own views, nor, as I believe, to the subject, without observing here, that in ordinary cases, I entertain a better opinion of the modest, doubting, fearful professor, than of the bold and assured one. The life of the former, as it seems to me, is, commonly at least, more watchful, more careful, more self-condemning, more scrupulous concerning the commission of sin and the omission of duty, more indicative of dependence on God, more inclined to 'esteem others better than himself,' more declaratory of the spirit of 'little children.' The spirit of the latter, even when he is admitted to be a Christian, appears to me to be often fraught, in an unhappy degree, with self-exaltation, with censoriousness, as well as contempt of those who differ from him; with uncharitableness, with peremptoriness of opinion, and with an unwarrantable assurance of the rectitude of whatever he believes, says, or does. These certainly are not favourable specimens of any character. I would be far from ultimately condemning the profession of all those in whom these things are more or less visible; yet I assert without hesitation, that their light would shine more clearly before men, were it not obscured by these clouds.

It is not the degree of confidence, but the source whence it is derived, and the objects on which it rests, by which its nature and import are to be determined. It may exist in the highest degree, without any religion; and religion may exist in very high degrees, at least, without any confidence.

7. The belief of others that we are Christians, furnishes no proof of our Christianity.

All persons who make a profession of religion, and many who do not, whose lives at the same time are exemplary, scrupulous, and unblamable, are by most charitable persons believed to be Christians. Some of these, however, beyond any reasonable doubt, are not Christians. Some we know to have lived in this manner, and to have sustained this character, both in ancient and modern times, without a pretension to vital religion. Judas was believed by his fellow apostles, for

a length of time, and not improbably without a single doubt, to be a true follower of Christ. Hymeneus and Philetus appear to have sustained the same character; and apparently with as little foundation. All these were believed to be Christians by apostles, inspired men, of singular understanding in subjects of this nature. Yet these men were deceived. No words are necessary to prove that we and all others are liable to deception in similar cases. If the belief of Peter and Paul, that the objects of their charity, in the cases specified, were Christians, was no evidence of their Christianity; then the belief of others that we are Christians, is no evidence of our Christianity.

REMARKS.

From these observations we learn,

1. That we ought to exercise the utmost care and caution in examining the evidences of our own religion.

How many professors of Christianity have considered the things which I have specified, as decisive proofs that themselves were good men! Yet, if I mistake not, it has been clearly shown that all of them united furnish no solid evidence of this fact. We are just as liable to be deceived as others; and, unless peculiarly guarded, by the very same means. Others have rested their hopes of salvation on these things, as proofs of their religious character, and have been deceived. If we rest on them, we shall be deceived also; for we may possess all these things, and yet not be Christians. In a case of this moment, nothing ought voluntarily to be left at hazard. We are bound by our own supreme interest, as well as our duty to God, to fulfill the command of the text; to 'examine and to prove ourselves, whether we be in the faith;' and in doing this, to make use of the best means in our power; to fasten, with as much care as possible, on those things which the Scriptures have made tests of a religious character; and earnestly to pray to God that we may not be deceived, either by ourselves or by any others.

2. From the same source we learn also the impropriety and folly of making these things the foundation of our judgment concerning the religious character of others.

Whenever we determine, that others are or are not Christians, because they exhibit these as evidences of their Christianity, we are plainly liable to gross error concerning this subject. All these things may be truly testified concerning himself by a Christian; and with equal truth by a person destitute of Christianity. They are, therefore, no proofs of his religion or irreligion.

Still, a great multitude of professing Christians, many of whom, I doubt not, are really Christians, and all or nearly all, enthusiastic professors, make these very things, or the want of them, the foundations of their favourable or unfavourable opinions of the religious character of others. They resort to them as to an acknowledged and Scriptural standard, which they do not expect to find disputed, and to question which would not improbably, be regarded by them as a proof of irreligion.

What is still more unhappy, among various classes of Christians in this country, these very things, particularly those mentioned under the first, second, and fifth heads of this Discourse, are, if I am not misinformed, not unfrequently made the objects of a public examination of candidates for admission to Christian communion, and the foundations of a public judgment concerning their religious character. To be able to remember the time when convictions of sin began, with their attendant distresses, and the time when they were followed by hopes, consolations, and joys; to have had these occasioned by the sudden, uncontrived, and unexpected influx of certain passages of Scripture into the mind; especially, if, according to a pre-established and acknowledged scheme of regeneration among themselves, these things have taken place in a certain order of succession; still more, especially, if the sorrows and consolations have risen very high; and most of all, if they are succeeded by distinguished zeal about things pertaining to religion; are boldly pronounced ample evidence of the candidate's piety. In this manner, there is reason to fear, multitudes are miserably led astray, both by being induced beforehand to labour that these things may be truly said of themselves; and by settling down in a state of security on this false foundation afterward.

Nor is the case less unhappy, when persons rest their hopes on their exactness in performing the external duties of religion and morality. Yet vast numbers of mankind repose themselves on these, as on a bed of down; and feel satisfied that God will not finally condemn persons who have laboured so much in his service. All of them will, however, find in the end, that to such as have done all this, and nothing more, 'one thing is lacking;' viz. an interest in Christ; a thing without which they cannot be saved.

3. We see the danger of being strongly confident in the piety of ourselves or others.

All or nearly all such confidence, so far as I have observed, has been derived from these supposed evidences of religion; any part, or the whole of which may be possessed by men totally destitute of Christianity. It is a fatal mark on them all, that the Scriptures have nowhere alleged them as proofs of religion. As they are not scriptural proofs, they cannot be sound. To trust in them is to trust in a nullity. Accordingly, those who give the fairest proofs of Christianity in their life and conversation, never make these things the foundation of their hope, and are very rarely found to be strongly confident of their acceptance with God.

To pronounce boldly that others are Christians, is, in many cases at least, equally hazardous. There are many persons, however, who roundly declare others, of whose life they have had little or no knowledge, to be Christians; and others not to be Christians, whose conduct and conversation give them at least as fair, and often fairer, claims to this character. Nay, they will peremptorily make these assertions concerning ministers of the gospel; and pronounce some to be sanctified, and others unsanctified, from a sermon or prayer, or even from the tones of voice with which they are uttered. 'Judge not,' saith our Saviour, 'that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.' 'Who art thou,' saith St Paul, 'that judgest another man's servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth.' It is sufficient to show the impropriety and rashness of these unwarrantable decisions, that they are founded on no scriptural or solid evidence. They are generally built on the very things exploded in this Discourse, or others of still less importance; all of which united, go not a single step towards proving a religious or an irreligious character.

SERMON LXXXIX.

REGENERATION.—ITS EVIDENCES.—WHAT ARE REAL EVIDENCES.

Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith: prove your own selves; know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?—2 Cor. xiii. 5.

In the last Discourse, I attempted to point out several things which furnish no real evidence of regeneration, although they have been supposed to furnish it, by multitudes in the Christian world. I now propose to mention several other things which actually furnish such evidence.

By all who believe the doctrine of regeneration, as formerly taught in these Discourses, it must be admitted that the disposition communicated when this work is accomplished in us, is new; and something which before did not exist in the soul. If it were the mere increase, or some other modification, of the former disposition, man could not be said to be born again; to be created anew; to be a new creature; to be renewed in the spirit of his mind. It could not be said by St Paul, concerning persons who were the subjects of regeneration, that 'old things were passed away' in them, and that 'all things had become new.'

It must farther be acknowledged, that this new disposition is in its nature opposite to that which before existed in the mind. The former disposition is sin, condemned and punished by the law of God; the new disposition is holiness, required and rewarded by the same law. The former disposition is hateful in the sight of God; the new one lovely, and 'of great price.'

The former disposition is frequently and justly styled selfishness; as being perpetually employed in subordinating the interests of any and all others to the private personal interests of the individual in whom it prevails. The new disposition is, with the same propriety, styled disinterestedness, love, good-will, benevolence; a spirit inclining him in whom it exists to subordinate his own private interest to the general welfare, and to find his own happiness in the common prosperity of the divine kingdom. The part, the place, and the enjoyments which God assigns to him as a member of this kingdom, he is inclined to take, not with submission only, but with cheerfulness; as being that which is ordered by infinite wisdom, and is, therefore, the best and most desirable.

This new disposition is also opposed to the former, particularly as it regards our Maker. The former or 'carnal mind is enmity against God,' opposed to his character and to his pleasure; the new one is conformed to his pleasure, and delighted with his character. He in whom it exists 'delights in the law of God after the inner man;' and esteems it as 'more to be chosen than the most fine gold, and sweeter than honey and the honeycomb.'

The former disposition is an impenitent devotion to sin; attended, at times, and after some of its grosser perpetrations, by remorse perhaps, and self-condemnation; but never by a real loathing of the sin itself, nor by that ingenuous sorrow for it, which is 'after a godly sort.' The new disposition is a real hatred of sin; a sincere, and, if I may so term it, an instinctive sorrow for every transgression of the divine commands, whenever such transgression is present to the view of the mind.

The former disposition was a general spirit of unbelief or distrust towards God, his invitations, promises, and designs; a distrust especially exercised towards the Redeemer, and towards his righteousness as the foundation of our acceptance with God. The new one is an humble, steadfast, affectionate confidence in God, his declarations and designs; exercised particularly towards Christ, as the Saviour of mankind, the propitiation for sin, and the true and living way to eternal glory. This confidence, or, as it is most usually termed in the New Testament, this faith, is a vital principle in the soul, producing every act of real obedience, every act in man which is pleasing to God.

In all these particulars united, the new disposition is termed godliness, or piety.

The former disposition is inclined to the indulgence of those lusts, or passions and appetites, which immediately respect ourselves; such as pride, vanity, sloth, lewdness, and intemperance. The new one is opposed to all these; is humble, modest, diligent, chaste, and temperate. In this view, it is styled, temperance, moderation, or self-government.

As in all these things the spirit communicated in our regeneration not only differs so greatly from that which we possess by nature, but is so directly opposed to it; it must be admitted, that, in all its operations it carries with it some evidence of its existence, in the same manner as our sinful disposition carries with it evidence of its existence. He who denies that holiness in a renewed mind can be evidenced by its nature and operations, must also deny, either that any moral character whatever can be perceived to exist, or that a holy disposition is capable of the same proof as a sinful one. That this is philosophy too unsound to be adopted by a sober man, is so evident as to need no illustration. Indeed, it may be doubted whether any man will openly aver this doctrine; although multitudes assert that which involves it. Certainly, a sinner who examines his own heart and life must discern that he is sinful; with equal certainty an angel must discern that he himself is holy.

From what has been said of the nature of the renewed disposition it is clear, that the man who repents of his sins, who believes in Christ, who loves and fears God, who disinterestedly loves his neighbour, and forgives his enemies, and who employs himself daily in resisting and subduing his own passions and appetites, must have some consciousness that he does these things. In this consciousness, as it continually rises up to the view of the mind, consists the primary or original evidence that we are Christians. Indeed, all the evidence of this nature which we ever possess, is no other than

this consciousness, variously modified, and rendered more explicit and satisfactory by the aid of several things with which, from time to time, it becomes connected.

Having made these general observations, I shall proceed to state the following particulars, in which, I apprehend, this evidence will be especially seen.

1. The renewed mind relishes all spiritual objects.

Every man knows what it is to relish natural objects; such as agreeable food, ease, warmth, rest, friends, beauty, novelty, and grandeur. Every man knows that these objects are relished also in themselves, for their own sake, as being in themselves pleasant to the mind, independently of consequences, and of all other extraneous considerations. In the same manner, according to what is here intended, are spiritual objects relished by the renewed mind. A Christian regards the character of God, the character of Christ, the divine law, the gospel, and his own duty, as objects pleasing in their own nature. Thus David, of the religious exercises of whose mind we have a more detailed account than we have of those of any other scriptural writer, says concerning the 'statutes of the Lord,' that 'they are right; rejoicing the heart: more to be desired than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter than honey, and the honeycomb.' And again, 'How sweet are thy words unto my taste! Yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth. I love thy commandments above gold; yea, above fine gold.' And again. 'Whom have I in heaven but thee? And there is none upon the earth, whom I desire beside thee.'—'Oh taste and see, that the Lord is good!' 'Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, ye righteous; and shout for joy all ye upright in heart!' With these expressions of David correspond all the declarations of the other divine writers, wherever they are made. Thus St Paul says, 'I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ.' Thus also the same apostle says, 'I delight in the law of the Lord after the inward man.'

This doctrine has been extensively illustrated in the Sermon lately delivered on the subject of joy in the Holy Ghost; and therefore will need the less illustration here.

It ought, however, to be remembered, that a delight in these things, because of some benefit which we have, or imagine ourselves to have, derived from them, or which we hope to derive from them immediately, or from the relish of them, whether it be the favour of God, comforting evidence of our Christianity, or any other benefit whatever, is not the kind of relish of which I speak. This is directed towards the things themselves, as being in themselves delightful to the taste of the mind. If the character of God is excellent, it cannot but be supposed that this excellence must be relished by a person suitably disposed; and that, although this person were to be ignorant of any manner in which he himself was to derive personal benefit from it.

Wherever this relish exists it will ordinarily show itself, not only in the manner in which the mind immediately regards spiritual objects, but in its remoter operations. Thus, if a man really relishes the worship of God, he will be apt to be regularly employed in it at all proper seasons. He will find himself inclined to ejaculatory prayer, to pray in his closet, in the family, and in the church. If he loves the Scriptures, he will be apt to read them regularly, much, and often. If he relishes the company of religious persons, he will naturally frequent it, seek it, and derive from it, when enjoyed, a sensible pleasure.

To secret prayer, there seems to be hardly an allurement, sufficient to keep the regular practice of it alive for a great length of time, beside a relish for communio with God. It is plain, that secret prayer cannot be continued with a view to be seen of men, or the hope of acquiring reputation. As in its own nature it cannot but be disrelished by every sinner, it seems as if it must of course be soon dropped where piety does not keep it alive. Thus Job seems to have reasoned, when he said concerning the hypocrite, 'Will he delight himself in the Almighty? Will he always call upon God?' Job xxvii. 10. As if he had said, 'He will not delight himself in the Almighty; and therefore will not always, or throughout life, continue to pray to God: but will cease from this practice, after the casual feelings and views which gave birth to it have ceased to operate.' A continued relish for secret prayer furnishes, therefore, a strong and hopeful testimony that we are Christians.

St John informs us, that the love of Christians also, is a satisfactory proof that we are Christians. 'Hereby we know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.' As this subject was extensively considered in the Discourse on brotherly love, it will be unnecessary to dwell upon it here. It will however be proper to observe, that we are not in the present case supposed to love Christians, because they are our personal friends, or because they have been, or are expected to be, useful to us; but because they are Christians; and on account of the excellence and amiableness of the Christian Spirit which they possess and manifest. For this reason God loves them; that is, with the love usually termed complacency; and for this reason only, since he can plainly receive no benefit from them. For the same reason they are loved by their fellow Christians.

In order to know whether we love them, it will be proper to ask ourselves the questions, mentioned in the Discourse alluded to. Do we love their goodness of character? Do we seek their company? Do we relish their conversation? Do we take pleasure in their Christian conduct? Do we pray for their prosperity, their holiness, and their salvation?

I will only add under this head, that with respect to all spiritual objects, we are carefully to inquire whether we relish them at all; and whether we relish them for themselves; for the excellence which they possess; or for some apprehended benefit which may be derived from them to ourselves.

2. Real religion is always accordant with the dictates of reason enlightened by revelation.

By this I intend, that it is not, on the one hand, the mere result of passion, affection, or impulse, as in every case of enthusiasm; and that it is not, on the other, the result of mere philosophy, or the decisions of human reason, unenlightened by revelation; as is the case with the professed natural religion of Deists. The good conscience of a good man is, on the one hand, purged from these dead works; and, on the other, exercises such a control over all the affections, as to direct their various operations steadily towards that which the Scriptures have pronounced to be true and right.

Religion, in the scriptural sense, is a reasonable, not a casual, nor an instinctive, service. Man acts in it,

not as an animal under the mere impulse of animal affections; not as a subject of mere passion, not as a creature of mere imagination, not as a mere subject of all these united; but as a rational being in whom the understanding governs, and in whom the affections only aid, animate, and obey. There are Christians in profession, whose religion seems to be nothing but a compound of mere impulses and affections. There are others, whose religion appears to be little else beside a cold, heartless collection of propositions or doctrines, quietly lying side by side in the understanding without any influence on the heart or on the life. In the religion of the gospel, the heart is plainly made the great essential; but it is the heart under the steady direction and rational control of the understanding. Real Christianity is the energy or active power of the soul, steadily directed to that which is believed to be right, and thus directed to it merely because it is right. That which is aimed at is loved and pursued, because of its rectitude, admitted on satisfactory and solid evidence.

From this source the renewed man is furnished with important evidence of his sanctification. If he finds in himself a steady disposition to learn as far as possible the true import of the doctrines and precepts of the gospel, and in this manner the real nature of his own duty; if he loves moral rectitude in such a degree as anxiously to inquire what it is; and if, when he has learned what it is, he is disposed to yield to proof and conviction, and pursue his duty, because it is seen to be his duty, he may justly be satisfied, that he is really renewed.

But if, on the contrary, he is accustomed to obey the casual impulses of feeling and imagination; if he is disposed to think highly of passages of Scripture, not because they are the word of God, or are excellent in themselves, declaring important truths, or enjoining important duties, but because they have come into the mind suddenly, accidentally, and without any forethought of his own; if he is inclined to prize such texts more than others, or more than he prized the same texts before; if he is disposed to think highly of sudden starts of feeling, of thoughts and purposes unexpectedly coming into the mind, and to regard them as produced by an extraordinary divine agency, and therefore to value them highly, as peculiar tokens of the favour of God, and as authoritative and safe guides to his own duty; if he is fond of indulging a lively imagination about the things of religion; of forming to himself awful views concerning the world of misery, and the sufferings of its inhabitants; or bright and beautiful visions of the light and splendour of heaven, and the glory of its inhabitants; or charming images of the person of Christ, as beautiful in form, ravishing in aspect, and surrounded with radiance; or as meek, gentle, looking with compassion, or smiling with complacency, on himself; if he is inclined to rest on these feelings and impulses, as the peculiar foundations of his hope, consolation, and confidence, or as any foundations of hope and confidence at all; I will not say, that such a man is not renewed; but I will say, that he trusts without evidence, and builds upon sand. I will farther say, that he is miserably deluded with regard to this great subject; that he feeds on wind, and not on food; and that by directing his eye to false objects, from which he never can derive any real good, he loses the golden privilege of gaining solid support and evangelical comfort from those sources whence alone God has intended they should be derived.

3. The prevalence of a meek and humble disposition furnishes the mind with good reason to believe that it is renewed.

The natural spirit of man is universally proud and irritable. No part of the human character is so predominant, more pleasant to ourselves, more deceitful, or more universal. At the same time, as we might expect, none is so much cherished by the mind. A great part of the perfection aimed at, and delineated by, the wise men of heathen antiquity, was formed of pride. Stoical pride is proverbial. The love of glory, according to Cicero, was virtue, or real excellence of character.

Devoted as we are to the indulgence of pride, it is perhaps of all passions the most unworthy and mischievous, the most irritable, the most unforgiving, the most wrathful, the most contentious, and the most oppressive. The world has been filled by it with private quarrels and public wars, with wretchedness at the fireside, with turmoil in the neighbourhood, and with bloodshed and desolation in the great scenes of national activity. It has brought forth the tyrant, and nursed the conqueror.

The religion of the gospel has laid the axe at the root of this passion. Christ, the glorious author of this religion, has exhibited in his own life a character perfectly contrasted to pride, in every degree, and in every exercise. This character he has beautifully expressed in that memorable and delightful declaration, subjoined to the most consoling invitation and the happiest tidings ever published to the children of men: 'Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls.' In conformity with this declaration, his whole life was a life of meekness and humility. In conformity with this declaration also, he has everywhere in the gospel preferred, as was remarked in one of the Discourses on his character, the meek and lowly virtues to the magnanimous and splendid ones. He has inculcated them oftener; has dwelt on them more; has enjoined them in stronger terms, and has made them in a higher degree indispensable.

As these virtues, then, are such a prominent and essential part of Christianity, it will be easily seen that they must be found in every Christian. So long as pride is the predominating spirit of man, he must know, if acquainted at all with himself, that he is not sanctified. A great part of the influence of the Spirit of sanctification is employed in annihilating this haughty, self-dependent disposition. One of the first perceptible effects of this influence is the humility of the gospel. An humble mind is, of course, meek, little disposed to feel provocations deeply, uninclined to construe them in the worst manner, and still more indisposed to requite them with wrath and revenge. What is thus the natural result of the Christian spirit is continually strengthened by the general disposition of the Christian to obey the precepts, and to follow the example, of his Master; both conspiring to enforce on him the same conduct in the most powerful manner. He knows, that Christ has required the same mind which was in himself (and peculiarly in this respect), to be in all his followers. He sees the beauty and glory of the disposition

in his great example. He knows that nothing without it will render him acceptable to God, or qualify him for admission into his kingdom. With these mighty motives in view, it seems impossible that this disposition, once begun in the soul, should fail to manifest itself in some good degree, by its genuine and happy effects.

The evidence which it furnishes to the mind, of its renovation, is twofold. Its former dispositions are weakened; and new ones have begun to prevail in their place. Pride is enfeebled in all its operations, the propensity to wrath is lessened, and humility and meekness (not insensibility to injuries, but a serene quiet of soul under them) have, like beautiful twin sisters, entered the mind, and made it their permanent habitation.

He who finds this his own state, possesses desirable evidence that he is a Christian.

4. Without a prevailing spirit of gentleness towards others, we cannot have sound and scriptural evidence of our Christianity.

This is a kindred subject to the last. The natural character of man is rough, revengeful, and unforgiving; disposed to overbear, to carry his measures by force and violence, to listen little to the wishes and reasons of others, and to arrogate to himself and his concerns an importance which all impartial persons see does not belong to them.

To this spirit also the gospel is directly and equally opposed. It enjoins everywhere a spirit of gentleness, moderation, and forgiveness towards all men. Its Author was wonderfully distinguished by softness and sweetness of disposition. He never intruded on the rights of others. He used no force, nor even wrought a single miracle to vindicate his own. He neither 'cried, nor lifted up, nor caused his voice to be heard in the streets.' In the garden he healed the ear of Malchus, and on the cross he prayed for his murderers. At the same time he required all his followers to possess and exhibit the same gentle and forgiving disposition, on pain of not being otherwise themselves forgiven. Nay, he has forbidden them to ask forgiveness of God upon any other condition. 'The servant of the Lord,' saith St Paul, 'must not strive, but be gentle towards all men.'

The existence and influence of this part of the Christian character, are especially seen in cases where we have been injured, and towards those who have injured us. If, beside quietly receiving injuries, we exercise a benevolent spirit towards those who have done them; if we can lay aside all thoughts of retaliation, if we can show them kindness, if we can rejoice in their prosperity, if we can feel and relieve their distress, if we can heartily pray for their well-being, we have good reason to conclude that 'the same mind which was in Christ is also in us.'

5. A willingness to perform, accompanied by the actual performance, of the duties required by the gospel, is an indispensable evidence of Christianity.

There are multitudes of persons in the Christian world, who appear to place religion greatly, if not wholly, in such feelings of the mind as are rarely or never followed by any of those overt acts of obedience, which are commonly called Christian duties. Their love, contrary to the injunction given by St John, appears to exist 'only in word, and in tongue; not in deed;' and therefore, we have reason to fear, not 'in truth.' We find persons of this character willing to converse much on religious subjects, to dwell on the nature of religious affections, to canvass abundantly the doctrines of the gospel, to explain minutely the nature of its precepts, to expose such tenets of others as they esteem erroneous, to defend strenuously such as they think true, and often to mix with all these things not a little censure of those who differ from them in opinion and character. I will not say that these persons are destitute of religion; but I will say, that, so far, they furnish little reason why others should believe them religious.

Real religion is ever active, and always inclined to do as well as to say. The end for which man was made, and for which he was redeemed, was that he might do good, and actively glorify his Creator. To this end all the instructions and precepts of the gospel were given, all the blessings of providence, and all the influences of the Spirit of God. All these, therefore, are frustrated and are without efficacy, where men do not thus act. The business of a Christian is not to say to others, 'Be ye warmed, and be ye filled; depart in peace;' but to feed and clothe them. This, I acknowledge, may be done by such as are not Christians; but he who does it not, cannot, so far as I see, be a Christian. Active obedience is the only visible fruit by which our religious character is discovered to others; and the fruit by which, in a manner peculiarly happy, it is known to ourselves.

To render this evidence of our sanctification satisfactory, it should, in the first place, be uniform.

By this, I intend, that our active obedience should proceed in a manner generally regular through life. I intend, that it should not exist by fits and starts; be cold to-day and warm to-morrow; now zealous, now indifferent; at one time animated by a strong sense of heavenly things; at another, absorbed in those of earth; at one time charitable, perhaps even to excess, at another, 'withholding more than is meet;' and all this, according to the rise and prevalence of different natural feelings. The spirit of Christianity is one in its nature, and therefore uniform in its operations. These indeed are diversified, as the objects which they respect vary. Thus the same disposition sorrows for sin, which rejoices in the Holy Ghost; and is at peace with itself, while it contends with its spiritual enemies. Still, a single character runs through them all; differing indeed in degree, but not in kind. Under its influence the life will wear one general aspect. By ourselves, therefore, if we examine, and by others, who are attentive to our conduct, it will be seen to be of the same nature, and to produce the same effects, throughout the progress of life. I do not mean, that we shall not backslide; or that we shall not have lukewarm, uncomfortable, unprofitable, and unexemplary seasons. These, unhappily, recur but too often. A field of wheat may grow with different vigour; may at times be checked by cold, and stinted by drought: and may, at other times, and under the influence of refreshing showers and kindly seasons, flourish with strength, verdure, and beauty. Still it will always be a field of wheat, and not of tares and darnel.

Secondly: This obedience must, for the same end, be universal.

By this I intend, that it must extend alike to all those duties which immediately respect God, our fellow-crea-

tures, and ourselves. Real virtue, or the religion of the gospel, never exists by halves. There is no such thing as being pious, and not benevolent; or being benevolent, and not pious; or being both, and not self-governed. Religion, in this sense, is a spirit of obedience to God; and regards all his commands alike.

If then we would derive from our obedience that satisfactory evidence of our Christianity which it is capable of furnishing, we should examine ourselves concerning our whole conduct, and inquire how far it wears this universal character. We should inquire diligently whether we regularly and steadily employ ourselves at all proper seasons in the worship of God, in reading the Scriptures, in communion with Christians, in communion with our own hearts, in watching, striving, praying, against our lusts within and our enemies without, in overcoming 'the world, the flesh, and the devil,' in resisting especially 'the sins which most easily beset us;' in raising our thoughts and affections to heavenly objects, and in endeavouring effectually to make, in the present life, preparation for eternity. Universally, we should inquire whether we live always in the fear, love, and service of God, with a spirit of dependence, confidence, submission, contentment, and gratitude.

Among the duties to which we are summoned by the gospel, those which we owe immediately to our fellow-creatures and to ourselves are there exhibited as being of very high and indispensable importance. They are every-where insisted on in the plainest, strongest, and most affecting manner; are commended, urged, enjoined, and promised a reward, from the beginning to the end of the Bible. At the same time, the neglect and the violation of them are condemned in the severest terms, and threatened under the most glowing images, with the severest punishment. 'Who,' says the psalmist, 'shall abide in thy tabernacle; who shall dwell in thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart; that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour; in whose eyes a vile person is contemned; but he honoureth them that fear the Lord: he that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not: he that putteth not out his money to usury, nor taketh a reward against the innocent. He that doeth these things shall never be moved.'—'If ye forgive men their trespasses,' said our Saviour to his disciples, 'your heavenly Father will also forgive you: but, if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive you your trespasses.' The servant who owed ten thousand talents to his lord, had his debt readily forgiven. But, when he oppressed his fellow-servant, the Lord delivered him over to the tormentors, till he should pay the debt. 'If any man will not work, neither let him eat.'—'If any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.'—'Be not deceived,' says St Paul, 'neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.'—'Blessed,' says David,' 'is he that considereth the poor; the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble.'

And, what may serve instead of a volume upon this subject, Christ, seated on the throne of final judgment, will, as he declares, 'say to them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye ministered unto me; and inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto me.' To them on the left hand he will also say, 'Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me not in; naked, and ye clothed me not; sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not; and, inasmuch as ye did it not to the least of these my brethren, ye did it not to me.'

From these passages of Scripture it will be seen, irresistibly, that the duties of these two classes are in the eye of God of incalculable importance, and are indispensable to the Christian character, and to the attainment of salvation.

Let it not be supposed for a moment, however, that I intend to prefer these duties to those which immediately respect God. Piety certainly holds the first place in a virtuous character; but no man loves God who does not love his fellow men, and control his own passions and appetites. 'As the body without the spirit is dead; so faith without good works is dead also.' 'He that taketh not his cross and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.'

There is one point of view in which these duties more effectually evince the Christian character, and prove the reality of our religion, than most of those which are classed under the name of piety. It is this: they ordinarily demand a greater degree of self-denial. A man may ordinarily practise the visible duties of piety without any serious sacrifice of his worldly inclinations. He may read the Scriptures, and teach them to his children; he may attend the worship of God in his family and in the sanctuary; he may be present in private religious assemblies; he may converse much and often on religious subjects; he may be very zealous about all these duties; he may commune at the table of Christ; he may preach the gospel: yet, instead of crossing his inclinations or denying himself, he may feel that he is purchasing a Christian character at a cheap rate; that he is securing to himself the best friends; that he is opening an easy way to distinction, to influence, and, in the end, to wealth; and that he is, upon the whole, making in this manner a very gainful bargain. Nay, he may in this manner more easily than in any other, quiet his own conscience, persuade himself that he is a Christian, feel satisfied that he has a title to eternal life; and thus, while he thinks he is performing his duty, be only seeking for the pleasure found in these things; pleasure which, though derived from sacred objects, is merely natural, and differs in nothing important from that which is furnished by pleasant food, fine weather, or a beautiful landscape.

But when a man is called to resist his passions and appetites; when he is required to be humble, meek, patient, forgiving, just, sincere, merciful, sober, chaste, and temperate; when he is required to communicate his property liberally to the poor, the stranger, and the public; and practically to 'remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than

to receive;' he is required of course to sacrifice 'the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life.' He is required to give up his pride, vanity, ambition, anger, avarice, and sensuality: these darling inclinations, which constitute what is called in the Scriptures 'the love of the world,' together with all the objects on which they are pampered, he is obliged to yield up to the love of God.

Nothing more strongly evinces the sincerity of any professions, than the fact, that they are followed by serious self-denial. Accordingly, the Scriptures have placed peculiar stress upon self-denial, as evidential of the genuineness of a Christian profession. 'If any man will be my disciple,' said our Saviour, 'let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.'—'If any man will save his life, he shall lose it; and, if any man will lose his life, for my sake, he shall find it.'—'Go, and sell all that thou hast,' said he to the young ruler, 'and give to the poor, and come and follow me; and thou shalt have treasure in heaven.'—'Love not the world,' says St John, 'neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.'

When, therefore, we find the love of the world actually prevailing, and clearly manifested, in the life and conversation of persons who make a profession of religion the evidence of their piety, of whatever nature it may be, must be exceedingly diminished in the eye of sober charity. Whatever zeal they may discover in attending upon public or private worship; however well they may converse upon religious subjects; whatever feelings they may discover in such conversation; and whatever bright discoveries they may seem to enjoy concerning the mercy or glory of God, or the love and excellence of Christ; if still they are greedy of gain, absorbed in the world, peevish, discontented, wrathful, slothful, sensual, unfeeling, vain of their attainments, uncharitable; particularly, if they are eagerly engaged in the pursuit of place, power, popularity, and fame; and more particularly still, if they refuse to give to the poor, or give leanly and grudgingly, or deny aid to others in their distresses; there will be little reason left to believe them children of God. How can these persons expect Christ to say at the final Judgment, 'I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; sick, and ye visited me?' How can he say, 'ye did it unto the least of these my brethren?' Were he on earth, and should tell them, as he told the young ruler, 'Go, and sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor;' would they not 'go away sorrowful?' Would they not feel, that even 'to have treasure in heaven' upon these conditions, would be a hard bargain?

There have been, there are still, multitudes of mankind, and it is to be feared, that in this land, and at the present time, the number is not small, of those who intend to go to heaven with a cheap religion; a religion, in which 'the love of the world' is made to harmonize with 'the love of the Father.' This religion consists of feelings, views, discoveries, conversation about these and other religious subjects, and zeal in attending upon external religious duties. But 'whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him; how dwelleth the love of God in him?'

It is easy for any man who thinks that he is loved by God, to love him in turn. But this is not that love of God which he requires. The feelings and views which do not prompt us to virtuous conduct are of no value. If we would prove ourselves to be Christians, we should then diligently ask ourselves, whether we aim at being strictly just, sincere, and faithful; whether we actually show kindness to all men, whether friends or enemies, strangers or neighbours; whether we 'do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again;' whether we befriend and promote public, useful, and charitable designs; employing both our substance and efforts as either may be needed; whether we love the souls of others, oppose their sins, and promote in them reformation and piety; and whether we are watchfully sober, chaste, temperate, diligent in our callings, and active in our opposition to every worldly lust.

Finally: Concerning all these things, we should carefully ask whether we take delight in such a life as this; and that, notwithstanding all the opposition, ridicule, and contempt of the world.

Among the different acts or kinds of obedience, also, particular attention is due to those which involve peculiar self denial. When the avaricious man becomes generous and charitable, the ambitious man contented with his circumstances, the proud man humbled, the wrathful man meek, the revengeful man forgiving, and the sensualist sober, chaste, and temperate; in a word, when we drop our reigning sins, and assume the contrary virtues, of set and cordial purpose; we are furnished with strong reason to believe that we are Christians.

6. The increase of all these things in the mind and life is, perhaps, the clearest of all the evidences of personal religion.

St Paul informs us that 'he did not count himself to have apprehended;' that is, he did not consider himself as having attained that degree of excellence which belonged to his Christian profession. 'But,' saith he, 'this one thing I do:' or, perhaps, as the omission in the text is supplied by Doddridge, 'this one thing *I can say:* forgetting the things which are behind, and reaching forth to those which are before' (in the Greek, reaching out eagerly), 'I press towards the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.' What was the conduct of Paul is the duty of all Christians; and is accordingly enjoined by him in the following verse. In greater or less degree it is their conduct also. They are directed 'so to run, that they may obtain;' and to 'grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ;' 'to increase, and abound, in love one towards another, and towards all men.'

As it is the duty of Christians to fulfill these precepts, so it is the nature of Christianity to accord with them, by increasing from time to time their strength and vigour. The more the spirit of the gospel is exercised, the more we love to exercise it. The more the pleasure found in it is enjoyed, the more it is coveted. The more habitual its principles and practices become, the greater is the strength which they acquire. Indeed nothing is vigorous and powerful in man, beside that which is habitual.

Hence it is plain, that, investigating our religious character, we should examine it with particular reference to its growth. To grow is its proper nature. If it is not seen to grow, then we do not either see it as it is, or it does not exist in us in its genuine character;

but is feeble, fading, sickly, clogged with encumbrances, and in a great measure hidden from view. Man is never for any length of time stationary. Either he is advancing or receding in every thing which pertains to him; and in religion as truly as in his natural endowments or acquisitions. Declension in religion, I need not say, furnishes a melancholy evidence that we are not religious. It is no less obvious, that a regular progress in its various graces and attainments must, on the contrary, become a clear and delightful testimony of our Christian character. There is not only more of religion to be seen in ourselves, but it is discerned with clearer conviction and certainty to be genuine; because it appears, as real religion naturally appears, in its own proper character of growth and improvement. He who loves, fears, and serves God more and more, who is more and more just, sincere, and merciful to his fellowmen, and who is more and more self-governed in all his appetites and passions, weaned from the world, and spiritually and heavenly minded, cannot want the best reasons furnished in our present state to believe that he is a child of God.

SERMON XC.

REGENERATION.—ITS EVIDENCES.—DIFFICULTIES ATTENDING THE APPLICATION OF THESE EVIDENCES TO OURSELVES.

Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith: prove your own selves; know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?—2 Cor. xiii. 5.

In the last Discourse but one I proposed from these words to examine,

I. *Some of the imaginary evidences of regeneration.*

II. *Some of the real evidences.*

III. *Some of the difficulties which attend the application of the real evidences to ourselves.*

There has been much debate in the Christian world concerning the faith of assurance; or, as it is in better language styled by St Paul, 'the full assurance of hope.' The question debated has, however, not been, whether men felt assured that they were Christians, but whether this assurance has been evangelical, or built on satisfactory and scriptural evidence. That such a faith has existed I have no doubt; nor do I see how it can be rationally doubted. That the apostles were evangelically assured of their own piety, and consequent salvation, must be admitted by all who believe the Scriptures. 'I have fought a good fight,' says St Paul, 'I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness.'—'For to me to live is Christ; to die is gain.'—'We know,' says St John, 'that we have passed from death unto life.' From the accounts given us concerning the first martyrs, I think we cannot hesitate to admit that they also were the subjects of the same faith. Nor is the evidence concerning a number of those who have lived and suffered in modern times, less convincing to me. These men have in various instances lived in a manner eminently evangelical; have devoted themselves through a long period to the service of God, with so much humility, self-denial, uniformity, steadfastness, and evangelical zeal; have laboured for the good of their fellow-creatures with so much disinterestedness, charity, and constancy; have lived so much above the world, and with a conversation so heavenly, that when they are declaring themselves possessed of this faith, and have died with peace and exultation, which must be supposed to result from it, we cannot, unless by wilful rejection of evidence, hesitate to admit that they were possessed of this enviable attainment. Indeed, I can hardly doubt, that any man who reads their history with candour, will readily admit the doctrine, so far as the men to whom I refer are concerned. But, if these things be admitted, it will probably be readily conceded, that there are, in every country and in every age where Christianity prevails, some persons who enjoy the faith or hope of assurance.

At the same time, I am fully persuaded that the number of these persons is not very great. If the Christians and ministers with whom I have had opportunity to converse, many of whom have been eminently exemplary in their lives, may be allowed to stand as representatives of Christians in general, it must certainly be true, that the faith of assurance is not common.

Indeed, I am persuaded, that this blessing is much more frequently experienced in times and places of affliction and persecution, than in seasons of peace and prosperity. Severe trials and sufferings furnish of themselves clearer proofs of the piety of those who are tried, than can ordinarily be furnished by circumstances of ease and quiet. The faith which will patiently submit, which will encounter, which will endure, which will overcome, in periods of great affliction, has in this very process both acquired and exhibited peculiar strength, and furnished evidence of its genuineness which can hardly be derived from any other source.

At the same time it is, I think, irresistibly inferred from the declarations contained in the word of God, and from the history of his providence, recorded both within and without the Scriptures, that God, in his infinite mercy, furnishes his children with peculiar support and consolation in times of peculiar trial; and that, as their 'day is,' so he causes their 'strength to be.' Among the means of consolation enjoyed by Christians, none seems better adapted to furnish them with the necessary support under severe distresses, than an assurance that they are children of God. Accordingly, this very consolation appears to have been given to the suffering saints of the Old and New Testaments, as a peculiar support to them in their peculiar trials.

From analogy it might be concluded, and from the history of facts it may, with the strongest probability, if not with absolute certainty, be determined, that the same blessing has been given in times of eminent affliction to saints in every succeeding age of the church.

Still there is no reason to think that the faith of assurance is generally attained among eminent Christians. This fact has, sometimes, been called in question, sometimes denied, and oftener wondered at. 'Why,' it is inquired, 'are not Christians oftener, nay, why are they not generally, assured of their gracious state? There certainly is a difference between sin and holiness, sufficiently broad to be seen and marked. The Scriptures have actually marked this difference with such clearness and exactness, as to give us ample information concerning both the nature and the limits of these great moral attributes. They have separated those who possess them into two classes, not only entirely distinct, but directly opposite to each other: so opposite, that the one class is styled in them, the friends, and the other, the enemies, of God. Farther, they present to us various means of judging, by which we are directed, as well as encouraged and enabled, to try and estimate our own religious character. The subject is also so spoken of in the Scriptures, as naturally to lead us into the conclusion, that these different characters may be distinctly known; and that it is our duty so to act, as upon the whole to form satisfactory views concerning our moral condition. Finally, the writers of the New Testament, and indeed of the Old also, speak of themselves, as knowing their own piety; and of others, as able to know theirs.'

To these observations I answer, in the first place, that holiness and sin are, in themselves, thus clearly distinguishable. Angels cannot but know that they are holy; and fiends, that they are sinful.

Secondly: This difference is sufficiently marked in the Scriptures. If we saw holiness in ourselves exactly as it is exhibited in the Scriptures, that is, unmixed, we should certainly know ourselves to be holy.

Thirdly: Holy and sinful men are just as different from each other, as they are represented in the Scriptures; but this does not enable us to determine which they are.

Fourthly: The means furnished us in the Scriptures of judging concerning our religious character, are, undoubtedly, the best which the nature of our circumstances will admit; and such as, if correctly applied to ourselves, and known to be thus applied, would undoubtedly decide this great point in a satisfactory manner. Still this does not infer, that it usually will or can be thus decided.

Fifthly: We are undoubtedly required in the Scriptures to examine ourselves; and the performance of this duty, while it is indispensable on our part, unquestionably may be, and is, of great importance to us; although we may not, as a consequence of it, become possessed of the faith of assurance.

Sixthly: The writers in the Old and New Testaments did, in many instances, certainly know that they were holy; but they were inspired. It will not therefore follow, that others who are uninspired will, of course, possess the same knowledge of their own state.

Seventhly: The Scriptural writers very extensively use the words *know*, and *knowledge*, not in the sense of absolute science, but to denote belief, persuasion, a strong hope, &c., in the same manner as these terms are used in common speech. We cannot, therefore, certainly conclude, from the use of these terms with respect to this subject, that the divine writers expected those to whom they wrote generally to possess the faith of assurance.

Finally: It is our duty to possess this faith. It is also our duty to be perfect. Yet St John says of himself, and all other Christians, 'If we say, that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us?' As, therefore, notwithstanding this duty, no man is perfect; so, notwithstanding the duty of obtaining the faith of assurance, few persons may actually possess it.

The real difficulty is chiefly passed by, in all the observations made above; and lies in applying the scriptural evidences of holiness to our own particular cases. This subject, I shall now attempt to examine in several particulars.

The difficulties which attend the application of these evidences to ourselves arise from various sources. Among them the following will be found to possess a very serious influence:

1. The vast importance of the case.

A case of great moment is at all times apt strongly to agitate our minds. Men deeply interested by any concern are, therefore, considered as less capable of discerning clearly and judging justly, than the same men when dispassionate. As this is the subject, even of proverbial declaration, it cannot need proof. The case in hand is of infinite moment to each individual. Whenever he brings it to view, he is prone to feel a degree, and often not a small one, of anxiety. It is therefore seen, together with the evidences which attend it, by the mind, through the medium of disturbed feelings. Earnest wishes to find satisfaction, on the one hand, and strong apprehensions lest it should not be found, on the other, naturally disorder that calm temperament, which is so necessary to clear investigation and satisfactory conclusions. In this state, the mind is prone to be unsatisfied with its own investigation; fears that it has not acted impartially; suspects that it has not viewed the evidence possessed by it in a just light; and when its judgments are favourable to itself, is prone to tremble, lest they have been too favourable, and the result of biased inclinations, rather than of clear discernment. A presumptuous decision in its favour, it perfectly well knows to be full of danger; and is ready to think almost every favourable judgment presumptuous. In this situation, all such judgments are apt to be regarded with a general suspicion; and the mind chooses rather to continue unsatisfied, and to undergo the distresses of anxiety and alarm, than to hazard the danger of ill founded conclusions in its own favour. Most Christians are, I believe, so strongly convinced that a state of anxiety will contribute to make them alive and awake to the danger of backsliding, to quicken them in their duty, and to secure them from carelessness and sloth, and that therefore it will have a happy influence towards rendering them safe, as willingly to judge too unfavourably, rather than too favourably, of their own religious character. An unfavourable judgment, they know, does not render the character itself any worse; but only deprives them of the consolation which, with more favourable views of it, they might enjoy; while the contrary opinion might naturally slacken

them in their duty; and perhaps prevent them finally from obtaining salvation.

2. Another source of difficulties is found in the peculiar natural character of those who are employed in this investigation.

Some of these persons are naturally inclined to hope, others to fear; some to cheerfulness, others to melancholy. Some are rash, others are cautious. Some are ignorant, others are well informed. But the evidences which establish, or should establish, a favourable judgment of our Christian character, are in substance always the same. As applied to persons of these different characters, they must, however, be seen in very different lights; because, although religion is the same thing, yet so much of the peculiar natural character of the man remains after he has become religious, as to render him a very different man from every other religious man. Paul and John were both eminently religious. Their religion was the same thing; but the men were widely different from each other. If Christians so eminent and excellent could differ in this manner, how much more different from each other must be ordinary Christians? How much more must the natural character remain in them? particularly, such as in a greater or less degree are sinful? The whole object, therefore, presented to the judgment of the individual must differ, and often greatly, in different cases.

For example: One person becomes the subject of piety, after a wise, careful, religious education, early and uninterrupted habits of conscientiousness, in the possession of a naturally sweet and amiable temper, in an original and regular course of filial duty, fraternal kindness, and exemplary conduct to those around him, and in the midst of a life generally commendable and lovely. Another, scarcely educated at all, possessed of a rough, gross, and violent disposition, and shamefully vicious from early life, is sanctified in the midst of scandalous indulgences, and rank habits of sin.

It is perfectly obvious, that these two persons will differ mightily from each other in the visible degree of that change of conduct which flows from their religion. The former will, perhaps, be scarcely changed at all, even to an observing eye; for he has heretofore done, and in a certain sense loved to do, in many particulars, the very thing which religion requires, and to which it prompts; and thus the tenor of his life will seem to those around him much the same after, as before, his conversion. The latter, sanctified in the same degree, will, it is plain, change almost the whole course of his conduct, and assume a life entirely new, and directly opposite to that which he led before.

Nor will the difference be small in the internal state of these individuals. The sanctified affections and purposes of the former will, in many instances, so blend themselves with those which he has derived from nature and habit, as to be often distinguished with difficulty, and not unfrequently to be entirely undistinguishable. Those of the latter, on the contrary, will be wholly opposite, in most instances, to all that he has heretofore thought, felt, and designed.

As the internal and external conduct of these individuals is the sole ground on which each must judge of himself, as well as be judged of by others, it is perfectly obvious that the objects concerning which they are respectively to judge are widely different from each other. But this is not all. The optics with which these persons judge concerning their religious state will, plainly, be widely different. Our dispositions naturally influence our judgment, and usually enter much more largely into the opinions which we form, than we are aware. Thus a person strongly inclined to hope, will almost of course judge favourably, when a person equally inclined to fear would, in the very same case, judge unfavourably, concerning himself. Cheerful persons naturally entertain comfortable views concerning themselves; those who are melancholy, such, and often such only, as are uncomfortable, discouraging, and distressing. The rash form bold and presumptuous opinions without hesitation; the cautious admit opinions favourable to themselves slowly, even when they are admitted upon acknowledged evidence. The ignorant must be very imperfectly fitted to consider the various means of evidence, all of which ought to be consulted, in forming our opinions concerning this important subject; while the enlightened Christian must be much more competent to draw up a well-founded determination.

3. The similar nature of those which we call natural views and affections, to those which are evangelical, furnishes another source of these difficulties.

Love and hatred, hope and fear, joy and sorrow, confidence and shame, together with various other affections and views of the mind, really exist and operate in the Christian as natural views and affections, and not merely evangelical. The objects which excite these affections in both senses are often the same. The emotions themselves are also so much alike, as perceived by the mind, that mankind universally, and the scriptural writers as well as others, call them by the same names. When both are described by those who are the subjects of them, the description, to a great extent, is commonly the same. It will, therefore, be easily believed that they are so similar in their nature, as, when they arise from the same objects, to render it difficult for the Christian in whom they exist, and at times impossible, to distinguish them from each other. It will be also easily seen, that when he who is not a Christian, has these affections and views excited in his mind, by the objects which excite the corresponding evangelical affections in the mind of a Christian, he may, in many instances, find it very difficult to discern that they are not evangelical.

To illustrate this subject clearly to the view of my audience, I will consider it more particularly.

A Christian loves God, his Son, his Spirit, his law, his gospel, his sabbath, his worship, and his children. Why does he love them? For two reasons. One is; their nature is agreeable to the relish of his mind. The other is, they are useful, and therefore pleasing, to himself. For both these reasons he is bound to love them. But, when he regards all these objects with this affection, it will be often difficult, and sometimes impossible, for him to determine whether his emotions are merely natural, wholly evangelical, or mixed. He knows that he exercises a love to God; but may be unable to determine whether he loves the character of God, considered by itself; whether he loves the divine perfections for what they are; or whether he loves God, because he regards him as a friend to himself; and delights in his perfections, because he considers them as engaged and operating to promote his present and eternal good. It would be difficult for most persons to determine precisely what views they would form of this glorious Being, if it were revealed to them that he was their enemy.

As it is often difficult for the Christian to distinguish his natural affections which, so long as he is a man, he will always continue to exercise, from the corresponding evangelical ones, which he exercises as a Christian; so it must evidently be more difficult for an unrenewed man, who has never had any other beside natural affections, to discern that these are not evangelical. When he loves God, and other divine objects, in what manner shall he determine that he loves him only because he believes him reconciled to himself? When he delights in the divine perfections, it will not be easy for him to see that it is only because he supposes them to be engaged to promote his welfare. When he loves the Scriptures, it will be difficult for him to perceive that it is only because of their sublimity and beauty, the good sense which they contain, the happy influence which they have on mankind, and the comforting promises which he considers them as speaking to himself. When he loves Christians, it will often be beyond his power to determine that it is not because of their natural amiableness of character, the agreeableness of their manners, their friendship or kind offices to himself, and their general usefulness to others with whom he is connected.

A person is quiet under provocations. This may arise from meekness. It may also arise from a sense of the wisdom, the dignity, and the usefulness of this spirit. He is kind to enemies. This may arise from the desire of obtaining the peculiar evidence that he is a good man, furnished by this exercise of Christian benevolence, from a sense of the nobleness of forgiveness, or from the danger of not finding himself forgiven.

I might extend this course of thought through all the objects of self-examination, and show that similar difficulties attend them all. Every Christian must, I think, have experienced them in his own case; and every person, accustomed to converse much with others on the grounds of their hope concerning themselves, must have perceived them continually occurring in the progress of every such conversation.

4. Another source of this difficulty is found in the transient nature of all our emotions.

By this I intend, that every exercise of our affections has only a momentary existence in the mind. It rises, is indulged, and is gone. All our knowledge of its nature, in the mean time, exists in the consciousness of it while it is passing; in our remembrance of that consciousness, known to be imperfect; and in our acquaintance with its effects, often of a character more or less doubtful. Few words can be necessary to show that our knowledge of these exercises, gained in this manner, must be attended by many imperfections. Our opportunity for viewing it while it is passing is so short, and often so carelessly employed; our remembrance of it, when it is past, is so far removed from certain accuracy; and its effects may be so easily, and for aught that appears, so justly attributed to various causes, that the whole view taken of them by the mind will frequently be obscure, and its decision unsatisfactory.

Hence appears the wisdom of fastening upon a course of such exercises, as furnishing far better means of determining our religious character, rather than resting it upon a few. A character may be successfully discerned in many exercises of a similar kind, which usually we shall attempt in vain to discover, to our satisfaction, in a small number. A thousand blades of grass will, in the spring, give a green and living aspect to that field, which with a hundred would still retain the russet appearance of absolute death.

5. Another fruitful source of the same difficulties is furnished by the imperfect state of religion in the mind.

This indeed may, in an extensive sense, be considered as the general source of them all. I have heretofore observed, that angels cannot but know that they are holy, and fiends, that they are sinful. Were we perfectly holy, then, we should certainly know this to be our character.

But there are particular difficulties attending this subject, which deserve to be marked.

The mind of every Christian experiences many alternations of holiness and sin. Temptations often and unexpectedly intrude. The objects which engross the whole heart of the sinner, unhappily engage at times, in greater or less degrees, that of the Christian. Nor is their influence always transient. David, Solomon, and other saints, mentioned in the Scriptures, sinned for a length of time. Not a small number of sins are committed in thought, word and action, in the brighter and better seasons, nay, in the brightest and best. 'I sin,' says Bishop Beveridge; 'I repent of my sins, and sin in my repentance. I pray for forgiveness, and sin in my prayers. I resolve against my future sin, and sin in forming my resolutions. So that, I may say, my whole life is almost a continued course of sin.' This is the language of one of the best men that ever lived. A still better man has said, 'The good that I would, that I do not; but the evil that I would not, that I do. I find then a law, that when I would do good, evil is present with me. After the inward man, I delight in the law of God. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin, which is in my members. O wretched man, that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?'

Now the whole life, not of such men as these, but of men who, though generally of a similar character, are greatly inferior to these in religious excellence, is almost always the real object of a Christian's examination. This also is to be continually examined; the worst and the best parts alike. But it is plain, that the comfortable evidence of our piety, furnished by the prevalence of holiness in the best seasons, will be always impaired by contrary evidence in periods of declension; will sometimes be rendered obscure, and at others overbalanced. It is farther evident that, as our whole judgment will and ought to be usually made up, partly of the evidence furnished by our present state, and partly of our past judgments, and the evidence on which they were founded; evidence contradicting, impairing, and obscuring each other; a degree of confusion and uncertainty in the views of the mind concerning its religious character, will almost necessarily result in many instances from this complicated and perplexed state of things.

6. No small difficulties are often thrown in our way by the backslidings of others.

Many persons who are really Christians, decline at times from holiness of life so greatly, and so long, as to excite not only the sneers and contempt, but the just censures also, of those who are not Christians; and the extreme regret, and the Christian discipline, of those who are. Other men, in cases of this nature, frequently question or deny the very existence of religion.

Christians do not indeed go this unwarrantable length; but they cannot avoid recollecting, that, frequently the persons who have thus declined were in their view better than themselves, and feeling the hopes which they have entertained of their own piety greatly lessened. They are compelled to doubt of the religion of these men, and almost irresistibly question the reality of their own.

There are other persons who strongly believe themselves to be religious; and who at the same time live in such a manner as to persuade others that they are eminent Christians, who afterward prove by their conduct that they are not Christians. Judas, Hymeneus, Philetus, and others, were of this character, and multitudes more in every succeeding age. When these persons fall, all the evidence which convinced either themselves or others of their piety, is plainly proved to be unsolid, and we are naturally led to ask, whether the evidence on which we have relied, as the foundation of our own hope, be not the very same; or, if it is known to be different, whether we have reason to think it at all better. In this way we naturally come to suspect the grounds on which the belief of our piety has rested, and to doubt whether we are not equally deceived with them.

7. I am of opinion that God, for wise and good reasons, administers his spiritual providence in such a manner, as to leave his children destitute of the faith of assurance, for their own good.

This opinion, I am well aware, will most probably be doubted, although I entertain not a doubt of it myself. It is proper, therefore, that I should mention some reasons which induce me to adopt it.

(1.) It is perfectly plain, that the evidence enjoyed by Christians, concerning their piety, is in no regular manner or degree proportioned to the real excellence of character. The proof of this position is complete, both from our own observation, and from the history of experimental and practical religion, given us in the lives of great multitudes of eminently good men. Such men, after having enjoyed for a long time the most consoling evidence of their good estate, have, through periods also long, been distressed with doubts and darkness, and sometimes with deep despondence, and have nevertheless afterward obtained the same consolations throughout their remaining lives. To such seasons the psalmist plainly alludes in many declarations, descriptions, and prayers. These are the seasons, in which he speaks of God as 'hiding his face from him;' and of himself, as disquieted, troubled, sorrowful, mourning, as almost gone, as having his feet in the miry pit, and as overwhelmed by the billows of affliction. Such seasons are also familiarly spoken of by Christians, as times of darkness and sorrow, in which the light of God's countenance is hidden from them.

(2.) There is not, I believe, a single promise in the gospel to Christians, as such, of the faith of assurance; nor any direct intimation, that they shall possess evidence of their piety, proportioned to the degree in which it exists. All the promises of this nature seem to be indefinite, and to indicate, that Christians shall enjoy some evidence of this nature, rather than to point out the degree in which it shall be enjoyed. 'The Spirit testifies with their spirits,' in a degree and manner accordant with his pleasure, 'that they are children of God.' It is indeed said, that 'if any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God.' But the word *know*, in this case, plainly means no other than that he shall have a strong and satisfying persuasion; for it cannot be said, that knowledge, in the proper sense, is ever attainable with regard to this subject. And this strong persuasion, that the Bible is the word of God, may exist without any satisfactory evidence that we are his children.

(3.) There seems to be a plain and important reason why most Christians should be left in some degree of uncertainty concerning this subject. In all the earlier stages of their piety, and in all other cases in which it is not eminently vigorous, they would be prone, if they possessed high consolatory evidence, especially if they possessed full assurance of their renovation, imperfect as they then always are, to be at ease; to settle quietly down in that imperfect state; and in this manner to come far short of those religious attainments which now they actually make; and perhaps finally to fall away. As the case now is, their fears serve to quicken them no less than their hopes; and by the influence of both they continue to advance in holiness to the end of life.

(4.) The fact is, unquestionably, as I have stated it; and it cannot be rationally denied to be a part of the spiritual providence of God.

REMARKS.

1. From these observations, we learn the necessity of performing daily and carefully the duty of self-examination. If such difficulties attend this duty, we are bound to exercise proportionally greater care and exactness in performing it.

2. We are taught to rest our hopes on the general tenor of our dispositions and conduct, and not on particular views, affections, and actions. These may be counterfeited; but to counterfeit the whole tenor of a life seems impossible.

3. We perceive the necessity of inquiring particularly whether we increase in holiness. Evangelical holiness increases by its own nature, though irregularly. False religious affections by their nature decline at no very late periods.

4. We learn the necessity of searching the Scriptures continually for that evidence which alone is genuine, and on which alone we can safely rest. In the Scriptures only is this evidence to be found.

5. How conspicuous are the wisdom and goodness of God, in causing the backslidings and other defects of good men to be recorded for the instruction and consolation of Christians in all succeeding ages! These evils, and the distresses and doubts which they occasion, attended them; still they were truly pious. They may attend us therefore, while we may nevertheless be also subjects of piety.

6. The same wisdom and goodness are still more conspicuous in the manner in which the Psalms are written. The Psalms are chiefly an account of the experimental religion of inspired men. In this account we find that many of them, particularly David, the principal writer, experienced all the doubts, difficulties, and sorrows which are now suffered by good men. It is highly probable that vast multitudes of Christians have by these two means been preserved from final despondence.

7. This subject, in its nature, furnishes strong, though indirect, consolation to Christians. When they find doubts, and consequent distress, concerning their religious character multiplied, they here see that they may be thus multiplied, in perfect consistency with the fact

that they themselves are Christians; and are thus prevented from sinking into despair.

8. We learn the absolute necessity of betaking ourselves to God in daily prayer, for his unerring guidance in this difficult path of duty. If so many embarrassments attend this important employment, the assistance of the Divine Spirit is plainly indispensable to our safety and success. If this assistance be faithfully sought, we know that it will be certainly granted.

9. We here discern the goodness manifested in that indispensable and glorious promise; 'I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.' For creatures, struggling with so many difficulties, to be left at all, would be inconceivably dangerous; to be forsaken would be fatal. But the divine presence, in the midst of all these, and even much greater dangers, furnishes complete and final safety to every child of God.

SERMON XCI.

THE LAW OF GOD.—THE LAW PERFECT.

The law of the Lord is perfect.—Psalm xix. 7.

In the whole preceding series of Discourses I have examined with attention the principal doctrines contained in the Scriptures. Particularly, I have exhibited the existence and perfections of God, and his works of creation and providence; the character and circumstances of man, both before and after his apostasy, and the impossibility of his justification by his personal obedience. I have considered at length the character and mediation of Christ, and the nature of evangelical justification through his righteousness; the character and agency of the Holy Ghost; the necessity and nature of regeneration; its antecedents, attendants, consequences, and evidences. All these united, constitute the body of those peculiarly important truths, to which the Scriptures have required us to render religious faith.

The second great division of subjects in such a system is formed of the Scriptural Precepts, requiring of us those internal and external acts, commonly termed the duty or duties of mankind. We are not, however, to suppose that faith in the doctrines of the Scriptures is not itself a prime duty of man. The contrary has, I trust, been amply proved. Nor are we to suppose, that any one of these doctrines has not naturally an important practical influence on mankind. The contrary to this also has, it is presumed, been extensively shown. Finally: We are not to suppose that faith in Christ, and repentance towards God, are duties of fallen beings, less real, less necessary, less essential, or less acceptable, than any other duties whatever. The conformity of the understanding and the heart to every doctrine of the Scriptures, is, by the authority of God, made equally a duty with obedience to every precept. All that can with propriety be said of this nature is, that those which are customarily called the doctrines of the Scriptures, are usually presented to us rather in the form of truths which we are to believe, than of commands which we are to obey; and that the precepts are commonly given to us in their own proper form, requiring our obedience directly.

At the same time, it is to be observed, that a conformity of our hearts and lives to the doctrines of the gospel is often expressly enjoined by the Scriptures. To repent of our sins, and to believe in Christ, are the immediate objects of the great precepts of the gospel. It is farther to be observed, that every precept becomes, by a slight alteration in the phraseology, a doctrine. For example; 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart,' is easily altered into a mere truth, only by changing the phraseology into 'It is right, or it is thy duty, to love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart.' A cordial faith in this declaration is here, as with respect to every other precept, the spirit whence is derived all genuine obedience.

Truth is commonly divided into that which is practical, and that which is speculative. But moral truth cannot, in the strict sense, be justly divided in this manner. Every moral truth is of a practical nature. Its influence, I acknowledge, is in some cases indirect; while in others it is direct. But it can never be truly denied in any case that its influence is really of this nature.

The observations, which I intend to make on the several subjects, included in the second great division of the System of Theology, I propose to preface with a general account of the divine law. The doctrine which I mean to discuss in this account, is that which the text expresses in the very best terms which can be chosen; viz.

THE LAW OF JEHOVAH IS PERFECT.

In proof of this truth, I allege the following considerations.

1. The law of God is the result of his infinite wisdom and goodness.

It cannot be supposed, that infinite wisdom and goodness would form a rule for the government of moral beings, which did not possess such attributes as must render it a perfect directory of their moral conduct. It may easily be believed, that God may make moral beings of many different classes; some of superior, and some of inferior capacities; but it cannot be imagined that he would not require, of all such beings, a character and conduct the best of which they were naturally capable. Inferior wisdom and goodness might be unable to devise, or uninclined to require, the best conduct and character in moral creatures; or to point out the means by which this character could be

most easily and perfectly formed, or the conduct in which it would most advantageously operate. But none of these things are attributable to infinite wisdom and goodness thus employed. They of course must require the best character and conduct, must point out the best means of forming it, and the best modes in which it can operate. To suppose a law which is the result of these attributes not to be perfect, is to suppose, either that God did not know what would be the best character in his moral creatures, or did not choose to require it of them. Both parts of this alternative are too obviously absurd to need a refutation.

Farther: A law is always the expression of the will of the lawgiver; and is of course an expression of his own character. This is pre-eminently applicable to the law of God. In forming it, he was under no necessity, and could have no motive beside what is involved in his own pleasure, to induce him to form it in any given manner. The things which it requires are the things which he approves, and is seen to approve; the things in which he delights, and is seen to delight; the things therefore, which entirely show his real character. But the things actually required include all which are due from his moral creatures to him, to each other, and to themselves; or, in other words, all their internal and external moral conduct. But it cannot be supposed, that God would exhibit his own perfect character imperfectly, in a case of this magnitude. That in a law expressing thus his own character, and seen to express it; a law from which they must of necessity learn his character more certainly than from any thing else; a law which regulated and required all the moral conduct ever required of them, he should not prescribe a perfect collection of rules, a collection absolutely perfect; is a supposition amounting to nothing less than this: that in exhibiting his character to the intelligent universe, he would present it in a false light, and lead them by a solemn act of his own, necessarily to consider him either as a weak or as an immoral being.

2. The law of God is perfectly fitted to the state and capacity of intelligent creatures.

The divine law is wholly included in two precepts; 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart; and thy neighbour as thyself.' These are so short, as to be necessarily included in a single very short sentence; so intelligible, as to be understood by every moral being who is capable of comprehending the meaning of the words, God and neighbour; so easily remembered, as to render it impossible for them to escape from our memory, unless by a wanton, criminal negligence of ours; and so easily applicable to every case of moral action, as not to be mistaken, unless through indisposition to obey. At the same time, obedience to them is rendered perfectly obvious, and perfectly easy to every mind which is not indisposed to obey them. The very disposition itself, if sincere and entire, is either entire obedience, or the unfailing means of that external conduct by which the obedience is in some cases completed. The disposition to obey is also confined to a single affection of the heart, easily distinguishable from all other affections; viz. love. 'Love,' saith St Paul, 'is the fulfilling of the law.' The humblest and most ignorant moral creatures, therefore, are in this manner efficaciously preserved from mistaking their duty.

In the mean time, these two precepts, notwithstanding their brevity, are so comprehensive, as to include every possible moral action. The archangel is not raised above their control, nor can any action of his exceed that bound which they prescribe. The child who has passed the verge of moral agency, is not placed beneath their regulation; and whatever virtue he may exercise, is no other than a fulfilment of their requisitions. All the duties which we immediately owe to God, to our fellow creatures, and to ourselves, are by these precepts alike comprehended and required. In a word, endlessly various as moral action may be, it exists in no form or instance in which he who perfectly obeys these precepts will not have done his duty, and will not find himself justified and accepted by God.

3. The law of God requires the best possible moral character.

To require and accomplish this great object, an object in its importance literally immense, is supremely worthy of the wisdom and goodness of this glorious Being. To make his moral creatures virtuous, is unquestionably the only method of rendering them really and extensively useful, and laying the only solid foundation for their enduring happiness. But all virtue is summed up in the fulfilment of these two commands: 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart; and thy neighbour as thyself.' In doing this, every individual becomes as amiable, excellent, dignified, and useful, as with his own capacity he can be. Should he advance in his capacity through endless duration, all the good which he will ever do, all the honour which he will ever render to his Creator, all the excellence, amiableness, and dignity which he will ever acquire, will be nothing but obedience to these two commands. The beauty and glory of the evangelical character, the rapturous flame which glows in the breast of a seraph, the transcendent exaltation of an archangel, is completely included in 'loving God with all the heart, and his neighbour as himself.' Nay, the infinite loveliness, the supreme glory of the Godhead, is no other than this disposition, boundlessly exerted in the uncreated mind, and producing, in an unlimited extent, and an eternal succession, its proper and divine effects on the intelligent universe. 'God,' saith St John, 'is love.'

4. The law of God proposes and accomplishes the best possible end.

The only ultimate good is happiness; by which I intend enjoyment; whether springing from the mind itself, or flowing into it from external sources. Perfect happiness is perfect good; or, in other words, includes whatever is desirable; and this is the good which the divine law proposes, as its own proper and supreme end.

This end is with exact propriety divisible, and is customarily divided into two great parts; the first, usually termed the glory of God: the second, the happiness of the intelligent creation.

The original and essential glory of God is his ability and disposition to accomplish perfect happiness. This is his inherent, unchangeable, and eternal perfection. But the glory of God to which I refer, is what is often called his declarative glory, and is no other than this very perfection manifested in his conduct, immediately by himself, and mediately in their conduct, by the intelligent creation. In this sense, the glory of God is proposed and accomplished by his law, when he prescribes to his intelligent creatures, and produces in

them, a disposition to 'love him with all the heart, and each other as themselves.' This disposition is, beyond all estimation, the most lovely, the most excellent, the most glorious work of the Creator's hands; incomparably the greatest proof of his sufficiency and inclination to effectuate perfect good; and therefore infinitely honourable to his character. In the exercise of this disposition on their part, and in its genuine effects, they render to him also, voluntarily and directly, all the honour which can be rendered to the infinite mind by intelligent creatures.

At the same time, the divine law is the source of perfect happiness to them. Voluntary beings are the only original sources of happiness; and virtue, which is nothing but this disposition, is in them the only productive cause of happiness. Under the influence of it, all beings in whom it prevails, unite to do the utmost good in their power. The good therefore which is actually done by them is the greatest good which can be derived from the efforts of intelligent creatures. As in this manner they become perfectly lovely, praise-worthy, and rewardable in the sight of God; he can, with the utmost propriety, and therefore certainly will, reward them, by actually communicating to them the most exalted happiness of which they are capable. The kingdom of glory in the heavens, with its endless and perfect providential dispensations, will to saints and angels constitute this reward.

I have mentioned the glory of God as the first great division of the perfect end proposed by the divine law. The glory of God is that in which his happiness consists; the object infinitely enjoyed by the infinite mind; the sufficiency for all good, not only existing and enjoyed by contemplation, but operating also, and enjoyed in its genuine and proper effects.

It ought to be observed, that there are no other possible means of accomplishing this illustrious end beside this disposition. Intelligent beings are the only beings by whom God can be thus glorified. They are the only beings who can understand either his character or his works, or perceive the glory which he directly manifests in them. They are also the only beings who can render to him love, reverence, or obedience; and thus honour his character in such a manner as this can be done by creatures. Without them, the universe with all its furniture and splendour, would still be a solitude.

At the same time, intelligent beings alone neither produce nor enjoy happiness in any great degree.

But there is no other disposition in such beings beside this, which can voluntarily glorify God, or produce important and enduring happiness. It is hardly necessary for me to observe, that no obedience and no regard whatever, rendered by rational creatures to God, can be of any value, or in any degree amiable or acceptable, except that which is voluntary; or that, towards beings who did not love him, he could not exercise any complacency. It is scarcely more necessary to observe, that beings who did not voluntarily produce happiness, could neither enjoy it themselves, nor yield it to others. The seat of happiness is in the mind; and the first or original happiness which it finds, is ever found in its own approbation of its conduct, and the delightful nature of its affections. But no mind can be self-approved which does not first love God and its fellow creatures; and no affections can be delightful, except those which spring from the same disposition. Its views of God, and its affections towards him, its apprehensions of his complacency towards itself, and its enjoyment of his blessings; constitute the second great division of its happiness. But no mind can have delightful views of God, or delightful affections towards him, or be the object of his complacency, except that which loves him supremely. The third great division of this subject consists in the esteem, the love, and the kind offices, mutually interchanged by rational beings. It is perfectly obvious that these can never exist in any material degree, where the second command of this law is not cordially obeyed. But the mind, influenced by 'the love which is the fulfilling of the law,' is self-approved, approved by God, and approved by its fellow creatures. All its affections also towards itself, its Creator, and the intelligent universe, are delightful. At the same time, all its actions are productive of glory to the Creator, and of good to his creation.

Thus the law of God, by laying hold on this single great principle, has directed the whole energy of the mind to the production of the best of all ends, in the best possible manner.

REMARKS.

From these observations it appears,

1. That the law of God is, and must of necessity be, unchangeable and eternal.

Our Saviour informs us, that 'heaven and earth shall sooner pass away than one jot or one tittle of the law shall fail.' This declaration has, I presume, seemed extraordinary to every reader of the New Testament. To many it has, in all probability, appeared incredible. But, if I mistake not, these observations furnish us, not only with ample evidence of its truth, but with ample reasons why it should be true. A law, which is the result of infinite wisdom and goodness, which is perfectly fitted to the state and capacity of intelligent creatures, which requires the best possible moral character, which proposes and accomplishes the best possible end, and without which neither the glory of God, nor the happiness of the intelligent creation, could be established or perpetuated, plainly cannot and ought not to be changed. Were God to change it, he must change it for the worse; from a perfect law to an imperfect one. Whatever rule he should prescribe in its place for the conduct of his moral creatures, must require something which is wrong, or fail to require something which is right. Neither of these could be just, or wise, or good. Nor could his wisdom, justice, or goodness be manifested, or even preserved, in the establishment of such a law; much less in annulling a perfect law, and substituting an imperfect one in its place. To give up this law would be to sacrifice his own glory and the happiness of his intelligent creation. These united constitute the very end for which the heavens and the earth were made. In the case supposed, therefore, the heavens and the earth would exist to no purpose, that is, to no purpose worthy of Jehovah.

2. This subject furnishes us with one affecting view of the evil of sin.

'Sin is a transgression of the law:' that is, sin is the disposition of the heart and the conduct of the life, directly opposed to what the law requires. It is directly opposed to the decisions of infinite wisdom and goodness, to the best possible character, and to the best pos-

sible end; the glory of God, and the supreme good of the intelligent creation. Of all these the law is either the transcript, or the indispensable means. So far as sin has power to operate, it operates to their destruction; and its native tendency would prevent the glory of God, and the good of the universe.

The evil of sin does not lie in the power of the sinner to accomplish his evil designs; but in the nature of the designs themselves, and the disposition which gave them birth; and must ever bear some general proportion to the extent of the mischief which it would accomplish, if it were permitted to operate without restraint. From what has been said, it is plain that this mischief transcends all finite comprehension. The evil, therefore, which is inherent in it must be incalculably great.

We see this truth verified in the present world. All the misery suffered here is the effect of sin. Sin blotted out the bliss of Paradise, and established in its place private wretchedness and public suffering. The smile of complacency it changed into the gloomy frown of wrath and malice. For the embrace of friendship it substituted the attack of the assassin. The song of joy it converted into a groan of anguish; the ascription of praise it commuted for the blasphemies of impiety. What then must be the evils which it would accomplish, were it let loose upon the universe, were it to invade the kingdom of glory, as it once intruded into Eden, and ravage eternity as it has ravaged the little periods of time?

3. We learn from this subject the absurdity of antinomianism.

Two of the prominent antinomian doctrines are, that the law of God is not a rule of duty to Christians; and that the transgressions of it by Christians are not sins.

'Sin,' saith St John, 'is the transgression of the law.' It is a bold assertion then, an assertion demanding a warrant which can be pleaded by no man, that there is such a thing, or that there can be such a thing, as a transgression of the law which is not sinful. Why are not the transgressions of Christians sinful? Is it because they are holy beings? Adam was perfectly holy; yet one transgression of his ruined the world. Angels were perfectly holy, in a state far superior to that of Adam; yet one transgression of theirs turned them out of heaven. Is it because Christians are redeemed? The mercy of God displayed in their redemption only increases their obligation to obey, and therefore enhances every transgression. Is it because God has promised that they shall persevere, and that they shall be saved? This promise is an exercise of divine mercy; has exactly the same influence; and, in the case supposed, can produce no other effect. Why then are the transgressions of Christians not sinful? To this question they will in vain search for an answer.

Why is the law no longer a rule of righteousness to Christians? Is it because they are no longer under its condemning sentence? For this very reason they are under increased obligations to obey its precepts. Is it because they are placed under a better rule, or a worse one? A better rule cannot exist; a worse, God would not prescribe. Are not Christians required to glorify God? Are they not bound to promise the happiness of each other, and their fellow men? Are they not required to conform to the dictates of infinite wisdom and goodness; to sustain the best moral character; and to fulfill the true end of their being? 'To love God with all the heart, and their neighbour as themselves,' is to do all these things in the manner most pleasing, and in the only manner which is pleasing, to God.

To remove a Christian from the obligation which he is under to obey the law of God, is to remove him from all obligation to perform any part of his duty, as a rational being, to God, or to his fellow creatures; for every part of his duty is required by the divine law. In other words, it is to discharge him from all obligation to be virtuous. What end must we then suppose Christians are intended to answer, while they continue in the world? Certainly, none worthy of God, none worthy of the mediation of Christ, none worthy of the Christian character.

Antinomians forget that 'he who is born of God, loveth God, and knoweth God;' that 'he who loveth not, knoweth not God;' and that 'this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments.' They forget that Christ died 'to purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.'

4. We are here furnished with one interesting proof of the divine revelation of the Scriptures.

It is perfectly obvious to all who hear me, that a book professing to be a revelation, must, whether false or true, depend in a great measure on its own internal character for evidence of its divine origin. The things which it contains must be such as become the character of God. Many of them may be mysterious and inexplicable; because the nature of the subjects may be such as to transcend the human comprehension, or lie beyond the reach of human investigation. There are subjects also of which it may be necessary to know a part; and that part, though sufficiently disclosed, if considered by itself only, may yet be connected with others, whose existence it will indicate, but whose nature it will not at all disclose. When subjects of this kind are presented to us, we may, if we are disposed to inquire into them extensively, be easily perplexed, and easily lost.

But whatever is revealed must consist with the character of God; or it cannot be admitted as a revelation. Some things also contained in a real revelation, must be plainly worthy of their Author, and not merely not unworthy; must be honourable to his character, superior to the discoveries of the human mind, and such as cannot be reasonably believed to have been the inventions of men.

Perfectly correspondent with all these remarks is the law under contemplation. This truth will advantageously appear by a comparison of it with the most perfect human laws. I shall select for this purpose those of Great Britain.

The statute laws of that kingdom are contained, if I mistake not, in about eighteen or twenty folio, or about fifty octavo, volumes. The common, or as it is sometimes styled, the unwritten law, occupies a number of volumes far greater. To understand them is a work of deep science; the employment of the first human talents, and the labour of a life. The great body of them can never be known by the generality of men, and must therefore be very imperfect rules of their conduct.

In the mean time, multitudes of cases are continually occurring which they do not reach at all. Those which they actually reach, they affect in many instances injuriously, and in many more imperfectly. The system of happiness which they propose is extremely defective, a bare state of tolerable convenience; and even

that attended with many abatements. They also extend their influence only to a speck of earth, and a moment of time. Yet these laws were devised, reviewed, and amended, by persons of the first human consideration for learning and wisdom.

The law which we have been examining is comprised in two commands only; is so short, so intelligible, so capable of being remembered and applied, as to be perfectly fitted to the understanding and use of every moral being. At the same time, it is so comprehensive, as to reach perfectly every possible moral action, to preclude every wrong, and to secure every right. It is equally fitted to men and angels, to earth and heaven. Its control extends with the same efficacy and felicity to all worlds, and to all periods. It governs the universe, it reaches through eternity. The system of happiness proposed and accomplished by it is perfect, endless, and for ever progressive. Must not condour, must not prejudice itself, confess, with the magicians of Egypt, that here 'is the finger of God.'

But if this is from God, the Scriptures must be acknowledged to have the same origin. In the Scriptures alone is this law contained. Nay, the Scriptures themselves are chiefly this law, expanded into more minute precepts, and more multiplied applications; enforced by happy comments, and illustrated by useful examples; especially the example presented to us in the perfect and glorious life of the Son of God.

SERMON XCII.

THE LAW OF GOD.—THE FIRST AND GREAT COMMANDMENT.—LOVE TO GOD.

And one of the scribes came, and, having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that he had answered them well, asked him, which is the first commandment of all? And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; the Lord thy God is one Lord; and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength; this is the first commandment.—Mark xii. 28—30.

In the last Discourse I made a number of general observations on the perfection of the divine law. I shall now proceed to consider somewhat more particularly, the nature and import of the first and greatest commandment of that law; the command which regulates our piety to God.

In the text we are informed, that a scribe, a man learned in the Scriptures, and accustomed to expound them to others, pleased with Christ's refutation of the Sadducees, and the proofs which he had unanswerably given of a future existence, asked him, 'Which is the first commandment of all?' that is, the first in rank, obligation, and importance. Christ, quoting Deut. vi. 4, informs him, that the first command in this sense is, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength.'

In this command, it is to be observed, there is one thing only required; and that is love. It is, however, love in a comprehensive sense; including several exercises of the mind, easily and customarily distinguished from each other, as might indeed be naturally expected from the phraseology of the command.

It is farther to be observed, that the love here enjoined is required to exist in such a degree as to occupy the whole heart, the whole soul, the whole mind, and the whole strength. The word here rendered *soul* seems originally to have been used to denote *the principle of animal life*, and to have been commonly used in this sense by the Greeks; as the two corresponding words of their respective languages were by the Jews and Romans. The word, translated *mind*, is commonly used to denote the *understanding*, and seems plainly to have been used in this manner here; since the scribe expresses this as the meaning of it in his answer. The import of this command may then be stated thus:—'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thine understanding, and with all thy strength, throughout all thy life.' In other words, we are required, under the influence of this disposition, to devote, throughout our lives, all our faculties and services to the glory of Jehovah. Our hearts and voices, our understandings and our hands, are to be entirely and voluntarily dedicated to his service.

I have already observed, that love in this comprehensive sense, includes several exercises of the mind, easily and customarily distinguished. It will be one object of this Discourse to exhibit them with this distinction.

1. Love to God, as required by this command, is good-will to him, his designs, and interests.

By good-will, in this case, I intend the very same benevolence, formerly described as one of the attendants of regeneration, and then mentioned as extending to the Creator and his intelligent creatures. Not a small number of divines have supposed, that love in this sense, is neither required nor exerted towards the Creator. 'God,' say they, 'being supremely and eternally blessed; and the success of his designs, and the prosperity of his interests, being perfectly secured by his power, knowledge, and presence; there can be no necessity nor room for any exercise of our good-will towards him or them. Benevolence is with propriety exercised towards man, because he needs it; but cannot with any such propriety be exercised towards God, who is so far from needing any thing, and he gives unto all life, and breath, and all things.'

These observations are undoubtedly specious. Yet

the reasoning contained in them is totally erroneous; and the conclusion intended to be derived from them, false and mistaken. To admit it, is to give up the first duty of man.

Benevolence depends not, either for its obligation or exercise, on the supposition that the person towards whom it may be directed, needs either our benevolence or its effects. Happiness, its immediate object, is always and everywhere supremely delightful and desirable in itself; delightful, whenever it exists; desirable, whenever it may exist hereafter. The greater the degree in which it exists, or may exist hereafter, the more delightful, the more desirable, must it be of course. It is desirable that two persons should be happy, other things being equal, rather than one; twenty than two; a hundred than twenty. It is in a continually increasing proportion desirable, that a person should be twice as happy as he is at present, ten times, a hundred times. On the same grounds it is delightful to find happiness existing in one degree, more delightful in two, and still more in twenty, or a hundred. To delight in happiness in this manner, is in the same manner to exercise goodwill towards the being who is thus happy.

The happiness, or blessedness of God, as it is more commonly termed, is no other than his enjoyment of his own perfect attributes, and of the effects produced by them in that glorious system of good which is begun in the work of creation, and will be completed in the work of providence: or, in other words, his sufficiency for accomplishing, the certainty that he will accomplish, and the actual accomplishment of a perfect system of good. This is an object infinitely desirable to the divine mind. Were it to fail, this desire would be ungratified, and the divine mind would be proportionally unhappy.

To this it will be objected, as it often has been, that 'this doctrine makes God dependent for his happiness on his creatures.'

This objection is a mistake. The doctrine involves no such dependence. The independence of God consists not at all in the fact, that he will be happy, whether his designs will be accomplished, or not; but in his sufficiency for the absolute accomplishment of them all; and in the absolute certainty that they will be thus accomplished. His power, wisdom, and goodness are this sufficiency; and yield him intuitive certainty of this accomplishment. These things constitute the most perfect possible independence.

Were God without desires, had he no choice, no pleasure, he could enjoy no happiness. Were he unable to fulfill his pleasure, or uncertain whether it would be fulfilled, he would be dependent. But, according to this statement, his happiness and his independence are both absolute.

The designs of God are infinitely desirable, because they involve the display of his infinite perfections in their perfect exercise, and in the accomplishment of a perfect system of good. In this manner they present to us the most glorious of all objects, operating in the most glorious manner, to the production of the most glorious purpose. The object is, with the highest evidence, infinitely desirable and delightful. At the same time, the happiness which God enjoys in the exercise of his perfections, and in the accomplishment of this divine end, is a happiness not only infinitely desirable and delightful to himself, but desirable in the same manner to all intelligent creatures. All intelligent creatures possessed of real benevolence, cannot fail to rejoice that God is, and ever will be, thus infinitely happy, that these glorious designs will certainly be accomplished, that he will ever thus act, and that he will ever find infinite enjoyment in thus acting. It is as truly desirable that God should be thus happy, as it is that any of his intelligent creatures should be happy; and as much more desirable as he is happier than they.

But to delight in this happiness, is to exercise towards God the benevolence of the gospel. I flatter myself, that to exercise this benevolence, has been amply proved to be an unquestionable and supreme duty of man.

2. Love to God is complacency in his character.

It has been shown in several former Discourses, that God is infinitely benevolent; in other words, he is infinitely disposed to desire and perform that which is good in the highest degree. In other words, he is infinitely just, faithful, true, kind, bountiful, and merciful. Such a character is infinitely excellent in itself; and demands, in the highest possible degree, the supreme approbation, and the supreme complacency of every intelligent creature.

Benevolence, as here required, is a delight in the happiness of God: Complacency is a delight in his excellence. The excellence of God contains in itself all that wisdom can approve, all that virtue can love, all that is meant by the excellence and amiableness, by the beauty and glory, of mind; by moral dignity and greatness. This is what God himself esteems his own supreme perfection, and the transcendent glory of his character. Accordingly, when he proclaimed his name to Moses on Mount Sinai, he proclaimed this part of his character only; and styled it the name, or glory, of Jehovah.

I know not, that to love God, in this sense, has ever been denied or doubted to be a Christian duty by such as have believed in the Scriptures. On the contrary, it has been commonly supposed, that complacency and gratitude were the only love to God required in his law. The happiness of God has usually been considered so secure, so independent, and so perfect, as that, while he needs nothing from the hands of his creatures to increase or insure it, he also may be justly regarded as claiming nothing from them with respect to this subject. His perfections, at the same time, are so manifest, and so absolute, as to fill the mind with reverence and amazement, and engross all its attention and thoughts. In this manner, probably, the regard of mankind, and even of wise and good men, has been so effectually drawn away from the consideration of the happiness of God, to the consideration of his excellence, that they seem chiefly to have forgotten the former of these objects, and have been almost wholly occupied by the latter. At the same time, it cannot be denied, that to delight in the excellence of God is a duty more obvious to the mind, than to delight in his happiness. A little reflection will, however, convince us, and I hope it has already been clearly shown, that it is not a more indispensable duty. It is plainly not our original duty. It is plainly not virtue, or moral excellence, in the original sense. This is, unquestionably, the love of happiness. Complacency is the love of this virtue, or moral excellence: but that excellence must exist, before it can be loved. The contrary supposition is a palpable absurdity; to which all those reduce themselves who insist that complacency is original virtue.

3. The love of God is gratitude.

Gratitude is love to God for the particular manifestations of his glorious character, in his various kindness to us, and to ours. We, and perhaps all other intelligent beings, are so formed, as to be able more clearly to see, and more strongly to feel, blessings immediately bestowed on ourselves, and on those intimately connected with us, whose characters and wants, whose sorrows and joys, we peculiarly understand and feel, than those bestowed on others. As we feel universally what is ours, and what pertains to our connexions, more (other things being equal) than what pertains to those whose interests we less understand, and in whose concerns we are less in the habit of mingling; so we feel, of course, more deeply, the blessings which we and they receive, the deliverances, hopes, comforts, joys, than we do or can those of others. Our near connexions are our second selves; and there is sometimes as little difference, and sometimes even less, between us and them, in our views and feelings, than between them and others. Nay, there are cases in which we feel the interests of our connexions no less than our own. A parent would often willingly suffer the distresses of a child, in order to accomplish relief for him, and often rejoices more in his prosperity than if it were his own.

There is, perhaps, no solid reason in the nature of things, why God should be loved more for the manifestation of goodness towards one being, than for the same manifestation towards another. Still, with our present dispositions, those acts of his benevolence which respect ourselves, will always, perhaps, appear more amiable than those which respect others.

Gratitude, therefore, or love to God for the communication of blessings to ourselves, and to those in whose well-being we find a direct and peculiar interest, is an affection of the mind, in some respects distinct from complacency; an affection which must, and ought to exist in this world. As we can love God more for blessings thus bestowed, than for those bestowed on others; so we ought to seize every occasion to exercise this love to the utmost of our power; and such occasions enable us to exercise it in a superior degree.

Possibly, in a future world, and a higher state of existence, all the blessings of God communicated to rational beings may affect us as if communicated to ourselves, and our complacency in his character may universally become possessed of the whole intenseness and ardour of gratitude.

Gratitude, considered as a virtue, it is always to be remembered, is love excited by kindness communicated, or believed to be communicated with virtuous and good designs, and from good motives: not for kindness bestowed for base and selfish ends. In every case of this nature, the kindness professed is merely pretended and hypocritical. The bestower terminates all his views in his own advantage; and has no ultimate regard to the benefit of the receiver.

The kindness of God is invariably communicated with the best of all designs and motives, designs and motives infinitely good; and is therefore a display of a character infinitely excellent. Hence it is always to be regarded with gratitude. The good bestowed is also the highest good; and therefore the highest gratitude is due to the bestower.

Of precepts, requiring all these exercises of love, and prohibiting the want of them; of examples, by which they are gloriously illustrated; of motives, promises, and rewards, by which they are divinely encouraged; the Scriptures are full. Particularly, the good-will of the psalmist to the infinitely great and glorious Creator, Preserver, and Benefactor, of the universe, is manifested everywhere throughout his sacred songs. Everywhere he rejoices in the designs and actions of Jehovah; in the certain accomplishment of his designs; in the infinite glory which he will derive from them all; in the prosperity of his kingdom; and in the joy which he experiences in all the works of his hands.

Equally does he express his complacency in the perfect character of God; his wisdom, power, goodness, truth, faithfulness, and mercy, as displayed in his works and word, in his law and gospel.

Nor is he less abundant in his effusions of gratitude for all the divine goodness to himself and his family, to the people of Israel and the church of God. In expressing these emotions, he is ardent, intense, sublime, and rapturous; an illustrious example to all who have come after him of the manner in which we should feel, and in which we should express, our love to God.

Like him, the prophet Isaiah, the apostle Paul, and generally all the scriptural writers, in words not directly devotional, but doctrinal and preceptive, exhibit, with corresponding ardour and sublimity, these most excellent dispositions. It is hardly necessary to add, that our own emotions and expressions ought to be of the same general nature.

Having thus exhibited, summarily, the nature of love to God, in these three great exercises, I will now proceed to allege several reasons which demand of us these exercises of piety.

1. This service is highly reasonable, beautiful, and amiable, in intelligent creatures.

God, from the considerations mentioned in this Discourse, presents to us in his blessedness, in his excellence, and in his communications of good, all possible reasons, in all possible degrees, why we should exercise towards him our supreme benevolence, complacency, and gratitude. His enjoyment is the sum of all happiness; his character the sum of all perfection; and his communications of good the amount of all the blessings found in the universe. These united constitute an object assembling in itself, comparatively speaking, all natural and moral beauty, glory, and excellence; whatever can be desired, esteemed, or loved.

2. God infinitely loves himself.

The conduct of God is, in every case, the result of views and dispositions, perfectly wise, and just, and good; and becomes, wherever they can imitate it, a perfect rule to direct the conduct of his intelligent creatures. In this case, the rule is as perfect as any other; and in this case, as well as every other, it is the highest honour, and the consummate rectitude, of all intelligent creatures to resemble their Creator. So far as we resemble him, we are secure of being right, excellent, and lovely.

At the same time, so far as we are like him, we are assured of his approbation and love, and of receiving from his hands all the good which our real interests require. As he loves himself, he cannot but love his resemblance, wherever it is found.

3. In this conduct we unite with all virtuous beings.

This is the very conduct which especially constitutes them virtuous, and without which their virtue, in every

other sense, would cease to exist. For this they love and approve themselves; for this they will approve and love us. By these exercises of piety, then, we become at once, entirely, and for ever, members of their glorious assembly; secure of their esteem, friendship, and kind offices; and entitled, of course, to a participation of their divine and immortal enjoyment. The best friends, the most delightful companions, the most honourable connexions which the universe contains, or will ever contain, are in this manner made, throughout the ages of our endless being.

4. We unite with God and the virtuous universe in voluntarily promoting that supreme good, which, by his own perfections and their instrumentality, he has begun to accomplish.

This work is literally divine; the supreme, the only display of divine excellence which ever has been, or ever will be, made; an immense and eternal kingdom of virtue and happiness; all that wisdom can approve, or virtue desire. To engage in it, is to engage in the best of all employments. To choose it, is to exhibit the best of all characters. It is to choose what God himself chooses, to pursue what he pursues, to act as he acts, and to be 'fellow workers together with him' in the glorious edifice of eternal good. The disposition required in this command is the same which, in him, and in all his virtuous creatures, originated, advances, and will complete, this divine building in its ever-growing stability, beauty, and splendour.

5. We secure and enjoy the greatest happiness.

Love to God is a disposition inestimably sweet and delightful; delightful in itself, delightful in its operations, delightful in its effects. All the exercises of it are in their own nature, and while they are passing, a series of exquisite enjoyments. They operate only to good; and are, therefore, highly pleasurable in all their various tendency. Their effects, both within and without the soul, are either pure unmingled happiness directly enjoyed by ourselves, or a similar happiness first enjoyed by others, and then returning to ourselves with a doubly endeared and charming reversion.

This disposition leads us unceasingly to contemplate the most exalted, wonderful, and delightful objects; the things which God has already done, is daily accomplishing, and has disclosed to us in his promises as hereafter to be accomplished. Contemplation on the works of God, when they are regarded as being his works, is capable of furnishing us with dignified and intense enjoyment. To produce this effect, however, it is indispensable that we should view them under the influence of this disposition. The mind can experience no pleasure in contemplating the actions of a being whom it does not love. Love to God opens the gates of enjoyment; and of all enjoyment, furnished by the works of creation and providence, so far as it springs from the consideration that they are his works. Through this enjoyment it conducts the mind to others; and to others still, in a train which knows no end. Wherever we are, and can be delighted with displays of boundless wisdom and boundless goodness, with the perfect efforts of a perfect character, love to God is the guide which conducts us to the divine possession.

Beyond this, he who created us for this glorious purpose, and who delights to see it accomplished, cannot fail to be pleased with us, while engaged in it, and, therefore, will not fail to reward us with his blessings. In this path, then, we ascend to the divine favour; 'see the good of his chosen, enjoy the gladness of his nation;' and share the 'glory of his inheritance.' Eternal glory, then, is the natural, the necessary result of love to God. Indeed, eternal glory is nothing but his eternal and unchangeable love to us, and our eternal and unchanging love to him; united with the same love, extended, and reciprocated, among all virtuous beings. In the world to come, this divine disposition will become more and more sweet and delightful; and in every mind be, in the beautiful language of our Saviour, 'a well of water springing up unto everlasting life.'

6. Without love to God, there can be no virtue, or moral excellence.

Love is a single character; uniform in its nature, and in no way separable, even in contemplation, except merely as it is exercised towards different objects. These give it all those which are considered as its different forms. In all these forms, it is exercised by the same man, in exactly the same manner. If it be found in one of these forms in any mind, it is of course found in the same mind, in every other form, whenever the object which gives it that form is presented to that mind. Thus he, who possesses benevolence, when happiness is the object present to him, exercises complacency whenever he contemplates moral excellence; and gratitude, whenever he turns his thoughts towards a benefactor. Thus, also, he who loves God, loves his fellow creatures of course; and, of course, governs himself with evangelical moderation and self-denial. In all these exercises of the mind, and all others of a virtuous nature, a single, indivisible disposition exists and operates. This disposition is the love required by the divine law; 'the love' which St Paul declares to be 'the fulfilling of the law;' not love of various kinds; not a train of dispositions, diversified in their nature and springing up successively as new objects are presented to the mind; but love of exactly the same nature, diversified only by being exercised towards different objects.

This disposition is the only real excellence of mind. There is no ultimate good but happiness; and no disposition originally good, but that which rejoices in it and voluntarily promotes it. Benevolence is, therefore, the only original excellence of mind; and is the foundation of all the real excellence of complacency and gratitude, which are only subordinate forms or exercises of the same character.

7. A higher, nobler state of being is enjoyed by him who loves God, than can possibly be enjoyed by any other.

God is the origin and residence of all that is great or good in the universe. All other greatness and goodness are mere emanations from the greatness and goodness of Jehovah. To have no delight in these glorious attributes, boundlessly existing in the infinite mind, is to be destitute of the noblest and best of all views and affections; of affections and views fitted in their own nature to improve, ennoble, refine, and enrapture the mind; and to form it into a most honourable resemblance to the sum of all perfection. Without this disposition, we are sinners, enemies to God, spots in his kingdom, and nuisances to the universe; are debased, guilty, and hateful here, and shall be endlessly guilty and miserable hereafter.

8. In this manner we obey God.

God, whose we are, and whom we are bound to serve,

has been pleased to express his pleasure to the intelligent universe, in these two commands. He who published them is our Maker, our Preserver, and our Benefactor. We are his property, created by his hand, formed for his use, made for his glory. His right to dispose of us according to his pleasure, is therefore supreme, and such as cannot be questioned. It is a right of course which, although so exercised as to demand of us very great and long-continued self-denial, is ever to be submissively, patiently, and cheerfully acknowledged by us. Whatever God is pleased to require us to do or to suffer, we are to do with delight, and suffer with absolute resignation. I do not mean that we can be required, either with justice or propriety, to do or to suffer any thing which is unjust or wrong. To require this of intelligent creatures, is literally impossible for a mind infinitely perfect. But I mean, that whatever this perfect and great being actually requires, we are absolutely bound to do or suffer in this manner.

At the same time, it is a source of unceasing satisfaction and delight, to discern, from the nature of the subject itself, that all which is actually required, is holy, just, and good, supremely honourable to him, and supremely beneficial to his intelligent creatures. This, I flatter myself, has been sufficiently shown in this and the preceding Discourses. It is delightful, while we are employed in obeying God, to perceive immediately that our conduct is in all respects desirable; the most desirable, the most amiable, the most delightful of all possible conduct; in a word, the only conduct which really deserves these epithets.

Obedience to a parent possessed of peculiar wisdom and goodness is, to every dutiful child, delightful in itself; not only when the thing required by him is in its own nature pleasing; but also when it is indifferent, and even when it is difficult and painful. The pleasure enjoyed is in a great measure independent of that which is done; and consists, primarily, in the delightful nature of those affections which are exercised in obeying, and in the satisfaction of pleasing him whom we obey, by the respect and love manifested in our obedience. The Parent of the universe is possessed of infinite wisdom and goodness. To please him, therefore, is supremely desirable and delightful. But the only conduct in which we can possibly please him, is our obedience; and our only obedience is to 'love him with all the heart, and our neighbour as ourselves.'

Thus, whether we regard ourselves, and wish to be virtuous, excellent, honourable, and happy; or whether we regard our fellow creatures, and wish to render them happy, to unite with them, in a pure and eternal friendship, to receive unceasingly their esteem and kind offices, and to add our efforts to theirs for the promotion of the universal good; or whether we regard God, and desire to obey, to please, and to glorify him; to coincide voluntarily with the designs formed by his boundless wisdom and goodness; and to advance with our own cordial exertions the divine and immortal ends which he is accomplishing; we shall make it our chief object to 'love the Lord our God with all the heart, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and with all the understanding.'

SERMON XCIII.

THE LAW OF GOD.—THE FIRST AND GREAT COMMANDMENT. REVERENCE OF GOD.

And unto man he said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding.—Job xxviii. 28.

In the last Discourse I examined the nature of love to God, as manifested in those three great exercises of it, which are commonly spoken of under this name; viz. benevolence, complacency, and gratitude. I shall now consider another exercise of this affection, of sufficient magnitude to claim a particular discussion in a System of Theology. This is reverence to the same glorious Being.

The context is an eulogium on wisdom, uttered in the noblest spirit of poetry. After describing, in a variety of particulars, the surprising effects of human ingenuity, and declaring that, extraordinary as these may seem, the ingenuity which has produced them is utterly insufficient to discover the nature of this glorious attainment; Job asserts its value to be greater than any, and than all the most precious things which this world contains. In this state of human insufficiency, he informs us, God was pleased to interfere, and by a direct revelation to declare to man, that 'the fear of the Lord is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding.'

By wisdom, throughout the Scriptures, in the common language of such men as understand the meaning of their own language, is universally intended that conduct, in which the best means are selected to accomplish the best ends; or the spirit which chooses these ends, and selects these means for their accomplishment. In the former case, the name refers to the conduct only; in the latter, to the character. The best of all ends which it is possible for intelligent creatures to pursue, is the combined and perfectly coincident one of glorifying God, and promoting the good of the universe. The spirit with which this is done in the only effectual manner, is that which is here styled 'the fear of the Lord.' The means by which it is done, are partly the spirit itself, in its various exercises and operations; and partly extraneous means, devised and employed by the same spirit.

A subordinate, but still very important end, which is or ought to be proposed to himself by every intelligent creature, and for which the most efficacious means

ought to be employed by him, in his own eternal happiness. 'The fear of the Lord is (equally) wisdom,' in this view; as being the only disposition which can either be happy in itself, or receive its proper reward from God.

Every person who has read the Scriptures of the Old Testament, must have observed that this phrase, 'the fear of the Lord,' and others substantially involving the same words, as well as the same meaning, are oftener used to denote the moral character which is acceptable to God, than any, perhaps than all, other phrases whatever. It must also have struck every such reader that this phrase is often used to denote all moral excellence; particularly, that supreme branch of this excellence which is denominated piety. This is plainly the drift of the text, and of many other corresponding passages of Scripture. Thus it is said, 'The fear of the Lord is the beginning,' or the chief part, of 'wisdom,' Psalm cxi. 10. 'The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life,' Prov. xiv. 27. 'The fear of the Lord is his treasure,' Isa. xxxiii. 6. In these, and a multitude of other declarations of a similar import, it is plainly indicated, that 'the fear of the Lord' is the sum and substance of that morally excellent character, which is the object of the divine complacency.

It must, at the same time, be equally obvious to every attentive reader of the Bible, that love to God has there exactly the same character; being, in the language of St Paul, 'the fulfilling of the law;' and in that of St John, the same thing as 'being born of God,' and 'knowing God;' in the sense in which such knowledge is declared by our Saviour to be 'life eternal.'

But there are not two distinct moral characters, severally thus excellent; thus the objects of the divine complacency, and the foundations of eternal life. Moral excellence is one thing; and moral beings have but one character which recommends them to God. As this is thus differently spoken of under the names of the love of God, and the fear of God, both in the Old and New Testament; it is sufficiently evident to a mind, even slightly attentive, that the fear of God, and the love of God, are but one character, appearing under different modifications. Accordingly, saints, or holy persons, are spoken of sometimes as those who fear God, and sometimes as those who love God: each of these exercises being considered as involving the other; and both as parts only of one character.

That this view of the subject is perfectly just, is easily explained by a consideration of its nature. There are two totally distinct exercises, which in the Scriptures, as well as in common language, are denoted by fearing God, which may be called dread and reverence. The former of these emotions is that which is experienced by men, conscious of their guilt, feeling that they have merited the anger of God, and realizing the danger of suffering from his hand the punishment of their sins. In this it is plain, that there can be no moral excellence. All that can be said in favour of it is, that it may serve as a check to sin, and prove, among other means, useful to bring sinners to repentance. In itself it is mere terror; and, in the language of the Scriptures, only makes us 'subject to bondage.' The latter of these emotions is a compound of fear and love, usually styled reverence; and is often that exercise of the mind, in which its whole attachment is exerted towards God. Fear, in this sense, is a strong apprehension of the greatness and the purity of God, excited in the mind of a person who loves him supremely. A lively example of a similar emotion is presented to us by the reverence with which a dutiful child regards a highly respected earthly parent. Accordingly, the fear of God, in this sense, is commonly styled filial; in the former sense, it is often termed servile, or slavish; as being of the same nature with the dread which a mercenary servant stands in of an imperious master.

It is perfectly evident, that the distinction between these two emotions is founded entirely on the character of those by whom they are severally exercised. Reverence to God is experienced only by those who love him; and is plainly the fear exercised by an affectionate mind only. Were love the only character of the mind, dread could not possibly find a place in it. 'There is no fear in love,' says St John, 'but perfect love casteth out fear. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.' As Christians in this world are not made perfect in love, the fear spoken of in this passage, viz. that which I have called dread, is, in greater or less degree, experienced by them. Wicked men are incapable of reverencing God, and only feel a dread of his anger and of punishment.

The reverence, which is the immediate subject of consideration, ordinarily exists in the mind of a good man whenever his contemplations are turned towards the Creator, or towards those objects which are peculiarly his, and in which he is peculiarly seen. It is a steady, solemn, and delightful awe, excited in the mind by every view which it takes of the perfections and operations of this great and glorious Being. In our contemplations on his character, he himself becomes immediately the object of our thoughts. In all other cases we see him through the medium of his works, his word, or his ordinances. In all these, and in these alone, are we able to discern his real character. In all these we behold him awfully great, and wise, and good. In his works, we are witnesses of that boundless benevolence which chose, that boundless knowledge which contrived, and that boundless power, which produced their existence; all of them seen daily, in every place, and in every object. It is impossible for the mind which is not totally destitute of piety, to behold the sublime, the awful, the amazing works of creation and providence; the heavens with their luminaries, the mountains, the ocean, the storm, the earthquake, and the volcano; the circuit of the seasons, and the revolutions of empires; without marking in them all the mighty hand of God, and feeling strong emotions of reverence towards the Author of these stupendous works. At some of them all men tremble: at others all men are astonished. But the sanctified mind, while it is affected in the same manner, blends its fear with love, and mingles delight even with its apprehensions; is serene amid the convulsions which only terrify others; and encouraged, while all around are overwhelmed with dismay.

In the word of God, these attributes are, in some respects, exhibited in a still more affecting manner. Here, the designs of this awful Being are unfolded, and his works presented to us, as a vast system of means, operating in a perfect manner to the production of the most divine and glorious ends. Here, the pure and perfect rectitude of the Creator, his unlimited wisdom and overflowing goodness, are still more divinely manifested in the law by which he governs the universe, and in the

scheme of restoring mankind to holiness by the redemption of his Son, disclosed to us in the gospel. The boundless nature of these things invests them with a magnificence and sublimity, wonderfully increasing the reverence excited by the things themselves; but nothing seems to me more fitted to awaken this emotion than a sense of that spotless purity, in the view of which 'the heavens are unclean, and the angels chargeable with folly.' In this solemn contemplation of this awfully amiable attribute, it seems difficult to forbear exclaiming, 'What is man, who drinketh iniquity like water!' The same emotion, mingled with stronger feelings of alarm, is produced also by a contemplation of those amazing events, which are proclaimed by the voice of prophecy concerning the future destination of man; the conflagration, the judgment, and the retributions of the righteous and the wicked.

In the ordinances of religion the very same things are presented to the view of the mind, which so deeply affect it in the works, and especially in the word of God, and are presented to us in a manner peculiarly interesting. Here, we in a peculiar manner draw nigh to God, and apply to ourselves with unrivalled force the great, the awful, and the glorious things which excite our reverence. They are, of course, all seen in the clearest light, and felt with the deepest impression. Our reverence, therefore, is apt to be here felt in a peculiar degree; not a little enhanced by the sympathy exercised by multitudes feeling the same impression.

No affection of the mind is more useful than this; especially when it has become so invigorated by habit, as to mingle itself with all our thoughts and feelings. It cannot but be advantageous to mention, particularly, some of the happy consequences which it regularly produces. As a preface to this subject, it will, however, be proper to observe generally, that habitual reverence to God may be justly regarded as being peculiarly the spirit with which his commandments are scrupulously and faithfully obeyed. 'Fear God,' saith Solomon, 'and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man:' or, in the better language of Hodgson's version, 'this is all that concerneth man.' Here we have presented to us the two great parts of human duty; our active obedience, and the spirit with which we obey. This spirit is announced by him to be reverence. He does not say, 'Love God, and keep his commandments;' but gives this all-comprehensive injunction in what seems to me very evidently better language. If we suppose ourselves to love God, without fearing him, I have no hesitation in saying, we should not keep his commandments, while possessed of the present imperfection, either to such an extent, or with such exactness, as we now do when under the government of evangelical reverence. Reverence adds new motives of obedience to those which are presented by love considered by itself; motives pre-eminently powerful and extensive, reaching the heart immediately, and extending to all persons, occasions, and times. Hence, it becomes a most powerful prompter to universal obedience; and although love is the disposition which renders this emotion excellent, and although the emotion itself is only one modification of love, yet, in my own view, and, if I mistake not, in the view of the Scriptures also, it is, at least in such beings as men are, a more energetic principle than mere love existing, as it actually does exist, in human minds. Hence, after so much solemn preparation in the context, God declares in the text, 'The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom.' Hence St Paul says to the Corinthians, 'Having, therefore, these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh, and of the spirit; perfecting holiness in the fear of God.' In this passage it is evident that, in the view of St Paul, the fear of God is the primary means of advancing personal holiness to perfection. It is in this view, also, that the prophet Isaiah declares 'the fear of the Lord to be his treasure;' the attribute which in man he especially prizes, and in which he peculiarly delights.

These observations concerning the general influence of this attribute are sufficient for the present purpose. I shall now, therefore, proceed to mention its particular influence on the Christian life.

1. Religious reverence has a peculiar tendency to render our worship acceptable to God.

'Wherefore,' says St Paul, 'we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve him acceptably, with reverence and godly fear.' In this passage the grace of God is exhibited to us as the cause which enables us to worship God acceptably; and reverence and godly fear, two names for the same disposition, as the spirit with which acceptable worship is performed. 'By this spirit,' says Dr Owen, 'the soul is moved and excited to spiritual care and diligence not to provoke so great, so holy, and so jealous a God by a neglect of that exercise of grace he requires in his service, which is due to him on account of his glorious excellences.'

In accordance with this representation of the apostle, the psalmist says, Psalm v. 7, 'As for me, I will come into thy house in the multitude of thy mercy; and in thy fear will I worship towards thy holy temple.' Our Saviour also, speaking in Psalm xxii. says, 'Ye that fear the Lord, praise him; all ye seed of Jacob, glorify him; and fear him, all ye seed of Israel.' In the former of these passages, the psalmist, under the influence of inspiration, teaches us that the fear of God is pre-eminently the spirit with which he would choose to perform his worship in the temple; and the spirit of course which he knew would render that worship acceptable to God. In the latter of these passages, our Saviour mentions those who fear God, as the proper persons to be employed in his praise; and teaches us, therefore, that this is the spirit with which alone men are becomingly occupied in this solemn and delightful act of worship. At the close of the verse, he exhibits those who fear God as the persons who glorify him.

A prime part of the character given of Job is, that 'he feared God.' Perhaps this may be alleged as the true reason why his prayers for his three friends were accepted on their behalf; for we find him immediately before humbling himself in the presence of God with expressions of the most profound reverence. Cornelius also seems to have had his prayers, as well as his alms, accepted, because he feared God. A much stronger instance than these, the strongest indeed which can be supposed, is given us in Heb. v. 7, where it is said of Christ, 'who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared.' If this translation of the passage be admitted, as the natural meaning of the words requires, and as, notwithstanding the

opinion of several commentators, seems reasonable; we are here taught, that even Christ himself, on the great occasion referred to, was heard on account of the reverence with which his supplications were presented. Perhaps, this extraordinary declaration was made especially to teach us, that without religious reverence no prayer can be accepted of God; and thus to render us peculiarly careful not to approach the throne of grace without emotions in a high degree reverential.

I will only add to these observations from the Scriptures, that a great part of the worship transcribed in them from the mouths of pious men, consists in reverential sentiments and expressions.

What the Scriptures thus teach, is perfectly accordant with the dictates of our reason. No views, no emotions in us can be supposed to become the worship of God, which are not either directly reverential, or such as flow from a generally reverential state of mind. If we remember how great a being God is; that he is self-existent and independent; that he is almighty and omnipresent; that 'he searches the hearts, and tries the reins; that he is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and cannot look upon sinners but with abhorrence;' if we think at the same time, how dependent we are upon him, how little we are, how guilty, how exposed to his anger, how imperfect in our best services, and how undeserving of any acceptance; if we remember, that 'he is,' and that 'there is none beside him;' and that not only we, but 'all nations, are as nothing before him;' that he is 'glorious in holiness, fearful in praises,' and transcendently awful in his purity; it cannot be possible for us to avoid feeling, that no thoughts, affections, or conduct can become those who worship him, but such as are accompanied by solemn awe, and profound reverence for his perfect character; that, as 'his name is holy and reverend,' so his worship should ever be celebrated with 'godly fear.'

2. Religious reverence is peculiarly the means of exciting, and keeping alive, an abhorrence of sin.

'The fear of the Lord,' says Solomon, or rather Christ speaking by Solomon, 'is to hate evil,' Prov. viii. 13: that is, it is a part of the very nature of religious reverence to hate evil. 'The transgression of the wicked saith in my heart, there is no fear of God before his eyes.' In this passage the psalmist declares, that 'the transgression of the wicked' proved to his satisfaction, that there was 'no fear of God before his eyes.' Why? Plainly, because the wicked, if he feared God, would cease to transgress. Of Job it is said, he 'feared God, and eschewed evil.' In this passage we are directly taught, that he eschewed evil because he feared God. After God appeared to him with awful glory and majesty, his views of the hatefulness and vileness of his sins, were exceedingly enhanced by the clear apprehensions which he entertained of the supreme greatness and excellency of his Maker. His reverential awe of God on the one hand, and his abhorrence of himself and his sins on the other, are very forcibly exhibited in his own language. 'Behold, I am vile! What shall I answer thee? I will lay my hand upon my mouth. I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.'

It hardly needs to be observed, that nothing can impress on our minds the odiousness of sin in such a manner, as clear and affecting views of the purity of Jehovah, and the reverence for him with which these views are attended; or, in better language, of which these views constitute an essential part. So entirely are mankind, at least those of them who speak our language, sensible of this, that in judicial processes against criminals, the law constantly assigns as a primary cause of their commission of crimes, that they 'had not the fear of God before their eyes.' This is the strongest of all human testimony, that the fear of God is the great and controlling cause of hating and abstaining from iniquity. Of course,

3. Religious reverence is the great source of reformation.

'The fear of the Lord,' says Solomon, 'is to hate evil,' Prov. viii. 13. In this declaration we are taught, that reverence of God is so extensively the cause of departing from evil, that it was proper, in the view of the Spirit of God, to declare it to be the same thing with 'departure from evil.' Substantially in the same manner is this truth exhibited in the text; where 'the fear of the Lord' is declared to be 'wisdom, and departure from evil, understanding.' By wisdom and understanding here, it is scarcely necessary to say, the same thing is intended; and this, in the former part of the verse, is declared to be 'the fear of the Lord;' and, in the latter, 'departure from evil.' 'Fear the Lord,' says Solomon to his son, Prov. iii. 7, 'and depart from evil.' And again, Prov. xiv. 27, 'The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death.' And again, in language somewhat different, Prov. xiii. 14, 'The law of the wise is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death.' Here religious reverence, styled in the former passage 'the fear of the Lord,' and in the latter, 'the law of the wise,' is declared to be 'a fountain of life,' sending forth unceasing streams, of which he who drinks will be both enabled and inclined 'to depart from the snares of death;' that is, from sins which are fatal snares to all who practise them.

But to depart from evil is, necessarily, to do good. Moral beings are, by their nature, always employed in obedience or disobedience. He, therefore, who 'ceases to do evil,' invariably 'learns to do well;' is invariably employed in the great business of reforming his life, and endeavouring to glorify his Creator.

4. Religious reverence is peculiarly the source of rectitude in our dispositions and conduct towards mankind.

'There was,' saith our Saviour, 'in a certain city, a judge, who neither feared God, nor regarded man.' This account of the subject is metaphysically and universally just. He who does not fear God, will not regard man, in any such manner as reason acknowledges to consist with moral rectitude, and as all men declare to be due from man to man. He may, indeed, like the unjust judge in this parable, for the sake of freeing himself from importunity and trouble, for the sake of reputation, convenience, gain, or some other selfish object, act with propriety in his external conduct; but he will never possess any real rectitude, and cannot, therefore, act under its influence.

When Jehoshaphat set judges in the land, he said unto them, 'Take heed what ye do; for ye judge not for man, but for the Lord, who is with you in the judgment. Wherefore now, let the fear of the Lord be upon you; take heed, and do it: for there is no iniquity with the Lord our God, nor respect of persons, nor

taking of gifts.' These are obviously the best rules ever given to judicial officers for the direction of their moral conduct; and such judges and such rulers as have accorded with them have undoubtedly been the best, when prejudice has not operated in a peculiar manner, which the world has even seen. In all these, the fear of God was the controlling principle. Concerning those rulers whose conduct is recorded in the Scriptures, the subject does not admit of a doubt; for the divine writers have marked each case so strongly, as to put it wholly out of question. Concerning such men as Moses, Samuel, Josiah, and Nehemiah, no man is at a loss. There is as little uncertainty concerning Alfred the Great, Sir Matthew Hale, and many others in later times. All these, and all other men of a similar character, were supremely controlled in their conduct by the fear of God; the great thing insisted on by Jehoshaphat in these directions.

Nehemiah particularly informs us concerning this subject, as it respected himself. 'The former governors,' says he, 'who have been before me, were chargeable unto the people, and had taken of them bread and wine, besides forty shekels; yea, even their servants bare rule over the people: but so did not I, because of the fear of God.'

Of Hananiah, the ruler of the palace, this eminently worthy man says, chapter vii. 2, that he 'gave him charge over Jerusalem, because he was a faithful man, and feared God above many.' Of Cornelius it is said, 'he feared God, and gave much alms to the people.' Of Obadiah, the governor of Ahab's house, it is declared, that 'he feared the Lord greatly;' and that he had thus feared him 'from his youth.' As a proof, as well as consequence, of this spirit, we are informed, that, when Jezebel cut off the prophets of the Lord, he took a hundred and fifty of them, and hid them in caves, where he kept and fed them, at the daily hazard of his life. By St Paul, religious reverence is alleged as the ground and directory of Christian submission to lawful authority, Eph. v. 21; and by Malachi, chapter iii. 16, as the cause of Christian fellowship.

Thus we find this spirit extending its benign influence to the various branches of Christian duty; and proving a peculiarly efficacious cause of zeal and exemplariness, in all those parts of a religious life which contribute immediately to the well-being of our fellow men.

5. Religious reverence is the foundation of peculiar blessings in the present world.

'The secret of the Lord,' says the psalmist, 'is with them that fear him,' Psalm xxv. 14. 'He hath given meat to them that fear him,' Psalm cxi. 5. 'There is no want to them that fear him,' Psalm xxxiv. 9. 'By the fear of the Lord are riches and honour,' Prov. xxii. 4. 'The angel of the Lord encampeth about them that fear him,' Psalm xxxiv. 7 'He will fulfill the desire of them that fear him,' Psalm cxlv. 19. These promises, and these declarations, furnish complete security to those who fear God, that they shall really 'want no good thing;' that their circumstances shall be so ordered, as that 'all things shall work together for their good.' They may indeed be troubled, and persecuted, and even cut off by violent death. But these evils will take place only when they become necessary; and when they themselves, as well as others, will become more happy in the end by means of them, than they could be without them. Ordinarily, they will find, in times both of adversity and prosperity, ways, and those very numerous, in which God will show himself more attentive to their real good than they themselves were; and, even in this life, will often see that the most untoward events, as they seemed while passing, are such as they themselves, while taking a retrospective view, would choose to have had befall them. At the same time, all their enjoyments are blessings; and not, like those of the wicked, enjoyments merely. At the same time also, while the sufferings of the wicked are punishments and curses, the afflictions of such as fear God are only blessings in disguise.

6. Religious reverence is especially the means of securing eternal life.

'Surely,' saith the psalmist, 'his salvation is nigh to them that fear him,' Psal. lxxxv. 9. 'I know,' saith Solomon, 'it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before him. But it shall not be well with the wicked, because he feareth not before God,' Eccl. viii. 12, 13. And again; 'The fear of the Lord tendeth to life,' Prov. xix. 23. And again; 'The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life: and, to sum up all in a single declaration, the wicked are declared by Christ, in the character of Wisdom, Prov. i. 29, to be finally given over to destruction, 'because they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord.' But it is unnecessary to spend time any farther, in illustrating a doctrine which necessarily follows from the observations made under the preceding heads.

REMARKS.

From these observations Christians are taught,

1. The supreme importance of the fear of God.

This affection is indispensable to the acceptableness of their worship, and their obedience; to their hatred of sin, their safety in temptation, and the amendment of their lives. It is a primary ingredient of their piety. It is the well-spring of their benevolence, justice, faithfulness, and brotherly love; of rectitude in them, when rulers; of submission, good order, and public spirit, when subjects. It is indispensable to their enjoyment of the favour of God in this life, and his everlasting kindness in the life to come. Higher motives to the attainment of any character cannot be alleged. Let every Christian, then, cherish and cultivate religious reverence in his own mind. Let him often, and habitually, bring before his eyes the awful Being, who is the only object of this affection, and whose sole prerogative it is to demand it of his creatures. Let him fasten his views on the presence and greatness, the purity and glory, of Jehovah; and solemnly discern, and confess, that he himself 'is nothing, less than nothing, and vanity.' In the incommunicable splendour, in the incomprehensible majesty, of the uncreated mind, all created glory is lost and forgotten. In the presence of the Sun of righteousness every star hides its diminished head. Before his beams the lustre of angels and archangels fades into nothing. In the presence of his purity 'the heavens' themselves, spotless as they are to a created eye, 'are unclean.'—'What then is man, that God should be mindful of him; or the son of man, that he should visit him?' What indeed are we—what indeed must we be—in the presence of such a being as this?

Such thoughts as these ought ever to be present in

the mind. Whenever it turns its views towards the Creator, those views ought, from motives of interest and duty alike, to be invariably of the most reverential kind. They most become the character of God; are eminently pleasing in his sight; constitute the best and happiest frame of mind; and most advantageously influence us in all our duty.

2. From these observations it is clear, that habitual reverence to God is one of the best evidences of piety.

After what has been said, this truth needs no farther illustration. All that it is necessary to add is, that we are bound to examine ourselves accordingly.

3. As reverence to God is the most profitable, so irreverence is the most dangerous, habit which can easily be conceived.

As I shall have occasion to dwell particularly on this subject, when I come to consider the third command in the decalogue, I shall not dwell upon it here. It is sufficient to observe at the present time, that every person who is the subject of this character, ought to tremble at the danger to which he is daily exposing himself. There is no manner in which he can more effectually harden his own heart, or provoke the anger of God.

4. He who does not reverence God habitually, is here taught, that he is wholly destitute of religion.

There is a state of mind, in such persons especially as have been taught to fear God from the morning of life, and have retained a strong influence of these impressions, which it is often difficult to distinguish from evangelical reverence. But there is also a state of mind very extensively existing, which is wholly destitute of this attribute, and which, if examined with an ordinary degree of honesty and candour, may be easily discerned. No infidel, no profane person, no mere sensualist, or worldling, needs to hesitate for a moment in determining that he is destitute of reverence to God, and consequently of religion. Of course, he ought to regard himself as plainly an object of divine wrath; and, so far as he has hitherto lived, an acknowledged heir of perdition. 'The fear of God is a fountain of life.' Irreverence to him is a well-spring of everlasting death. Let every irreverent man remember, therefore, that, to such as he is, 'God is a consuming fire.'

I have dwelt more minutely and extensively on this great subject of religion, because of its inherent importance, and because it is, I think unhappily, a rare topic of discussion from the desk.

SERMON XCIV.

THE LAW OF GOD.— THE FIRST AND GREAT COMMANDMENT.—HUMILITY.

Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and it giveth grace to the humble.—1 Pet. v. 5.

In the preceding Discourse I considered at some length that exercise of love to God which is styled *reverence*. I will now proceed to examine the kindred virtue of *humility*, an attribute which seems to differ from reverence, not so much in its nature, as in its object. God is the object of reverence; ourselves, of humility. The state of the mind in the exercise of these Christian graces seems to be the same. It is hardly possible that he who is now employed in reverencing his Maker, when casting his eye towards himself, should fail of being deeply humbled by a view of his own circumstances and character.

Before I enter upon this examination, however, it will be proper to observe, that there are no other modes in which love to God is exerted; and which, although not demanding a particular discussion here, are yet of high importance, and well deserve to be mentioned. They deserve to be mentioned because of their importance. The reasons why they do not claim a particular discussion are, that more time would be demanded by it than can well be spared from the examination of such subjects as require a more minute attention, and that they may be sufficiently understood from the observations made on the other exercises of piety.

Among these, the first place is naturally due to admiration. By this I mean the train of emotions excited in a good mind by the wonderful nature of the various works of God, and the amazing power, and skill, and goodness, which they unfold. 'God,' saith Eliphaz, Job v. 9. 'doeth great things and unsearchable, marvellous things, without number.' These things, we find good men, distinguished in the Scriptures for their piety, observing and commemorating with a transport of admiration. 'O sing unto the Lord,' says David, 'for he hath done marvellous things,'—'I will show forth all thy marvellous works.'—'Surely I will remember thy wonders of old.'—'How great are his signs,' says Nebuchadnezzar, speaking at least the language of a good man, 'how mighty are his wonders!' What they felt they called upon others to feel. 'Remember,' says David, 'his marvellous works that he hath done; his wonders, and the judgments of his mouth,' 1 Chron. xvi. 12.—'Declare his glory among the heathen; his wonders among the people,' Psal. xcvi. 3. 'Oh give thanks to the Lord of lords who alone doeth great wonders; for his mercy endureth for ever.'

Admiration is a combined exercise of the mind; and is formed of wonder and complacency. It is an exercise eminently delightful, and is everywhere presented with objects to awaken it. Both creation and providence are full of wonders, presented to us at every moment, and at every step. Every attribute of God is fitted to excite this emotion by the amazing degree in which it exists; and by the degree also in which it is very often displayed. Thus the psalmist speaks of the 'marvellous loving-kindness of God;' St Peter, of his 'marvellous light.' King Darius says, 'He worketh

signs and wonders in heaven and earth.' Thus David says, 'I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.' Thus one of the names of Christ, whose redemption is the most marvellous of all the works of God, is, 'Wonderful.'

It is to be observed, that religious admiration is entirely distinguished from wonder in the ordinary sense, by its union with complacency. Ordinary wonder is delightful, but is totally destitute of moral excellence. Religious wonder is still more delightful, and may be excellent in any degree.

Secondly: Dependence is also an exercise of the same spirit.

That we are all dependent on God, is known to every person possessed of reason; and that we are absolutely dependent on him for every thing which we enjoy, or which we need. A willingness to be thus dependent, a complacency in this state of things as appointed by God, accompanied with that humble frame of mind necessarily attendant upon these affections, constitutes what is called religious dependence: a state of mind exactly suited to our condition, and eminently useful to our whole Christian character and life.

To these may be added faith, hope, and joy, which have already been subjects of discussion; and to these, submission, which will be made the theme of a future Discourse.

The text contains a command, addressed to all those to whom St Peter wrote, requiring that they should be clothed with humility; and enforces the precept by this combined reason, that 'God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.' No precept of revelation has been more disrelished by infidels than this. Hume attacks it in form, and considers the disposition enjoined as both vicious and contemptible. Still it is largely insisted on in the Scriptures, and is required of us unconditionally and indispensably. It is declared to precede all real honour, and thus to be necessary even to its existence. It is pronounced to have been an important attribute in the character of Christ himself. 'Learn of me,' says the Saviour of mankind, 'for I am meek and lowly of heart.' In the text itself it is plainly asserted to be an object of divine favour, in such a sense, that the grace or free love of God is communicated to those who are humble, and denied to those who are not. In the Scriptural scheme, therefore, humility is invested with an importance which cannot be measured.

It must indeed be confessed, that nothing is more unaccordant with the native disposition of mankind. Pride, the first sin of our common parents, has characterized all their posterity. It is not, therefore, to be wondered at, that humility should be disesteemed and calumniated. If it 'were of the world, the world would (undoubtedly) love his own; but because it is not of the world, therefore the world hateth it.'

Of this attribute of the human mind, as it is exhibited in the Scriptures, I observe,

1. It involves, in its nature, a just sense of our character and condition.

We were born yesterday of the dust, and to-morrow return to the dust again. In our origin, and in our end, there is certainly little to awaken our pride. In both, we are closely allied to the beasts that perish; and may, with the strictest propriety, 'say to corruption, Thou art our father; and to the worm, Thou art our mother and our sister.' How strange is it, that a being should be proud, who is going to the grave; who in a few days will lie down in the dust, to become a feast of worms, and to be changed into a mass of earth! Such, however, will speedily be the lot of the haughtiest monarch, the most renowned hero, and the proudest philosopher, who now says in his heart, 'I will ascend up to heaven, I will be like the Most High.'

During this little period, we are dependent creatures. Nothing is more coveted, nothing more eagerly sought, nothing boasted of with more complacency, by the children of pride, than independence. But the boast is groundless, and the opinion which gives birth to it false. 'What hast thou,' says St Paul, 'which thou hast not received?' From God we derive 'life, and breath, and all things.' All of them are mere gifts of his bounty, and to the least of them we cannot make a single claim. To his sovereign pleasure, also are we every moment indebted for their continuance. 'That which he gives, we gather. He opens his hand, and we are filled with good. He takes away our breath; we die, and return to dust.'

But we are not dependent on God only. To a vast extent we are necessarily indebted for a great body of our enjoyments to our fellow men. We can have neither food nor raiment; we can neither walk nor ride; we can have neither sleep nor medicine; we can neither enjoy ourselves, nor be useful to others, without the aid of multitudes of our fellow men. Especially is the proud man thus dependent. Life to him is only a scene of suffering, unless he is continually regaled by the real or imagined respect of those around him. Homage is the food on which he lives, and applause the atmosphere in which alone he is able to breathe.

Among those on whom we are thus dependent, sometimes for life itself, and always for its comforts, are to be regularly numbered the poor, whom we are so prone to despise; nay, the slaves, whom we regard as having been created merely as instruments of our pleasure. To what a lowly condition is a haughty man thus reduced, and how different his actual situation from that which his conversation and demeanour would induce us to imagine.

Nor is our situation less precarious than it is dependent. The possessions, the comforts, the hopes, which we enjoy to-day, may all to-morrow vanish for ever. Our 'riches may make to themselves wings as an eagle, and fly away towards heaven.' Our health may be wrested from us by disease, and our comfort by pain. We may become decrepit, deaf, or blind. Our friends and families may bid us the last adieu, and retire to the world of spirits. Nay, ourselves and our pride may be buried together in the grave. What foundation does such a state of existence furnish on which to build our pride?

We are also ignorant. Much, indeed, is said of our learning and science. It would be well if more could be said, and said with truth, concerning our wisdom. With all our boasts, how little do we know! How many objects are presented to us every day, of which we know nothing except their existence! How many questions do even little children ask, which no philosopher is able to answer! How many subjects of investigation say to every inquirer, 'Hitherto shalt thou come, but no farther.'

Every thing which we know brings up to our view

the many more which we cannot know; and thus daily forces upon us, if we will open our eyes, irresistible conviction of the narrowness of those limits by which our utmost researches are bounded, of the infantile nature of our actual attainments, of the smallness of those which are possible.

Among the subjects which display this ignorance in the strongest degree, those of a moral nature, those which immediately concern our duty and salvation, infinitely more important to us than any others, hold the primary place. What man is able to find out of himself concerning those, we know by what he has actually found out. Cast your eyes over this great globe, and over the past ages of time, and mark the nature of the religious systems invented by man. How childish, how senseless, how self-contradictory, have been the opinions; how infatuated, how sottish, the precepts by which they have professedly regulated the moral conduct of men; how debased, how full of turpitude, how fraught with frenzy, the religious services by which they have laboured to propitiate their gods, and obtain a future happy existence; nay, what mere creatures of Bedlam were the gods themselves, and their delirious worshippers!

But for the Scriptures, we should now have the same views which have been spread over the whole heathen world; and might this day have been prostrating ourselves before stocks and stones, and looking to drunkenness, prostitution, and the butchery of human victims, as the means of obtaining a happy immortality. How inexpressibly deplorable is this ignorance! How humble the character of those of whom it can be truly predicated!

For our exception from all these errors, we are indebted solely to the Bible. But, with this invaluable book in our hands, we reluctantly admit, in many cases, even its fundamental truths; truths of supreme importance to the establishment of virtue in our minds, and to the acquisition of eternal life beyond the grave; truths which are the glory of the revealed system, and which have been the means of conducting to heaven 'a multitude which no man can number.' In the place of these, what absurdities have not been imbibed!—absurdities immeasurably disgraceful to the understanding, and absolutely ruinous to the soul. How long these absurdities have reigned! How widely they have spread! What innumerable mischiefs they have done! How strongly they discover a violent tendency in our nature to reject truth and welcome error! Who, with this picture before him, can doubt that on this account we have abundant reason for humility?

In addition to these things, we are sinful creatures. 'The heart,' says the prophet Jeremiah, 'is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.' He who reads the three first chapters of the Epistle to the Romans, or peruses the history of mankind, or attentively considers the conduct of himself and his fellow men, will, without much hesitation, adopt the decision of the prophet. It is wonderful that sinful beings should be proud of their character; and remarkable that pride is indulged by no other beings. Of what shall we be proud? In our conversation, and in our writings, we charge each other endlessly with impiety, profaneness, perjury, irreligion, injustice, fraud, falsehood, slander, oppression, cruelty, theft, lewdness, sloth, gluttony, and drunkenness. The charges are either true or false. If they are false, they are in themselves abominable wickedness. If they are true, those on whom they rest are abominably wicked. What an unhappy foundation is here furnished for pride!

If we look into our own hearts, and into our own lives, and perform this duty faithfully, we shall find ample reason for self-condemnation; we shall see that our own hearts, at least, answer to the declaration of Jeremiah; we shall see ourselves alienated from God, revolted from his government, opposed to his law, ungrateful for his blessings, distrustful of his sincerity, and discontented with his administrations. With all these sins before us, we shall find ourselves slow of heart to believe or repent.

God has provided for us, and proffered to us, deliverance from our sins, and from the punishment which they have merited. He has sent a Saviour into the world, to redeem us from under the curse of the law, and that by the effusion of his own blood; but we reject him. He has sent his Spirit to sanctify us, and to make us his children; but we resist his influence. He has offered to be reconciled to us; but we refuse to be reconciled to him. We might be virtuous, we might be happy; but we will not. What causes for humiliation are here presented to our view!

Finally: we are miserable creatures. In the present world we are, to a great extent, unhappy. Cold and heat, hunger and thirst, anxiety, disappointment, toil, poverty, loss of friends, disgrace, sorrow, pain, disease, and death, divide among them a great part of our days, and leave us scarcely more than a few transient gleams of ease, comfort, and hope. How often are most of these evils doubled and tripled by similar sufferings of such as are dear to us in the bonds of nature and affection! How truly does Job declare, that 'man who is born of a woman, is of few days, and full of trouble!'

From these calamities, our only way of escape conducts us to the grave. Beyond that dreary mansion stands the last tribunal, at which our eternal doom will be irreversibly fixed. But the only reward of sin is perdition, perdition final and irremediable. This is the deplorable end of the sins and miseries which so extensively constitute our character and our allotments in the present world.

Look now at the description which has been given, and tell me for which of these things we shall be proud. Is it our origin, our dependence, the precariousness of our life and its enjoyments, our ignorance, our errors, our sins, or our miseries?

In the mean time, let it be remembered, that this very pride is one of our grossest sins; whether it be pride of birth, of wealth, of beauty, of talents, of accomplishments, of exploits, of place, of power, or of moral character. 'A proud look,' from whatsoever source derived, 'is an abomination to the Lord.' Angels by their pride lost heaven. Our first parents by their pride ruined the world.

That the view, which has been here given of the state and character of man is just, will not, because it cannot, be questioned. Conformed to it are all the views entertained, of the same subjects, by every man possessing the humility of the gospel. On these very considerations, especially as applied to himself, is his humility founded.

2. Humility involves a train of affections accordant with such a sense of our character and condition.

It involves that candour and equity which dispose us to receive and acknowledge truth, however humbling to our pride, or painful to our fears, in preference to error, however soothing or flattering. The humble man feels assured, also, that it is his true interest to know and feel the worst of his situation: that a just sense of his condition may be the means of rendering it more hopeful and more desirable; that false conceptions of it, on the contrary, cannot possibly do him any good, and will, in all probability, do him much harm; that truth is a highway, which may conduct him to heaven; but that error is a labyrinth, in which he may be lost for ever.

Equally disposed is he to do justice to the several subjects of his contemplation. Cheerfully is he ready to feel and to acknowledge that he is just such a being as he is; that he is no wiser, no better, no more honourable, and no more safe; but just as lowly, as dependent, as ignorant, as guilty, and as much in danger, as truth pronounces him to be. With the humiliation, dependence, and precariousness of his circumstances he is satisfied, because they are ordained by his Maker. His guilt he acknowledges to be real; and at the sight of it willingly takes his place in the dust. His sufferings he confesses to be merited, and therefore bows submissively beneath the rod. Claims he makes none, for he feels that there is nothing in himself to warrant them; and, although he wishes ardently to escape from his sin and misery, he never thinks of demanding it as a right; but, so far as he is permitted, humbly hopes it as a gift of free grace, as a mere blessing derived from the overflowing mercy of his Creator.

Among the subjects which his situation forces upon his mind, the means of expiating his guilt becomes one of primary importance. After surveying it on every side, he pronounces the attempt hopeless; and sees with full conviction, that, if God should mark iniquity, it would be impossible for him to stand. In this melancholy situation he does not, like the man of the world, rise up in haughty rebellion against God; he does not say, 'Who is the Almighty, that I should serve him; and what profit shall I have, if I pray unto him?' He does not insolently exclaim, 'Why doth he yet find fault, for who hath resisted his will?' On the contrary, in the language of Job, he modestly cries out, 'Behold, I am vile, what shall I answer thee? I will lay my hand upon my mouth. I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.' With Daniel, he 'sets his face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fastings, and sackcloth, and ashes; and he prays unto the Lord his God, and makes his confession, and says, O Lord, the great and dreadful God! keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love thee, I have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled by departing from thy precepts, and from thy judgments.'

But, although in himself he sees no means of deliverance or escape, he finds in the Scriptures of truth ample provision made for both. The provision is complete. An expiation is there made for the sins of men; and a deliverance from the miseries to which they were destined, effectuated; which involve all that the most sanguine mind can wish concerning both. Still the scheme involves an absolute humiliation of human pride; for it represents man as totally destitute of any thing in his native character, or in his efforts, which can recommend him to God, or which can be regarded by the final Judge as any ground of his justification. It is a scheme of mere mercy; and every one who is to receive the blessings of it must come in the character of a penitent supplicating for pardon through the righteousness of a Redeemer.

Nothing can be more painful to pride than this scheme of deliverance; but nothing can be more welcome to the heart of genuine humility. God, in the great work of forgiving, redeeming, and sanctifying man, appears to the humble, penitential mind, invested with peculiar glory, excellence, and loveliness. 'God,' says St Paul, 'who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined into our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.' In the work of redemption, accomplished by this divine person, the character of God is seen by the sanctified mind in a light entirely new, and more honourable to him than that which is presented by any other work, either of creation or providence. His benevolence shines here, in the exercise of mercy towards the apostate children of men, in a manner which is new and singular; a manner in which it has been displayed to the inhabitants of no other part of the universe. Here especially it is discerned, that 'God is love;' and the humble penitent is so deeply affected with the kindness manifested in expiating and forgiving sin, and renewing the soul, that he is ready to exclaim with the psalmist, 'Not unto me, O Lord, not unto me, but to thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake.' In the midst of his astonishment that such mercy should be extended to him, a poor, guilty, miserable wretch, unworthy, in his own view, of the least of all mercies, the pride, even of self-righteousness, is for a while, at least, laid asleep; and his thoughts and affections, instead of being turned towards himself, are absorbed in the condescension and goodness of his Father, Redeemer, and Sanctifier.

It is impossible for the man in whom this attribute is found not to turn his thoughts, from time to time, to the perfect purity of God. No subject of contemplation can more strongly impress upon the mind a sense of its own impurity. 'In his sight the heavens themselves are not clean, and the angels before him are charged with folly.' How much more 'abominable and filthy' to the eye of the penitent must man appear, who 'drinketh iniquity like water?' In the sight of this awful and most affecting object, he will almost necessarily exclaim, with Job, 'I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee! Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.'

When such a man contemplates the character of his Christian brethren, emotions of the same general nature will necessarily occupy his mind. St Paul has directed Christians to 'forbear one another in all lowliness and meekness of mind, and to esteem others better than themselves.' This precept, which to a man of the world appears absurd and incapable of being obeyed, involves no difficulty in the eye of him who is evangelically humble. The sins of other Christians are, of course, imperfectly known to him. Their sins of thought are all hidden from his eyes: their sins of action he rarely witnesses; and of those which are perpetrated in his presence, he cannot know either the extent, or malignity. His own sins, in the mean time, both of heart and of life, are in a sense always naked

before him, and he can hardly fail to discern, in some good degree, their number, their aggravations, and their guilt. Hence other Christians will, in a comparative sense, appear to him to be clean; while himself will seem unsound and polluted, from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot. In this situation, the difficulty of esteeming others better than himself vanishes. Impossible, as it would be, for a proud man to think in this manner, the only difficulty to the humble man is to think in any other.

Such at all times, with the exceptions for which the human character always lays the foundation, will be the emotions naturally imbibed, and strongly cherished, by Christian humility. But there are certain seasons in which they will be excited in a peculiar degree. Such will be the case in the house of God. Here he is brought immediately into the presence of his Maker; here he appears in the character of a sinner, and of a suppliant for mercy; here he draws nigh to his Maker in the solemn ordinances of the sanctuary; here the character and sufferings of the Redeemer are set before him in the light of heaven; here he witnesses all the wonders of redeeming, forgiving, and sanctifying love. What God is, and what he himself is, what he has done to destroy himself, and what God has done to save him from destruction, are here presented to his eye, and brought home to his heart, in the most affecting manner. In this solemn place, also, he is in the midst of his fellow Christians, uniting with them in their prayers and praises, and sitting with them at the table of Christ, to celebrate his sufferings, and 'the love wherewith he loved us, and gave himself for us.' In such a situation, how great and good must his Father, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, appear! How little, how unworthy, how sinful, himself! How strange must it seem, that he, who is unworthy of the least, should thus be put into the possession of the greatest of all mercies! How naturally, how often, and how anxiously, will he inquire, whether it can be proper for such a being as himself, to unite with the followers of the Redeemer in their worship, share in their privileges, and participate in their hopes and in their joys!

Feelings of the same general nature will also be awakened, and often in an equal degree, when he retires to his closet to pray to his Father who is in secret. Here he withdraws entirely from the world, and meets his Maker face to face. The divine character and his own must be brought before his eyes in the strongest light, while he is employed in confessing his sins, and supplicating pardon and sanctification, gratefully acknowledging the blessings which he has received, and humbling asking for those which he needs. How naturally would he exclaim, 'Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man, that thou shouldst visit him!'

Such, if I mistake not, are the views formed by Christian humility; and such the affections of the mind in which it prevails.

REMARKS.

From these observations it is evident,

1. That evangelical humility is exactly conformed to the real circumstances and character of men.

The views which the humble man entertains of himself and of his condition are exactly suited to both. He is just such a being as he supposes himself to be, and in just such a condition. His origin is as lowly, his situation as dependent and precarious, his mind as ignorant and erring, his character as guilty, and his destination fraught with as much distress and danger, as he himself realizes. His views, therefore, are absolutely true and just. If such views then are honourable to a rational being, if no other thoughts can be honourable to such a being, then the views entertained by humility are honourable to the human character. On the contrary, the views of pride, or, as Mr Hume chooses to style it, self-valuation, are absolutely unsuited both to the condition and character of man. They are radically and universally unjust and false, and of course are only disgraceful and contemptible.

The affections which have been here considered, as involved in humility, are evidently no less just. They spring irresistibly from those views; and no sober mind can entertain the latter without experiencing the former. These affections are all plainly the harmony of the heart with the dictates of the understanding; dictates seen and acknowledged to be just and certain, and, where the heart is governed by candour, irresistible. Whenever the mind sees itself to be thus ignorant, erring, and sinful, and its situation thus dependent, precarious, and distressing, it cannot, without violence done to itself, fail of feeling both the character and condition, and of feeling them deeply; for they are objects of immeasurable importance to its whole well-being. Equally just are the affections which he exercises towards his Maker and his fellow Christians. The difference between the character of God and his own character being seen to be such; so entire, so vast, particularly as he is infinitely holy and pure, while himself is altogether polluted with guilt; no emotions can be proper towards this great and glorious Being which do not involve a strong sense of this amazing moral difference between him and itself. In such a case, where there is no humility, there can be no reverence towards God; and where there is no reverence, it is impossible that there should be any thing acceptable towards him.

In the same manner, humility enters into every other affection of a sanctified mind towards its Maker. Our views of the mercy of God exercised towards us, and the emotions excited by them, are exactly proportioned to the apprehensions which we form of our own unworthiness. He 'to whom much is forgiven,' our Saviour informs us, 'will love much.' Pardon, mercy, and grace, are terms which mean little, if they have any meaning that is realized in the eye of him who is not humbled for his sins, and who does not feel his own absolute need of pardon. The song of the redeemed is sung only by those who realize the love of Christ, because he has 'washed them from their sins in his own blood.' The gratitude, therefore, exercised to God for his unspeakable mercy, in forgiving our sins, and redeeming us from under the curse of the law, will in a great measure be created by our humility.

In the same manner does it enhance our complacency in the divine character. Of dependence, it is the essence; of adoration, and indeed of all our worship, it is the substance and the soul.

2. From these observations it is evident, that no man can hope for acceptance with God without humility.

'God,' says the text, 'resisteth the proud, but giveth grace (or favour) to the humble.' The proud and the humble, are two great classes, including the whole of

the human race. Of which class does it seem probable to the eye of sober reason, that the infinitely perfect Author of all things will select his own family, and the objects of his everlasting love? Those who possess the views and the spirit here described; or those who indulge the 'self-valuation' so grateful to Mr Hume? Those who boldly come before him with 'God, I thank thee that I am not as other men;' or those who 'dare not lift up their eyes to heaven; but, smiting upon their breasts, say, God be merciful to me a sinner!' How obvious is it to common sense, that, if he accept any of our race, they will be such as have just views of their character and condition; of their own absolute unworthiness; of the greatness of his mercy in forgiving their sins and sanctifying their souls; of the transcendent glory of the Redeemer in becoming their propitiation; and of the infinite benignity of the divine Spirit, in renewing them in the image, and restoring them to the favour, of God! Who else can possess the spirit, who else can unite in the employments, who else can harmonize in the praises, of the first-born?

Let me ask, is it possible that a proud man should be a candidate for immortal life; whether proud of his birth, his wealth, his station, his accomplishments, or his moral character? Suppose him to arrive in the regions of life, in what manner would his pride be employed? Which of these subjects would he make the theme of his conversation with the spirits of just men made perfect? How would he blend his pride with their worship; how would he present it before the throne of God?

3. From these observations also we learn that humility is a disposition eminently lovely.

'Learn of me,' says the Saviour of mankind to proud and perishing sinners, 'for I am meek and lowly of heart.' How astonishing a declaration from the mouth of Him who controlled the elements with a word, at whose command the dead were raised to life, and at whose rebuke demons trembled and fled? Draw nigh, ye miserable worms of the dust, place yourselves by the side of this glorious person, and recite before him the foundations on which your loftiness rests; your riches, your rank, your talents, and your stations. How will these subjects appear to his eye? How will those appear, who make them the grounds of their self-valuation? Meekness and lowliness of heart adorned him with beauty inexpressible. Can pride be an ornament to you?

Would you be amiable in the sight of God, you must essentially resemble Him who was 'altogether lovely.' Even you yourselves cannot but discern, that, had he been proud, it would have tarnished his character, and have eclipsed the face of the Sun of righteousness.

In the mean time let Christians remember, and feel, that they themselves will be lovely, exactly in proportion as they approximate to the character of the Redeemer in their humility. 'Let the same mind,' says St Paul to the Philippians, 'be in you, which was also in Christ: who, being in the form of God, thought it no robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.' From what a height did he descend! How lowly the visible station which he assumed!

Your humility towards God will make you lovely in his sight; your humility towards your fellow Christians will make you lovely in theirs. In both cases it will be a combination of views and affections conformed to truth, exactly suited to your character and circumstances, and equally conformed to the good pleasure of God, and to the perfect example of his beloved Son. It will mingle with all your affections and make them sweet and delightful. It will operate on all your conduct, and make it amiable in the sight of every beholder. From pride and all its wretched consequences, it will deliver you. Of the grace of God it will assure you. 'For to this man will I look,' says the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, 'even to him, who is of an humble and contrite spirit; to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite.' It will accompany you through life, and lessen all the troubles, and increase all the comforts, of your pilgrimage. It will soften your dying bed, and enhance your hope and your confidence before the last tribunal.

SERMON XCV.

THE LAW OF GOD.—THE FIRST AND GREAT COMMANDMENT.—RESIGNATION.

And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down and prayed, saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done.—Luke xxii. 41, 42.

The next exercise of love to God in our progress is, resignation.

Of this excellence the text contains the most perfect example, which has been recorded or witnessed in the universe. Our Saviour, while in the garden of Gethsemane, having 'withdrawn from his disciples about a stone's cast, kneeled down, and prayed,' under an agonizing sense of the evils which he was about to suffer. His prayer in the midst of this agony was, 'Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done!' The situation of Christ was much more trying than we can conceive. Yet in this situation he bows his will entirely to the will of God; and prays him to remove the cup, only on the condition that he is willing; and that not his own will, but the will of the Father, may be done.

The occasion was wonderful; the resignation was complete. He yielded himself entirely into the hands of his Father, and earnestly desired that his will, whatever it should cost himself, might be done. Nothing can be more edifying than this example, nor can any thing be more instructive. By it we are taught,

1. That religious resignation is a quiet yielding of ourselves to the disposal of God, and not to the mere sufferance of evil.

Christ prayed earnestly and repeatedly, that if it were possible, the evil, or 'the cup, might pass from him.' That this was perfect rectitude on his part, will not be questioned. What he, with perfect rectitude, desired to escape, we may, with entire rectitude also, desire to escape. As he was not willing to suffer evil; it was perfectly right, that he should not be willing. It is entirely right, therefore, that we should be equally unwilling.

But Christ was entirely willing to do and to suffer whatever God willed him to do or to suffer. He was, however, disposed thus to do and suffer merely because it was the will of God; and because that will requires nothing but what is perfectly wise and good, and perfectly desirable. As, therefore, the perfect resignation of our Saviour was a yielding of himself to the will of God, and not at all to mere suffering; so it is clear, beyond a debate, that religious resignation is, in every case, of this nature only.

2. That it is our duty to resign ourselves to the will of God entirely, and that in all situations of life.

The situation in which Christ expressed the resignation in the text, was certainly much more trying than any which men experience in the present world. At the same time, he had not merited this distress by any fault or defect of his own. His pure and perfect mind was free alike from error and from sin. Accordingly, in that memorable prayer contained in the seventeenth chapter of John, and uttered just before his agony in the garden, he could say with perfect confidence, as well as with exact truth and propriety, 'I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father! glorify thou me, with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.' Yet, in this situation of peculiar distress, he gave up entirely every wish of his own; choosing rather to suffer these wonderful afflictions, if it were the will of God that he should suffer them, than to escape them, if it were not. Whatever afflictions befall us, we are ever to remember that we have deserved them, and that they are always inferior in intenseness to those which were suffered by Christ. Our reasons for resigning ourselves entirely to the disposal of God, therefore, are, in some respects, greater than his. In all situations it, of course, becomes us to 'be still, and know,' that he who afflicts us is 'God.'

To render our resignation entire, it is indispensable that it should be unmingled with murmuring, impatience, distrust of the goodness of God, or any dissatisfaction with his providence. We may lawfully wish not to suffer evil, considered by itself; but we cannot lawfully wish that the will of God should not be done. Nor can we lawfully complain at any time of that which is done by his will. He who complains has not, if he is resigned at all, arrived at the due degree of resignation. Jeremiah, with irresistible force, asks, 'Shall a living man complain; a man for the punishment of his sins?'

3. Religious resignation is perfectly consistent with the clearest and strongest sense of the evils which we suffer; and with the deepest distress while we suffer.

Christ, as I have observed, was perfectly resigned. Yet Christ felt, in the deepest manner, the whole extent of the evils which he suffered. This we know, both because he prayed to be delivered from them, if it were possible; and because his agonies forced the sweat to descend upon him in 'the form of great drops of blood.' What Christ did in this respect, it is lawful for us to do. Christ felt these evils to their full extent, and yet was perfectly resigned. We, therefore, may, in the same manner, feel the evils which we experience, and yet be the subjects, in this very conduct, of true evangelical resignation.

4. Christian resignation is perfectly consistent with the most fervent supplications to God, for deliverance from the evils which we suffer.

The evidence of this is complete in the example of Christ. Christ thus prayed, while yet he was perfectly resigned; we, of course, may thus pray, without lessening at all the degree, or affecting the genuineness, of our resignation.

The obligations which we are under to exercise this spirit, are founded both in the command of God and the nature of things. The command of God carries with it, in all cases, an authority and obligation which are without limits. With this authority he requires us to be resigned to his whole will; asserting it, with the most perfect propriety, to be his prerogative alone to prescribe, and our duty entirely to obey. We are his creatures; and are, therefore, under all possible obligation to do his pleasure. At the same time, his will is perfectly right, and ought exactly to be obeyed, even if there were no authority to bind, and no reward to retribute, our obedience. Our own supreme good is entirely promoted by our obedience only, both as the obedience itself is delightful, and as it is followed by a glorious and divine reward.

Resignation is not merely a single act, but a general course of obedience; a general preparation of the heart to yield itself to God's known will, and his promised dispensations. I here include, and have all long included what is commonly called submission. Submission differs from resignation in nothing but this: Submission is yielding the heart to the divine will, in that which has already taken place, or is now taking place; and resignation, yielding the heart to that which it is foreseen may or will hereafter take place. The spirit is exactly the same, as to its nature, in all instances; and the difference is found only in its regarding the past, present, or future accomplishment of the divine will. This distinction is so nearly a nominal one only, that both names are used indiscriminately; and of so little importance as to preclude any necessary regard to it in this Discourse.

This disposition is the only becoming temper in suffering creatures, so far as their sufferings are concerned. The sufferings of mankind in the present world are all expressions of the will of God. There are but three dispositions, with which they can be regarded; impatience, indifference, or acquiesence. It cannot be necessary for me to show, that the last of these is the only spirit with which we can receive either profitably or becomingly the chastisements inflicted by the hand of God.

To acquiesce in the divine pleasure under sufferings is a strong, and eminently excellent exercise of love and reverence to God. It is not easy to conceive how we can give a higher or more decisive testimony of our delight in the divine character, or our approbation of the divine government, than by quietly yielding to that government in circumstances of suffering and sorrow; by testifying with the heart, that we have such a sense of the wisdom and goodness of God, as to be satisfied to undergo whatever afflictions he is pleased to send upon us, and to give up our own wishes and comforts, that the pleasure of God may be done, and his glory promoted. This is an exercise of love to our Maker which proves itself to be genuine and excellent, by the willing self-denial which it encounters, and by the victory which it gains over interest and pleasure powerfully present.

It is also to be remembered, that the Christian, notwithstanding he is a Christian, is still a sinful being. Afflictions are punishments of his sins, imcomparably less than he has deserved. Resignation to them is a candid, equitable, dutiful acknowledgment of the justice of God in sending them, and an humble confession of the sins by which they have been deserved.

By this spirit the general selfishness of the mind is gradually wasted away, the strength of passion and appetite continually weakened, its impiety prevented, its ingratitude destroyed, and its rebellion broken down. The rebel is converted into a child. A serenity and quietness of disposition take possession of the soul, allay the bitterness of its distresses, soothe all its tumults into peace, mingle comfort in the cup of sorrow, and happily blend with all its sufferings the inherent delight of resignation, a supporting sense of the approbation and favour of God.

REMARKS.

From this passage of Scripture, thus considered, it is evident,

1. That willingness to suffer perdition is no part of Christian resignation.

It is well known to my audience, that the contrary doctrine to that which I have here asserted, has been taught by men of distinguished reputation for learning and piety; and it is equally well known, that no human learning and piety will furnish a sufficient security from error. All human opinions, therefore, may be warrantably questioned; and none are to be received, without evidence, upon the mere reputation of their authors. While, therefore, I would treat the authors with becoming respect, I shall take the liberty freely to question their opinions.

That Christian resignation does not at all involve a willingness to suffer perdition, is, in my view, unanswerably clear from the text. To the arguments derived from this source, I shall however add a few, out of many suggested by the nature of the subject.

(1.) Christian resignation is resignation to nothing but the will of God. This position has, if I mistake not, been proved beyond debate in the body of the Discourse. The will of God, by which we are to be governed, is plainly that which is, or can be known to us. The proof of this, both from reason and Scripture, is complete. Reason teaches us, or rather we know by intuition, that it is impossible for us to be governed by a rule which we cannot know. Revelation informs us, that 'secret things belong to God;' and that only 'the things which are revealed belong to us, and to our children, for ever; that we may do all the words of his law.' That, then, which is not known to us, cannot belong to us, in any sense, as a rule, or part of our duty.

But it is not known, and without a new and direct revelation it cannot be known, to any man living, to be the will of God, that he should suffer perdition. The Scriptures reveal to us, that the impenitent and unbelieving will indeed suffer this terrible punishment. But they do not reveal to any man, that he himself will be impenitent and unbelieving when he leaves the world, or that he will finally be condemned. It is impossible, therefore, for any man to know in this world, that the will of God will require him to suffer perdition. If, then, he resigns himself to this dreadful allotment, as being a part of the will of God, he himself presumptuously establishes, by his own contrivance and conjecture, something as the will of God, which God has not declared to be such; which the man himself cannot know to be such, while in the present world; and which he cannot lawfully presume to be such. Instead, therefore, of resigning himself to the divine will, he resigns himself to a will which his own imagination creates for God; and is guilty of intruding into the province and assuming the prerogatives, of his Creator.

(2.) Every sincere professor of religion either knows or believes himself to be a Christian.

If he knows himself to be a Christian, then he knows it to be contrary to the will of God that he should be finally condemned, or that he should suffer the miseries of perdition. To be willing, in this case, to suffer these miseries, is to be willing to suffer that which is known by him to be contrary to the will of God. It is a consent to prevent Christ of one trophy of his cross, one glorious fruit of his sufferings, aud to take a gem from his crown of glory.

If the professor believes himself to be a Christian, then, in being willing to suffer perdition, he is willing to suffer in direct contradiction to what he believes to be the will of God. His belief here ought to have exactly the same influence on his disposition and conduct as his knowledge in the former case. Wherever we have not, and, at the time when we are to act, cannot have, certainty, we are under absolute obligation to be governed by the highest probability. In this case, therefore, the duty of the professor is exactly the same as in the former.

When we remember that the sufferer becomes, of course, the eternal enemy of God and of all good, and that the professor, in thus consenting to suffer, consents in the same act to be the eternal enemy of God and of all good; and when this consent is yielded in direct contradiction to what he either knows or believes to be the will of God; it will, I think, be difficult to find a reason which will evince this conduct to be a part of the Christian's duty.

(3.) There is no precept in the Scriptures enjoining this conduct.

It certainly must seem strange, that a duty so extraordinary, and so fitted to perplex the minds of mere men should, if it be really a duty, be nowhere expressly enjoined. Certainly, it is not likely to be easily embraced by any man. It can hardly be supposed, therefore, if it be really a part of the evangelical sys-

tem, to be left to inference, philosophy, and supposition. No precept, so far as we are able to judge, needs more to be clear and express than that which should require of us this singular mental effort. But such precept cannot be found.

(4.) There is no example of such resignation recorded in the Scriptures.

There are two examples, which are alleged in support of the resignation in question. The first is in Exod. xxxii. 31, 32, 'And Moses returned unto the Lord, and said, Oh! this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold. Yet now, if thou wilt, forgive their sin; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book, which thou hast written.' The part of this text, which is alleged in support of the doctrine here contended against, is contained in these expressions: 'Yet now, if thou wilt, forgive their sin; if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book, which thou hast written.' It is supposed that Moses prayed to God to make him miserable, on the condition specified, throughout eternity.

Concerning this subject, I observe, first, that the expression, 'Blot me out of thy book, which thou hast written,' is wholly figurative; and, like most other figurative language, is capable of being understood in various senses. To say the most, then, it is ambiguous and uncertain. I need not say, that such a doctrine as this ought not to be founded on an ambiguous passage of Scripture, nor on any uncertainty whatever.

Secondly: It will be admitted, that Moses, although he prayed in a violent state of emotion, yet spoke in some accordance with common sense. But the interpretation given to his words by those who teach this doctrine, makes him speak the most arrant nonsense. His words are, 'Yet now, if thou wilt, forgive their sin; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written.' Here, according to the abettors of this doctrine, Moses prays that God would forgive their sin, if he was willing; and, if he was unwilling, that he would blot him out of the book of life. They say, that the benevolence of Moses was so great, that he chose rather to suffer endless misery, in order to obtain the forgiveness of his countrymen, than to be endlessly happy, and see them condemned. But they do not attend to the words of Moses. He himself says no such thing. On the contrary, he prays, 'that God would blot him out of his book, if he will not forgive their sin:' choosing not to be happy himself, unless they may be happy with him; and choosing to be endlessly miserable, rather than to be endlessly happy, unless they may be happy also. This, it must be acknowledged, if it be benevolence, is benevolence of a very extraordinary kind. Moses, according to this scheme, is desirous, if he cannot obtain all the good which he wishes, to have none; and, if his countrymen cannot be happy, to be miserable himself; to be endlessly miserable, without the least expectation of doing, without a possibility of doing, any good whatever to them: in plain language, to be endlessly miserable for the sake of being endlessly miserable.

It is also resignation of an extraordinary kind. Instead of being resignation to the will of God, it is resignation directly opposed, and perfectly known by Moses himself to be directly opposed, to that will. Moses certainly knew that he was destined to endless life; and therefore certainly knew that this was the will of God. To this will, thus known, his prayer, interpreted according to this scheme, is directly contradictory. I hesitate not to say, that Moses never exercised resignation of this nature.

Thirdly: The real meaning of this prayer is, that on the condition specified, God would take away his life.

After the rebellion of the Israelites at the foot of the Mount, in which they made and worshipped the golden calf, God directed Moses to 'let him alone, that he might consume them;' and promised to make of Moses himself 'a great nation.' Alluring as this promise was, Moses loved Israel too well to forsake them on this pressing occasion. He therefore besought God to forgive them, with great earnestness and anxiety; and prayed fervently also, that, if he would not forgive them, he would take away his own life; probably, that he might not witness the melancholy sight of the ruin of a people for whom he had done and suffered so much, and in whose interests his heart was so entirely bound up. The book, here called 'the book which God had written,' is a figurative allusion to a register, in which were recorded the names of living persons; and, in the present case, is considered as a register written by God, in which were enrolled the names of all living men. To blot out the name, is equivalent to taking away the life of the person thus registered. That this was what was intended by Moses must, I think, be unanswerably evident from the observations which have been already made.

A similar prayer of the same illustrious man is recorded in Numb. xi. 14, 15, 'I am not able to bear all this people alone, because it is too heavy for me. And, if thou deal thus with me, kill me, I pray thee, out of hand, if I have found favour in thy sight; and let me not see my wretchedness.' The only difference between the two cases seems to be that, in the former case, Moses prayed that he might not live to see the ruin of his people; and, in the latter, requested to be released from life, because he was unable to bear the burden of superintending, and providing for them.

The other passage is Rom. ix. 1—3, 'I say the truth in Christ, I lie not; my conscience also bearing me witness in the holy Ghost; that I have great heaviness, and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ, for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh.' Here it is supposed, that St Paul declares himself desirous, or at least capable of being desirous, to suffer final perdition for the sake of rescuing his brethren, the Israelites, from their ruinous condition. But I apprehend the apostle says no such thing. For,

In the first place, the declaration in the Greek is not, 'I could wish,' but 'I wished:' not *ηυχοιμην*, in the *optative* mode, but *ηυχομην*, in the *indicative*. The apostle, therefore, here declares a fact which had taken place; not the state of his mind at the time present; nor a fact which might take place at that, or any future time. I do not deny, that the *indicative* is sometimes used for the *optative*, or, as it ought to be here understood in the *potential* sense; to denote what could be done, instead of what has been done. But no case of this kind is to be presumed; nor is such a meaning to be admitted, unless the general construction of a passage renders the admission necessary.

Secondly: The admission of it here ruins the meaning of the passage altogether. It is introduced in this

manner: 'I say the truth in Christ; I lie not; my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost.' Now, what is the assertion to gain credit to which these three declarations, two of them attended with all the solemnity of an oath, were made? It is found in the following verse. 'I have great heaviness and continual sorrow of heart.' Can it be imagined, that St Paul would think it necessary or proper to preface this assertion in so solemn a manner? Was it a matter even of surprise, that a person, afflicted and persecuted as he was, should be the subject of such sorrow? Could the apostle need the aid of a triple declaration, and a double oath, to make this assertion believed? And, if these were not necessary, can he be supposed to have used them for such a purpose; or for any purpose whatever?

As this cannot have been the apostle's meaning in this passage, so, happily that meaning is sufficiently obvious. St Paul, it is well known, was considered by the Jews as their bitter enemy; as hating their temple, worship, and nation; and as conspiring with the Gentiles to subvert all those which they esteemed their best interests. This prejudice of theirs against him, was an immense evil; for it not only obstructed powerfully, and often fatally, the success of his evangelical labours among the Gentiles; but, in almost all instances, prevented the Jews from receiving the gospel. This evil the apostle felt in its full force, as he teaches us on many occasions, by endeavouring earnestly to clear himself of the imputation. The present is one of those instances; and the meaning of the passage is rendered perfectly clear, and highly important when it is considered in this manner; and the propriety of the solemn preface with which it commences, fully evinced. The words rendered, 'For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ,' ought to be included, as they plainly were intended to be, in a parenthesis. The passage, truly translated in this manner, will run thus: 'I say the truth in Christ, I lie not; my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost; that I have great heaviness, and continual sorrow in my heart (for I also wished myself separated from Christ), for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh.' That the apostle had really this sorrow and heaviness for his nation, he knew would be doubted by some, and disbelieved by others. He, therefore, naturally and properly appeals to God, for the reality of his love to them, and for the truth of the declaration in which it is asserted. To show his sympathy with them in their ruined state, he reminds them, that he was once the subject of the same violent unbelief, and alienation from Christ; and that then he earnestly chose to be what he here calls 'anathema,' justly rendered in the margin, 'separated, from Christ,' just as they now chose it. A person once in this condition, would naturally be believed to feel deeply the concerns of such as were now in the same condition, and would therefore allege this consideration with the utmost force and propriety.

It will, I am aware, be here said, that this interpretation derogates exceedingly from the nobleness and expansiveness of the apostle's benevolence, as exhibited in the construction which I am opposing. It seems to me, that St Paul's own meaning is as really valuable as any which is devised for him by his commentators. There can be no more dangerous mode of interpreting the Scriptures, than to drop their obvious sense, and to substitute for it one which happens to be more agreeable to ourselves. Were I to comment in this manner on the passage before us, I should say, that the meaning to which I object is absurd and monstrous; and that which I adopt, becoming the apostle's character. At the same time, I would lay no stress on this remark. My concern is with the real sense of the words. St Paul must be allowed to have spoken good sense; and this the obvious and grammatical construction here given to his language, makes him speak. Whereas, the construction which I oppose, makes him speak little less than absolute nonsense.

These two passages, therefore, although relied on to support the doctrine which I oppose, do not affect the question at all; and the Scriptures are equally destitute of examples as of precepts to warrant the doctrine.

(5.) There is no motive to induce the mind to this resignation.

By this I do not intend, that no motive is alleged; but that there is none by which the mind of a rational being can be supposed to be influenced. The motives by which Christians are induced to be unwilling to suffer perdition, are (1.) the loss of endless and perfect happiness in heaven; (2.) the loss of endless and perfect virtue, or holiness; (3.) the suffering of endless and perfect sin; (4.) the suffering of endless and perfect misery; and, (5.) the glory of God in the salvation of a sinner. The motives which must produce the willingness in question, must be of sufficient magnitude to overbalance all these; each of them infinite. Now what is the motive alleged? It is the delight experienced by the Christian in seeing the glory of his Maker promoted by his perdition. Without questioning the possibility of being influenced by this motive, as far as the nature of the case merely is concerned, I observe, that the willingness to glorify God in this manner, and the pleasure experienced in glorifying him (which is the same thing), is to endure but for a moment; that is, during this transient life. The pain through which this momentary pleasure is gained, is, on the contrary, infinite, or endless, in each of the methods specified above. Will it be believed, that, if every volition of man is as the greatest apparent good, there can be in this case a volition, nay, a series of volitions, contrary to the greatest apparent good—a good, infinitely outweighing that by which these volitions are supposed to be excited? I say this good is momentary; because the subjects of perdition, immediately after entering upon their sufferings, hate and oppose the glory of God throughout eternity. Whatever good, therefore, the Christian can enjoy in glorifying his Creator, he can enjoy only during the present life.

It ought to be observed, that the resignation here required of the Christian, extends infinitely beyond that which was required of Christ himself. He was required to undergo only finite and temporary sufferings. The Christian is here required to be willing to undergo infinite sufferings. The sufferings of Christ were, and he knew they were, to be rewarded with infinite glory and happiness. Those of the Christian are only to terminate daily in increasing shame, sin, and woe, for ever. Christ 'for the joy set before him, endured the cross, and despised the shame.' There is no joy set before the Christian.

As a rule of determining whether we are Christians, or not, it would seem, that hardly any supposable one

could be more unhappy. If we should allow the doctrine to be sound and scriptural, it will not be pretended that any, unless very eminent, saints arrive at the possession of the spirit in such a degree, as to be satisfied that they are thus resigned. None but these, therefore, will be able to avail themselves of the evidence derived from this source. To all others the rule will be not only useless, but in a high degree perplexing, and filled with discouragement. To be thus resigned, will, to say the least, demand a vigour and energy of piety not often found. Rules of self-examination incomparably plainer, and more easy of application, are given us in the Scriptures, fitted for all persons and for all cases. Why, with those in our possession, we should resort to this, especially when it is nowhere found in the sacred volume, it would be difficult to explain. Yet, if this is not the practical use to be made of this doctrine, it would not be easy to assign to it any use at all.

The resignation of the Scriptures, as I have before observed, is either a cheerful submission to the evils which we actually suffer, or a general, undefinable preparation of mind to suffer such others as God may choose to inflict. In the Bible this spirit is, I believe, never referred to any evils which exist beyond the grave. If this remark be just, as I think it will be found, there can be no benefit in extending the subject farther than it has been extended by revelation. If I mistake not, every good consequence expected from the doctrine which I have opposed, will be derived from the resignation here described; while the mind will be disembarrassed of the very numerous and very serious difficulties which are inseparable from the doctrine in question.

2. Resignation, as here described, is an indispensable duty of mankind.

The government of God, even in this melancholy world, is the result of his perfect wisdom, power, and goodness. Now nothing is more evident, than that the government which flows from such a source must be absolutely right; or, in other words, must be what wisdom and virtue in us would certainly and entirely approve. To be resigned to such a government therefore would be a thing of course, were we perfectly wise and virtuous. But what this character would prompt us to do, it is now our indispensable duty to do.

This, however, is not the only, nor the most affecting, view which we are able to take of the subject. The government of God in this world is a scheme of mercy; the most glorious exhibition which can exist of infinite goodness. Unless our own perverseness prevent, the most untoward, the most afflicting, dispensations, however painful in themselves, are really fitted in the best manner to promote our best interests. 'We know,' says St Paul, 'that all things do work (or, as in the Greek, labour) together for good to them that love God.'

'Good,' says Mr Hervey,

> 'Good, when He gives, supremely good,
> Nor less, when he denies;
> Ev'n crosses from his sov'reign hand
> Are blessings in disguise.'

Surely in such a state of things it must be the natural, the instinctive conduct of piety to acquiesce in dispensations of this nature. Under the afflictions which it demands, and which of course it cannot but involve, we may and must at times smart, as a child under the rod, when administered by the most affectionate parental hand; but, like children influenced by filial piety, we shall receive the chastening with resignation and love.

3. Resignation is also a most profitable duty.

The profit of this spirit is the increase which it always brings, of virtue and happiness. Our pride and passion, by which we are naturally and of choice governed, conduct us only to guilt and suffering. So long as their dominion over us continues, we daily become more sinful and more miserable, as children become, during the continuance of their rebellion against their parents. The first step towards peace, comfort, or hope in this case, is to attain a quiet, submissive spirit. That God will order the things of the world as we wish, ignorant and sinful as we are, cannot be for a moment believed, The only resort which remains for us, therefore, is to be satisfied with what he actually does; and to believe that what he does is wise and good, and if we will permit it, wise and good for us. To be able to say, 'Thy will be done,' says Dr Young, 'will lay the loudest storm;' whether of passion within, or affliction without.

Children, when they have been punished, are often, and if dutiful children, always, more affectionate, and dutiful, and amiable than before. Just such is the character of the children of God, when they exercise evangelical resignation under his chastening hand. Every one of them, like David, finds it 'good for himself that he has been afflicted;' an increase of his comfort; an increase of his virtue and loveliness.

As this disposition regards events not yet come to pass, its effects are of the same desirable nature. For the wisdom and goodness, the fitness and beneficial tendency, of all that is future, the pious mind will rely with steady confidence on the perfect character of God. With this reliance, it will regularly believe that there is good interwoven with all the real as well as apparent evil which, from time to time, may take place. With this habitual disposition in exercise, the resigned man will be quiet and satisfied, or at least supported, when others are borne down; and filled with hope and comfort, when worldly men sink in despair. All that dreadful train of fears, distresses, and hostilities, which, like a host of besiegers, assault the unresigned, and sack their peace, he will have finally put to flight. Safety and serenity have entered the soul, and the Spirit of truth has there found a permanent mansion. Whatever evils still remain in it, his delightful influence gradually removes, as cold, and frost, and snow vanish before the beams of the vernal sun. He will yield God his own place and province, and rejoice, that 'his throne is prepared in the heavens,' and that 'his kingdom is over all.' His own station he will at the same time cheerfully take, with the spirit of a dutiful and faithful subject, or an obedient child; and confide in the divine wisdom for such allotments as are best suited to make him virtuous, useful, and happy. In this manner he will disarm afflictions of their sting, deprive temptations of their danger, and his spiritual enemies of their success, by quietly committing himself and his interests to the disposal of his Maker. In this manner he will become effectually prepared for that glorious and happy world, in which all these evils will have 'passed away;' and be succeeded by a new, divine, and eternal train of enjoyment. In this manner 'the work of righteousness' in his mind 'will be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness, and assurance for ever.'

SERMON XCVI.

THE LAW OF GOD.—THE SECOND GREAT COMMANDMENT.—LOVE TO OUR NEIGHBOUR.

And the second is like; namely, this: Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.—Mark xii. 31.

In several preceding Discourses, I have considered the great duties of love, reverence, and humility towards God, and resignation to his will; and given a summary account of the other duties of piety. I shall now proceed to an examination of the second commandment.

In this precept we are required 'to love our neighbour as ourselves.' In canvassing the duty here enjoined, I shall consider,

I. *Its nature:*

II. *Its extent.*

I. *I shall make a few observations concerning the nature of this duty.*

Before I proceed directly to this subject, it will be proper to remind my audience, that in the Discourse concerning love, considered as an attendant of regeneration, I exhibited it at length as a disinterested disposition; and in this particular view exhibited its nature, so far as is necessary to this system. Nothing farther will be needed under this head, except an explanation of the degree in which we are required to love our neighbour, expressed in the words 'as thyself.'

This phraseology has been very differently understood by different persons. Some have supposed it to contain a direction, that we should love our neighbour with the same kind of love, which is exercised towards ourselves. This plainly cannot be its meaning. The love which we usually and naturally exercise towards ourselves, is selfish and sinful. Such a love as this may be, and often is, exercised towards our children, and other darling connexions; and wherever it exists, is of course, sinful; and cannot, therefore, have been commanded by God. At the same time, it is physically impossible, that we should exercise it towards our fellow creatures at large; the real objects of the affection required in the text; as I shall have occasion to show under the second head. Others have insisted, that we are required to love them in the same manner as ourselves. This cannot be the meaning. For we love ourselves inordinately, unreasonably, without candour or equity; even when the kind of love is really evangelical. Others, still, have supposed, that the command obliges us to love our neighbour in exactly the same degree in which we ought to love ourselves. This interpretation, though nearer the truth than the others, is not, I apprehend, altogether agreeable to the genuine meaning of the text. It has, if I mistake not, been heretofore shown satisfactorily, that we are, in our very nature, capable of understanding, realizing, and feeling, whatever pertains to ourselves more entirely, than the same things, when pertaining to others; that our own concerns are committed to us by God in a peculiar manner; that God has made it in a peculiar manner our duty to 'provide for our own; especially those of our own households;' and that, thus, a regard to ourselves, and those who are ours, is our duty in a peculiar degree. To these things it may be justly added, that we are not bound to love all those, included under the word neighbour, in the same degree. Some of these persons are plainly of much greater importance to mankind, than others; are possessed of greater talents, of higher excellence, and of more usefulness. Whether we make their happiness, or their excellence, the object of our love; in other words, whether we regard them with benevolence, or complacency; we ought plainly to make a difference, and often a wide one, between them; because they obviously, and exceedingly, differ in their characters and circumstances. A great, excellent, and useful man, such as St Paul was, certainly claims a higher degree of love from us, than a person totally inferior to him in these characteristics.

Besides, if this rule of entire equality had been intended in the command, we ought certainly to have been enabled, in the natural sense, to perform this duty. But it is perfectly evident, that no man, however well disposed, can exactly measure, on all occasions, the degree of love, exercised by him towards his neighbour, or towards himself; or determine, in many cases, whether he has, or has not, loved himself and his neighbour in the same degree. It is plain, therefore, that, according to this scheme, we cannot, however well inclined, determine whether we do, or do not, perform our duty. But it is incredible, that God should make this conduct our duty; and yet leave us in the natural sense, wholly unable to perform it.

For these and various other reasons I am of opinion, that the precept in the text requires us to love our neighbour, generally, and indefinitely, as ourselves. The love which we exercise towards him, is ever to be the same in kind, which we ought to exercise towards ourselves; regarding both ourselves and him as members of the intelligent kingdom; as interested, substantially in the same manner, in the divine favour; as in the same manner capable of happiness, moral excellence, and usefulness; of being instruments of glory to God, and of good to our fellow creatures; as being originally interested alike in the death of Christ, and, with the same general probability, heirs of eternal life. This explanation seems to be exactly accordant with the language of the text. *As* does not always denote exact equality. Frequently it indicates equality in a general indefinite sense; and, not unfrequently, a strong resemblance, approximating towards an equality. There is no proof, that it intends an exact equality in the text.

In many cases; for example in most cases of commutative justice, and in many of distributive justice; it is in our power to render to others, exactly, that which we render to ourselves. Here, I apprehend, exactness

becomes the measure of our duty. The love, which I have here described, is evidently disinterested; and would, in our case, supply motives to our own conduct so numerous, and so powerful, as to render selfish affections useless to us. Selfishness, therefore, is a principle of action totally unnecessary to intelligent beings, as such; even for their own benefit.

II. *The love, here required, extends to the whole intelligent creation.*

This position I shall illustrate by the following observations.

1. That it extends to our families, friends, and countrymen, will not be questioned.

2. That it extends to our enemies, and by consequence to all mankind, is decisively taught by our Saviour in a variety of Scriptural passages. 'Ye have heard, that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies; bless them that curse you; do good to them that hate you; and pray for them who despitefully use you, and persecute you: that ye may be the children of your Father, who is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil, and on the good; and sendeth rain on the just, and on the unjust.' Matt. v. 43, &c. 'And again; 'For if ye love them who love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them. But I say unto you, love ye your enemies; and do good, and lend; hoping for nothing again: and your reward shall be great; and ye shall be called the children of the Highest.' Luke vi. 32, 35. The term 'neighbour,' in this precept, is explained by Christ, at the request of a Scribe, in the parable of the good Samaritan. Luke x. 25: and with unrivalled force, and irresistible conviction, is shown to include the worst and bitterest enemies. Concerning this subject the Scriptures have left no room for debate.

At the same time it cannot but be satisfactory and useful, to examine this subject, as it appears in its nature, and is connected with other kindred moral subjects.

It is well known, that the Pharisees held the doctrine, that, while we were bound to love our neighbour, that is, our friends, it was lawful to hate our enemies. It is equally well known, that multitudes in every succeeding age have imbibed the same doctrine; and that in our own age and land, enlightened as we are by the sunshine of the Gospel, there are not wanting multitudes, who adopt the same doctrine; and insist, not only that they may lawfully hate their enemies, but, also, revenge themselves on such as have injured them, with violent and extreme retribution.

On this subject I observe,

1. That the command to love our enemies, is enforced by the example of God.

This is the very argument, used to enforce this precept by our Saviour. 'Love ye your enemies; and do good to them that hate you: and ye shall be called the children of the Highest: for he is kind to the evil and unthankful. Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father, who is in heaven, is merciful.' The example of God is possessed of infinite authority. We see in it the conduct, which infinite perfection dictates, and in which it delights; and learn the rules of action, by which it is pleased to govern itself. All that is thus dictated and done, is supremely right and good. If we wish our own conduct to be right and good; we shall become 'followers of God, as dear children,' in all his imitable conduct, and particularly in that which is so strongly commended to our imitation. Christ also, who has presented to our view in his own life the conduct of God, in such a manner as to be more thoroughly understood and more easily copied by us, has in his prayer for his murderers, while suspended on the cross, enforced the precept in the text with unrivalled energy. Nothing could with greater power, or more commanding loveliness, require us to 'go and do likewise.'

To hate our enemies, is directly opposed to the authority and the glory of these examples. The examples are divinely excellent and lovely: the conduct opposed to them is, of course, altogether vile and hateful. Accordingly, this conduct is exhibited to us, for the purpose of commending the same precept also to our obedience, as the conduct of the worst of men. These love their friends, and hate their enemies; even publicans and sinners do this, and all who do this, and nothing more, bear a moral resemblance to publicans and sinners.

2. If we are bound to love those only who are friends to us, we are under no obligation to love God, any longer than while he is our friend.

If we are not bound to love our enemies whenever God becomes an enemy to us, we are not bound to love him. Of course, those who are finally condemned, are freed from all obligation to love God, because he is their enemy. In refusing to love him, therefore, they are guilty of no sin; but are thus far perfectly innocent, and perfectly excellent; because they do that which is perfectly right. Neither the happiness, nor the excellence, of God furnishes any reason, according to this scheme, why we should regard him either with benevolence or complacency. In the same manner, every person, in the present world, can, by committing the unpardonable sin, release himself from all obligation to love his Maker; because in this manner he renders God his enemy. In the same manner, every person, under a sentence of reprobation, is released from his obligation to love God; and persons of both these characters are thenceforth entirely innocent and unblamable. According to this doctrine also sinners can, and do, continually lessen their obligation to love God, in proportion as they make him more and more angry with them day by day. By advancing, therefore, in a course of opposition and disobedience to God, they advance nearer and nearer to an unblamable life and character.

3. According to this doctrine, good men are not bound, in ordinary cases, to love sinners.

That sinners are, ordinarily, enemies to good men, will not be questioned: that they often are very bitter enemies, cannot be denied. If, then, this doctrine be true; good men are, plainly, not bound to love them, nor, of course, to befriend them; to relieve their distresses; to promote their happiness; nor to seek their salvation.

4. According to this doctrine, sinners are not, ordinarily, bound to love each other.

Sinners are not only enemies to good men, but to each other. In every such case, they are relieved from all obligations to love each other; and, so long as they continue to be enemies, are justified not only in the sight of man, but in the sight of God also, in withholding their love, and the expression of it, from each other.

Let us now, for a moment, attend to the necessary and practical consequences of this doctrine. A moral being, whose moral conduct is such, as to justify us in withholding our love from him, cannot be regarded with indifference; but must of course be hated; and, so far as I can see, may justifiably be hated, because his character is really hateful. But if it be right to hate our enemies, it is undoubtedly right to exhibit our hatred of them in its proper expressions; such as censure, punishment, and hostilities. On this principle, mankind would contend with each other, in their public and private controversies, on the ground that it was right; because it was dictated by conscience, and not merely by passion. He who beheld an enemy, would be justified in hating him; and he who was thus hated, would, on the same ground, be justified in reciprocating the hatred. To express this justifiable hatred in quarrels would be equally accordant with rectitude; and men would fight each other, on a new basis of principle. Revenge would be accounted 'doing God service.' The persecutor, burning with rage against the miserable victims of his cruelty, exulting in his successful ravages of human happiness, and smiling over the tortures of the rack, and the agonies of the flame, would with new confidence say, 'Let the Lord be glorified.' War, instead of being the conflict of pride, avarice, ambition, and wrath, would be changed into a universal crusade of piety: and new Mohammeds would stalk through the world, to execute righteousness by butchery, and plant truth with the sword. Every national contest would become a war of extermination. Every land would be changed, by a professed spirit of righteousness, into a mere field of slaughter; and every age, by the mere dictates of conscience, converted into a period of unmingled and immeasurable woe.

The contrary principle, in good men, wherever they are found, is an extensive source of the peace and comfort actually enjoyed in this unhappy world: and its influence on the consciences, even of wicked men is such, as to effectuate no small quiet and comfort for themselves and others; and to prevent much of the evil, naturally flowing from this pernicious doctrine.

But the one half of the story is not yet told. Had God adopted this doctrine as the rule of his own conduct, what would, long since, have become of mankind? Sinners never love God, but always hate him; and of consequence rebel against his government, violate his law, and oppose his designs. In other words, they are uniformly, and unceasingly, his enemies. Had God, then, been governed by this principle; had he hated his enemies; nay, had he exercised no love, no tenderness, or compassion, for them; he must immediately have exerted his infinite power, to render them only, and eternally, miserable. In this case, no scheme of redemption would ever have been formed for our miserable race by the Infinite Mind. The compassionate and glorious Redeemer, instead of becoming incarnate, instead of living and dying for sinners, would have 'clad himself' only 'with vengeance as a cloak;' and arrayed himself with anger as a robe and a diadem. Instead of ascending the cross, and entering the tomb, he would merely 'have trodden the wine-press alone, and trampled the people in his fury. Their blood would have been sprinkled on his garments, and stained all his raiment. The day of vengeance,' only, would have been 'in his heart; and the year of his redeemed' would have never 'come.'

No 'sun' would now 'rise upon the unjust:' no 'rain descend upon the evil and unthankful.' The word of life would never have been revealed to mankind. The Sabbath, with its serene, peaceful, and cheering beams, would never have dawned upon this melancholy world; nor the sanctuary unfolded its doors, that sinners might enter in, and be saved. The voice of mercy would never have been heard within its hallowed walls. God would never, with infinite tenderness, have called rebels and apostates to faith, repentance, and holiness, in the Lord Jesus Christ; nor proffered pardon, and peace, to the returning penitent.

Heaven would never have opened the gates of life and glory to this ruined world. The 'general assembly of the first-born' would never have been gathered; nor would that divine kingdom, which shall for ever increase in its peace and prosperity, its virtue and glory, ever have begun.

The fairest attribute, the peculiar excellence, of the Godhead, the divine mercy, would neither have been unfolded, nor existed. Angels would never have sung, 'Glory to God in the highest; peace on earth; and good-will towards men.' On the contrary, sin without bounds, and misery without end, would have reigned with an uninterrupted and eternal dominion over all the millions of the race of Adam.

From these considerations it is unanswerably evident, that all mankind are included under the word 'neighbour.'

3. This term, of course, extends to all other intelligent beings, so far as they are capable of being objects of love; or, in other words, so far as they are capable of being happy.

To desire the happiness of beings who cannot be happy, is to exercise our affections in vain. To desire the happiness of those whom God has doomed, for their sins, to everlasting suffering, is to oppose his known, declared will. But even in these extreme cases, it is, I apprehend, our duty to feel a general spirit of benevolence towards the miserable sufferers. God has informed us, that 'he has no pleasure in the death of the wicked.' It is undoubtedly right, and proper, for us to experience the same disposition. This doctrine may be illustrated in the following manner. Were we to receive tidings from God, that these unhappy beings would, at some future period, be restored to holiness and happiness; every being, under the influence of this love, would rejoice with inexpressible joy; and would find, that, instead of indulging enmity towards them, he had ever been ready to exercise a benevolent concern for their welfare.

That virtuous beings, throughout the universe, are proper objects of this love will hardly be disputed. Of these beings, angels only are known to us; and their character, as unfolded in the Scriptures, is a complete proof of this position. To mankind they are related, merely, as intelligent creatures of the same God. Yet they cheerfully become ministering spirits for the benefit of men; inhabitants of a distant world; of the humblest intelligent character; enemies to their Creator; and enemies to themselves. Such an example decides this point without a comment.

4. The love, required in this precept, extends, in its

operations, to all the good offices which we are capable of rendering to others.

The benevolence enjoined by God is, as was formerly observed, an active principle, prompting those whom it controls to exert themselves in all the modes of beneficence which are in their power, and are required by the circumstances of their fellow men. Infinitely different from the cold philanthropy of modern philosophers, which spends itself in thoughts and words, in sighs and tears, its whole tendency is to employ itself in the solid and useful acts of kindness, by which the real good of others is efficaciously promoted. This philanthropy overlooks the objects which are around it, and within its reach; and exhausts itself in pitying sufferers in foreign lands, and distant ages; sufferers, so distant, as to be incapable of receiving relief from any supposable beneficence which it might exercise. These are, indeed, most convenient objects of such a philanthropy. For, as it is impossible to do them good by any acts of kindness which are in our power, we naturally feel ourselves released from the obligation to attempt any such acts; and thus enjoy, with no small self-complacency, the satisfaction of believing, that, although we do no good, we are still very benevolent; and are contented with thinking over the good, which we would do, were the objects of our benevolent wishes within our reach. It is remarkable, that all kindness of this nature is ardent and vivid upon paper, and flourishes thriftily in conversation; but whenever it is summoned to action by the sight of those whom it ought to befriend, it languishes, sickens, and dies. Its seat is only in the imagination; and unfortunately it has no connexion either with the purse, the hand, or the heart. In the same manner, professed hospitality is often struck dumb by the arrival of a guest; and boasted patriotism, at the appearance of a proposed subscription for some beneficial public purpose.

Such is not the love of the gospel. The happiness of others is its original, commanding object; and the promotion of that happiness its employment and delight. The objects for whom, and the manner in which, it is to be employed, are felt to be of no consequence, if good can really be done. The kind of good is, also, a matter of indifference; provided it be real, and as extensive as the nature of the case will admit.

It will be useful to illustrate this subject in a number of particulars, sufficient to exhibit its tendency and extent, in the variety of its operations.

(1.) The love required in this precept, will prevent us from voluntarily injuring others.

'Love worketh no ill to his neighbour; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.' The stress here laid upon this characteristic of love is remarkable. For St Paul declares, that for this reason it is the fulfilling of the law. We are not, indeed, to understand, that this is the only reason; but that it is one very important reason. At the same time we are to remember, that voluntary beings, who do no ill, always, and of course, do good.

From this characteristic of evangelical love we learn, that those who are controlled by it cannot be the authors of falsehood, fraud, slander, sophistry, seduction, pollution, quarrels, oppression, plunder, or war. All these, in whatever degree they exist, are real, and usually are great, injuries to others. These, therefore, are in no sense fruits of love. They may, and do indeed, exist in greater or less degrees, in the minds and lives, of those who are the subjects of it; but it is because their love is partial and imperfect. Were this spirit to become the universal, and the only character of mankind, what a mighty mass of human calamities would vanish from the world!

(2.) Among the positive acts of beneficence, dictated by the love of the gospel, the contribution of our property forms an interesting part. To feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, and to perform other acts generally of the same nature, have by mankind at large been esteemed such eminent and important specimens of this spirit, as to have appropriated to themselves the very name of charity; that is, of love; to the exclusion of other efforts, not less truly benevolent. They are, at the same time, accompanied more obviously than most other communications of beneficence by the appearance of self-denial, and of doing good without reference to a reward.

But although acts of this kind are peculiarly amiable, and peculiarly respected, they are still no more really dictated by evangelical love, than the contribution of our property to the purposes of hospitality, to the support of schools and colleges, the erection of churches, the maintenance of ministers, and the support of government. All these are important means of human happiness; and he who does not cheerfully contribute to them, is either ignorant of their nature and his own duty, or is destitute of evangelical benevolence.

(3.) Love to our neighbour dictates, also, every other office of kindness, which may promote his present welfare.

Under this extensive head are comprehended our instruction of others, our advice, our countenance, our reproof, our sympathy with them in their joys and sorrows; those which are called our civilities, our obligingness of deportment, our defence of their good name, our professional assistance, our peculiar efforts for their relief and comfort, on occasions which peculiarly demand them; and especially, those kind offices which are always needed by the sick and afflicted. The tendency of love, like that of the needle to the pole, is steadily directed to the promotion of happiness, and of course to the relief of distress. The cases in which this object can be obtained, and the modes in which it can be accomplished, are of no consequence in the eye of love. It only asks the questions, how, when, and where, good can be done? When these are satisfactorily answered, it is ever ready to act with vigour and efficacy, to the production of any good; except that it is regularly disposed to devote its labours, especially to that which is especially necessary. As its sole tendency is to promote happiness; it is evident, that it cannot but be ready to act for this end in whatever manner may be in its power. He, therefore, who is willing to do good in some cases, and not in others, will find little reason to believe that he possesses the benevolence of the gospel.

(4.) Love to our neighbour is especially directed to the good of his soul.

As the soul is of more worth than the body; as the interests of eternity are more important than those of time; so the immortal concerns of man demand, proportionally, the good-will and the kind offices of his fellow men. In discharging the duties created by this great subject of benevolence, we are required to instruct, counsel, reprove, rebuke, restrain, encourage, comfort,

support, and invigorate them, so far as it shall be in our power. We are also bound to forgive, cheerfully, their unkindness to us; to bear with their frowardness; to endure patiently their slowness of apprehension or reformation; and to repeat our efforts for their good, as we have opportunity, unto the end. For this purpose we are bound to hope concerning them, so long as hope can be exercised that neither we nor they may be discouraged; and to pray for them without ceasing. All these offices of kindness are the immediate dictates of evangelical love. He, therefore, who does not perform them, in some good measure at least, can lay no claim to the benevolence of the gospel.

REMARKS.

1. From these observations it is evident, that the second great command of the moral law is, as it is expressed in the text, like the first.

It is not only prescribed by the same authority, and possessed of the same obligation, unalterable and eternal; but it enjoins exactly the exercise of the same disposition. The love, required in this command, is exactly the same which is required in the first: a single character, operating now towards God, and now towards our fellow creatures. Equally does it resemble the first in its importance. That regulates all our conduct towards God; this towards other intelligent beings. Each is of infinite importance; each is absolutely indispensable. If either did not exist, or were not obeyed; a total and dreadful chasm would be found in the virtue and happiness of the universe. United, they perfectly provide for both. The duty, prescribed in the first, is undoubtedly first in order; but that prescribed by the last, is no less indispensable to the glory of God, and the good of the intelligent creation.

2. Piety and morality are here shown to be inseparable.

It has, I trust, been satisfactorily evinced, that the love required in the divine law, is a single disposition; indivisible in its nature; diversified, and distinguishable only as exercised toward different objects. When exercised towards God, it is called piety; when exercised towards mankind, it is customarily styled morality. Wherever both objects are known, both are loved of course by every one, in whom this disposition exists. He, therefore, who loves not God, loves not man, and he who does not love man, does not love God.

3. We here see that the religion of the Scriptures is the true and only source of all the duties of life.

On the obedience of the first and great commandment is founded the obedience of the second: and 'on these two hang all the law and the prophets:' the precepts of Christ, and the instructions of the Apostles. Religion commences with love to God, and terminates in love to man. Thus begun, and thus ended, it involves every duty, and produces every action, which is rewardable, praiseworthy, or useful. There is nothing, which ought to be done, which it does not effectuate; there is nothing, which ought not to be done, which it does not prevent. It makes intelligent creatures virtuous and excellent. It makes mankind good parents and children, good husbands and wives, good brothers and sisters, good neighbours and friends, good rulers and subjects; and renders families, neighbourhoods, and states, orderly, peaceful, harmonious, and happy. As it produces the punctual performance of all the duties, so it effectually secures all the rights, of mankind. For rights, in us, are nothing but just claims to the performance of duties by others. Thus the religion of the Scriptures is the true and only source of safety, peace, and prosperity to the world.

SERMON XCVII.

THE LAW OF GOD.—THE SECOND GREAT COMMANDMENT.—THE EFFECTS OF BENEVOLENCE ON PERSONAL HAPPINESS.

I have showed you all things, how that, so labouring, ye ought to support the weak; and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.—Acts xx. 35.

In the preceding Discourse, I considered at some length that love to our neighbour, which is required in the second command of the moral law, I shall now attempt to show, that this disposition is more productive of happiness than any other.

The speech of St Paul, recorded in this chapter, I have long considered as the most perfect example of pathetic eloquence ever uttered by man. The occasion, the theme, the sentiments, the doctrines, the style are all of the most exquisite kind, wholly suited to each other, and calculated to make the deepest impression on those who heard him. The elders of the church of Ephesus, to whom it was addressed, were ministers of the gospel; converts to Christianity made by himself; his own spiritual children, who owed to him, under God, their deliverance from endless sin and misery, and their attainment of endless holiness and happiness. They were endeared to him, as he was to them, by the tenderest of all possible ties; presiding over a church, formed in the capital of one of the principal countries in the world; at a period when heresy, contention, and dissoluteness, were prophetically seen by him to be advancing with hasty strides, to ruin Christianity in that region. This address was, therefore, delivered at a time when all that was dear to him or them was placed in the most imminent hazard of speedy destruction. They were the persons from whom almost all the exertions were to be expected, which might avert this immense evil, and secure the contrary inestimable good; the shepherds, in whose warm affection, care, and faithfulness, lay the whole future safety of the flock. He was the apostle by whom the flock had been gathered into

the fold of Christ, and by whom the shepherds were formed, qualified, and appointed. He had now come for the great purpose of admonishing them of their own duty, and of the danger of the flock committed to their charge. He met them with the tenderness of a parent visiting his children after a long absence. He met them for the last time. He assembled them to hear his last farewell on this side the grave.

To enforce their duty in the strongest manner, he begins his address with reminding them of his manner of life, his piety, faithfulness, zeal, tenderness for them, disinterestedness of conduct, fortitude under the severest sufferings, diligence in preaching the gospel, steady dependence on God, and entire devotion to the great business of the salvation of men. To them, as eye witnesses, he appeals for the truth of his declarations. Them he charges solemnly, before God, to follow his example: warning them of approaching and accumulating evil; and commending them to the protection, and grace, and truth, of God, for their present safety and future reward.

With this extensive, most solemn, and most impressive preparation, he closes his discourse, in a word, with the great truth which he wished to enforce, and the great duty which he wished to enjoin, as the sum and substance of all his instructions, precepts, and example; exhorting them to 'remember the words of the Lord Jesus, which he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.'

In no remains of Demosthenes or Cicero, can be found the same simplicity, address, solemnity, tenderness, and sublimity, united. Paul was a man immensely superior to either of these celebrated orators in excellence of character; and with the aid of Christianity to influence, and inspiration to direct, rose to a height, and enlarged his views to an extent, of which no other man was ever capable. His eloquence, like the poetry of Isaiah, rises beyond every parallel: and the excellence of his disposition seconded in a glorious manner the greatness of his views, the tenderness of his sentiments, and the sublimity of his conceptions. He speaks as if he indeed possessed the tongue of angels; and the things which he utters are such, as angels, without superior aid, would never have been able to conceive.

The words, which he declares to have been spoken by the Saviour, are no where recorded in the gospels, as having been uttered in the manner here specified. They were, however, unquestionably the words of Christ; and not improbably addressed to Paul himself. Be this as it may, they are words of the highest possible import; and may be justly considered as the language of all our Saviour's preaching and of all his conduct. The Spirit by which he was governed, they perfectly describe; the actions which he performed, and the sufferings which he underwent, they perfectly explain. Of all his precepts they are a complete summary; and of his whole character, as a moral being, they are a succinct, but full and glorious exhibition.

The import of them cannot be easily mistaken, unless from choice. To give, is a universal description of communicating good; to receive, an equally extended description of gaining it from others. The former of these two kinds of conduct is pronounced here to be happier or more blessed than the latter. To be blessed, is to receive happiness from God, from our fellow creatures, or from ourselves; and denotes, therefore, all the good, which we do now, or shall hereafter, enjoy. The doctrine of the text is, therefore, that,

It is more desirable to communicate happiness, than to receive it from others.

I am aware that the selfishness, which dwells in every human mind, and clouds every human intellect, as well as biasses every human decision concerning moral subjects, revolts at this doctrine. To admit it, is a plain condemnation of our ruling character, and a judicial sentence of reprobation on all our conduct. In a world of selfish beings, where one universal disposition reigns and ravages; it cannot but be expected by a man, even moderately versed in human nature, that the general suffrage will be given, in favour of the general character. Every man knows, that his own cause is in question; and that his vote is an acquittal, or condemnation of himself. From this interested tribunal an impartial issue cannot be hoped. In a virtuous world, instead of that proverbial, and disgraceful aphorism, that, where you find a man's interest, you will find the man, the nobler and more vindicable sentiment, that we should find the man, where we find his duty, would unquestionably prevail. If the united voice of our race, therefore, should decide against this great evangelical doctrine, the innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect, may be easily expected to give their unqualified decision in its favour. In their happy residence a selfish being would be a prodigy, as well as a monster.

Even in our own world, we may, however, lay hold on facts, which fully evince the doctrine to be possible. Parents are often found preferring the happiness of their children to their own personal and private good, and enjoying more satisfaction in communicating good to them, than in gaining it from the hands of others. Friends have frequently found their chief happiness in promoting the well-being of the objects of their friendship. Patriots have, sometimes at least, cheerfully forgotten all private concerns, and neglected the whole business of gaining personal gratification, for the sake of rendering important services to their beloved country. The apostles, also, with a spirit eminently disinterested and heavenly, cheerfully sacrificed every private consideration for the divine purpose of accomplishing the salvation of their fellow men. Nothing of this nature 'moved them, neither counted they their lives dear unto themselves; so that they might finish their course with joy, and the ministry which they had received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.'

Now, what forbids; what I mean, in the nature of things; that, with an affection as tender and vigorous, as parents feel for their children, and friends for their friends; which patriots have at times felt for their country, and which the apostles of Christ felt for the souls of their fellow men; we should, in a nobler state of existence, escape from the bond of selfishness, and send forth our good-will to every intelligent being whom we know, in such a manner, as to take delight in the happiness of all around us, and to experience our first enjoyment in communicating good, wherever we could find a recipient. That such a disposition would be a desirable one, will not be disputed. Why may it not exist? What is there, which will of necessity, forbid such enlargement, excellency, and dignity, of moral character? Why may not a world be filled with intelligent

beings, devoted to this great and god-like end, and gloriously exhibiting the image and beauty of their Creator? The only answer to these questions, which an opponent can bring, is, that in this guilty, wretched world, the contrary spirit universally prevails. On the same ground, the tenants of a gaol may rationally determine, that the mass of fraud, theft, rape, and murder, for which they are consigned to chains and gibbets, is the true and only character which exists in the palace of sovereignty, the hall of legislation, the household of piety, and the church of God.

Admitting, then, that such a disposition is possible; admitting, that it has, at least in superior worlds, a real existence; admitting still farther, as all who really believe the dictates of the gospel must admit, that it exists in every sincere Christian, even in this world: I proceed to establish the doctrine by observing,

I. *That all the happiness which is enjoyed in the universe, flows originally from the voluntary activity of intelligent beings.*

All happiness is contrived; and is brought into existence by carrying that contrivance into execution. Intelligent beings alone can contrive or execute. From their voluntary agency, therefore, all happiness springs. God, the Great Intelligent, began this wonderful and immense work. Intelligent creatures, endued with the faculties necessary for this purpose, coincide with him, as instruments, in carrying on the vast design. On the part of Him, or them, or both, it is the result of design. If happiness, then, is to exist at all, it must flow from disposition; and plainly from a disposition to do good: this, and a disposition to do evil, being the only active and productive principles in the whole nature of things. A disposition to gain happiness from others, could plainly produce nothing; and were there no other, the universe would be a blank, a desert, in which enjoyment could never be found. The capacity for it would indeed exist; but the means of filling it would be wanting. The channels would open and wind; but the living fountain, with which they were to be supplied, would be dry. The soil would be formed, and the seeds might be sown; but the life-giving influence of the rain and the sunshine would be withholden. Of course, no verdure, flowers, nor fruits, would spring up, to adorn, and enrich, the immense and desolate surface.

As great, therefore, as the difference is between the boundless good which exists, and for ever will exist, in the great kingdom of Jehovah, and an absolute barrenness and dearth throughout this incomprehensible field; so great is the difference between these two dispositions.

II. *Virtue, the supreme excellence and glory of intelligent beings, is merely the love of doing good.*

No attribute of a rational nature is, probably, so much commended, even in this sinful world, as virtue; yet the commendations given of it are, in many instances at least, unmeaning and confused; as if those who extol it had no definite ideas of its nature, and knew not in what its real value consists.

All the worth of virtue, in my own view, lies in this; that it is the original, only voluntary, and universal, source of happiness; partly, as its affections are happy in themselves, and partly, as they are the sources of all other happiness. There is originally, nothing valuable but happiness. The value of virtue consists only in its efficacy to produce happiness. This is its value in the Creator; this its value in the creature. Hence, and hence only, is virtue the ornament, the excellency, and the loveliness, of intelligent beings.

Virtue, as exercised towards the Creator, is, as was shown in a former discourse, summed up in love to him; in benevolence, complacency, and gratitude; good-will to his supreme blessedness, and to the accomplishment of his glorious designs; a delight in his perfect character, which forms and accomplishes the boundless good of his creation; and a thankful reception and acknowledgment, of the effects of his goodness, communicated either to ourselves or to others. All these are affections in the highest degree active; and prompt us to study what we shall render to the Lord for his benefits, and to co-operate with all our powers in the promotion of the designs which he has made known to us. All the good, indeed, which we can do to him, if it may be called by this name, is no other than to please him; by exhibiting always a disposition like his own. With this disposition he is ever delighted; and he has been pleased to inform us, that in his sight it is of great price.

Virtue, as exercised towards our fellow creatures, is the same love directed to them, and perfectly active in promoting their well-being.

In all the forms of justice, faithfulness, truth, kindness, compassion, charity, and forgiveness, in every act of self-denial and self-government, this is still the soul and substance. But virtue is a character, beyond comprehension superior to any other, and in a literal sense infinitely more desirable. It is the only worth, the only excellence, the only beauty, of the mind; the only dignity; the only glory.

To the spirit, which is occupied in gaining good from others, or which aims at enjoyment merely, it is transcendently superior, in numerous particulars.

It is the source of all internal, moral good.

The mind is a world of itself; in which happiness of a high and refined kind can exist: a happiness, without which external good can be of but little value. In the great business of forming happiness, its first concern is with itself. If disorder, tumult, and tempest, reign within, order, peace, and serenity, from without, will find no admission. The first step towards real good is self-approbation. So long as the mind is necessitated to see itself deformed, odious, and contemptible; so long as the conscience reproaches and stings; so long as the affections are inordinate, base, insincere, rebellious, impious, selfish, and guilty; so long as fraud is cherished, truth rejected, sin loved, and duty opposed; it is impossible, that quiet, consolation, or hope, should find a residence there. Self-condemned, self-abhorred, self-despised, it must fly of design, from all conversation with itself; and find its poor and transient pleasure in the forgetfulness of what it is, and in the hurry and bustle of external employments and companions. From the sweet and peaceful fire-side of harmonious and happy affections and purposes; from the household serenity of a satisfied conscience, and of a blameless life, it is forced abroad, to seek, without success, to slake its thirst for happiness in streets and taverns, in routs and riots. Sickly, pained, and languishing, it looks for health and ease in medicines which cannot reach the disease, and turns in vain for relief to sports and sounds, for which it has neither eye nor ear.

But when the love of doing good has once gained dominion over the man, he is become reconciled to his Creator and to all his commands. This ruling disposition, wholly excellent and lovely in itself, is of course seen to be lovely and excellent. The conscience smiles with approbation on all the dictates of the heart. The mind becomes at once assured of its own amiableness and worth; and, surveying the landscape within, beholds it formed of scenes exquisitely beautiful and desirable. The soul, barren and desolate before, is clothed by the influence of the moral sun, and the rain of heaven, with living verdure, and with blossoms and fruits of righteousness. All is pleasant; all is lovely to the eye. No tumult ruffles, no storm agitates. Peace soothes and hushes every disordered affection, and banishes every uneasy purpose; and serenity, like the summer evening, spreads a soft and mild lustre over the cheerful region. Possessed of new and real dignity, and assuming the character of a rational being, the man for the first time enjoys himself; and finds this enjoyment not only new, but noble and expansive; and, while it furnishes perpetually varied and exquisite good, it sweetens and enhances all other good. From his happiness within, the transition to that which he finds without, is easy and instinctive. Of one part of this, himself is the immediate parent. When he surveys the objects, to whom he has communicated happiness by relieving their distresses, or originating their enjoyments; the first thing, which naturally strikes his attention is, that their happiness is the work of his own hands. In the exalted character of a benefactor, a voluntary and virtuous benefactor, he surveys and approves himself; not with pride and self-righteousness, but with humble gratitude to God, for vouchsafing to raise him up to such exaltation and worth, and to make him a willing instrument, in his hand, of the good of his fellow creatures.

In this character, the man, who seeks happiness in gaining good, has no share. A child of sense, a mere animal, his only business has been to taste and to swallow; while nobler and more active beings have been employed in producing the food on which he regales his appetite.

In this character of a common benefactor, the virtuous man is seen, and acknowledged by others, as well as by himself. By all who see him he is approved; and by the wise and good he is beloved. Conscience owns his worth; virtue esteems and loves it; and the public testimony repeats and applauds it. To the world he is considered as a blessing; and his memory survives the grave, fragrant and delightful to succeeding generations.

In the mean time, those who are most unlike him in character, pay an involuntary testimony to his worth. Whenever they seek esteem and commendation, they are obliged to profess his character, and to counterfeit his principles; to pretend to do good, and to seem to love the employment. In this conduct they unwillingly declare, that there is no honour, and no worth even in their view, beside that, of which his character is formed.

In addition to these things, he is daily conscious of the approbation of God; a privilege, a blessing, transcending all other blessings; a good which knows no bounds of degree or duration. The proofs given of his approbation to this character are such, as leave no room for doubt or question. It is, he has declared it to be, his own character. 'God is love.' His law demanded it, as the only article of obedience to himself. 'Love is the fulfilling of the law.' To this character, as formed in the soul through the redemption of Christ, all his promises are made. In consequence of the existence of this character, sin is forgiven; the soul justified; and the man adopted into the divine family, as a child of God, and an heir of eternal life. Of the approbation of God, therefore, he is secure. Think, I beseech you, of the nature of this enjoyment. Think of the character of Him who approves. Think what it is to be approved by infinite wisdom. What a seal of worth; what a source of dignity; what a foundation of honour! How virtuous an ambition may be here gratified; what an immense capacity for happiness may here be filled!

Beyond the grave, his excellence will find a complete reward. There, all around him will be wise and good; and will joyfully feel and acknowledge, will esteem and applaud his worth. Of their esteem and love, the testimonies will be sincere, undisguised, unchanged, and eternal. There he will be acknowledged and welcomed, as one of the virtuous and happy number, who have voluntarily glorified God, and befriended the universe, during their earthly pilgrimage; and who are destined to the same delightful employments, and to the same glorious character for ever. His heavenly Father will also there testify his own divine approbation, in an open, full, and perfect manner; will adorn him with every grace; remove from him every stain; and advance him through successive stages of excellence, which shall know no end.

It is the actual, and probably the necessary, law of intelligent nature, that we love those to whom we do good, more than those who do good to us. Thus God loves his intelligent creatures incomparably more, than they can love him. Thus, the Saviour loved mankind far more intensely, than his most faithful disciples ever loved him. Thus parents regard their children with a strength of affection, unknown in children towards their parents. Thus friends love those, whom they have befriended, more than those who have befriended them. Thus also in other, and probably in all, cases. According to this undeniable scheme of things, he who seeks his happiness in doing good, is bound to his fellow creatures, and to the universe, and will be eternally bound, by far stronger, and tenderer ties, than can otherwise exist. He will contemplate every fellow creature, primarily, as an object of his own beneficence; and, while he feels a parental, a god-like attachment to all, will enjoy a delight in their prosperity, not unjustly styled divine. This glorious disposition will make the happiness of every being his own, as parents make that of their children. Even in this world, he will thus multiply enjoyment, in a manner unknown to all others; and in the world to come will, in a progress for ever increasing and enlarging, find the most pure and exquisite delight springing up in his bosom, wherever he dwells, and wherever he roves. His mind, a bright and polished mirror, will receive the light of the Sun of righteousness, and of all the stars which adorn the heavenly firmament; and will, at the same time, warm and brighten within itself, and return the enlivening beams with undiminished lustre.

III. *To do good is the only and perfect character of the ever blessed Jehovah.*

When God created the universe, it is most evident, that he could have no possible view in this great work, but to glorify himself in doing good to the creatures which he made. Whatever they were, and whatever they possessed, or could ever be or possess, must of course be derived from him alone. From them, therefore, he could receive nothing, but what he had given them. Accordingly, 'he is not worshipped as though he needed any thing; seeing he giveth unto all, life, and breath, and all things.' The whole system of his designs and conduct is a mere system of communicating good; and his whole character, as displayed in it, is exactly summed up by the psalmist in these few words; 'thou art good, and doest good, and thy tender mercies are over all thy works.' The same character was anciently proclaimed by himself to Moses, on Mount Sinai, in that sublime and affecting annunciation; 'the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, slow to anger, and abundant in goodness and truth.' St John has, in a still more comprehensive manner, declared his character in a single word; 'God is love.' This peculiarly divine and glorious character was still more illustriously manifested by the Son of God, in the wonderful work of redemption. Infinitely rich in all good himself, 'for our sakes he became poor, that we through him might become rich;' rich in holiness; rich in the happiness which it produces. We were fallen, condemned, and ruined; were 'poor, and miserable, and blind, and naked,' and in want of all things. To do good to us, to redeem us from sin, and to rescue us from misery, he came to this world; and while he lived, went about doing good unto all men as he had opportunity, and ended his life on the cross, that we might live for ever.

On the third day he arose from the dead, and ascended into heaven. At the right hand of God the Father, while he sits on the throne of the universe, he makes perpetual intercession for the sinful, backsliding creatures whom he left behind, and with infinite benignity carries on the amazing work of redeeming love, in the world of glory. In that world it is his employment and delight 'to feed' all his followers, 'and lead them to fountains of living waters,' to enlighten them with wisdom, to improve them in virtue, to adorn them with strength and beauty, and to dignify them with immortal glory.

All these things have flowed, and will for ever flow, from his own love of doing good. Of them, he could not possibly stand in need. Of the stones of the street, he could raise up children and followers, beyond measure better, wiser, and nobler, than they are, and in numbers incomprehensible. For him they can do nothing; for them he does all things.

But God is infinitely blessed. This superior and unchangeable happiness of Jehovah springs entirely from this glorious disposition. As he can receive nothing, his happiness must lie wholly in the conscious enjoyment of his own excellence, which is formed of this disposition, and in the communication of good to his creatures.

If we would be happy like him, we must be disposed like him; must experience and exercise the same love of doing good; and must find our own supreme enjoyment in this exalted communication. Happiness grows out of the temper of the mind which enjoys. Its native soil is benevolence. When this is the temperature of the soul, it springs up spontaneously, and flourishes, and blossoms, and bears, with a rich and endless luxuriance, and with beauty supreme and transcendent; but when selfishness predominates, like an exotic in a sterile ground and a wintry climate, it withers, fades, and dies.

In the mean time, God loves and blesses those whose disposition and conduct resemble his own. In giving this character to his children, he gives them the first of all blessings; the source of peace, dignity, and enjoyment within, and the means of relishing every pleasure from without. Thus, in the possession of this character, they have, in the scriptural language; and therefore, to them, in other respects, shall be largely given. Their internal excellence and enjoyment shall be perpetually improved, and their external happiness, in the like manner, extended. As the mind becomes more beneficent, more pure, more active in doing good; all the sources of its felicity will multiply around it; its consciousness of being like its Father and Redeemer will expand and refine; virtuous beings will more clearly see, approve, and love, its beauty and worth; and the smiles of infinite complacency will beam upon its character and conduct with inexpressible and transporting glory.

Having thus, as I flatter myself, shown in a clear light the truth of the doctrine contained in the text, I shall now close the discourse with two

REMARKS.

1. This doctrine places in the strongest point of view the superiority of the gospel to every other system of morals.

There are two classes of men, both very numerous, who have employed themselves in forming moral systems for mankind: viz. the ancient heathen philosophers, and modern infidels. It is hardly necessary to observe, that in all modern systems the supreme good, or highest interest of man, and, by consequence, the nature of virtue, and the nature and means of happiness, become, of course, prime objects of inquiry. Nothing can more effectually teach us the insufficiency of the human mind to determine the nature of the supreme good than the declaration of Varro, that the heathen philosophers had embraced, within his knowledge, two hundred and eighty-eight different opinions concerning this important subject. Nor were their sentiments concerning the nature of virtue and the nature and means of happiness, as will be easily supposed, at all more harmonious. Some of them taught, that sensual pleasure is the chief good of man; that it consists in freedom from trouble and pain; and that business and cares do not consist with happiness; and therefore, that a man ought not to marry, because a family will give him trouble; nor engage in public business; nor meddle with the concerns of the public. They also taught, that nothing, which is in itself pleasurable, is an evil; and that when it is evil, it is so, only because it brings more trouble with it than pleasure; that therefore, injustice is not an evil in itself, but is evil merely on account of the trouble which it occasions to its author. Some of them placed their supreme happiness in pride, and personal independence of both gods and men. Apathy, or an absolute want of feeling with respect to our own troubles, and those of our fellow men, was regarded as being essential to this independence. Some of them placed happiness

in abstraction from the world; in study; in contemplation; in quietude of mind; in indolence of body; in seclusion from human society; in wealth, power, fame, superiority of talents, and military glory. Of virtue they appear to have formed no distinct or definite conceptions. In some instances, they spoke of it with propriety and truth; but in others, with such confusion, as to prove, that they were without any correct and satisfactory apprehensions concerning its nature; the several things, which they taught, being utterly inconsistent with each other. Different philosophers placed virtue in the love and pursuit of most of the things mentioned above, and made it consist with injustice, impurity, impiety, fraud, falsehood; the desertion of parents in their old age, unkindness to children, insensibility to the distresses of our fellow creatures, and generally with a dereliction of almost every thing which the Scriptures have declared to be virtuous.

These observations are sufficient to show how infinitely remote these philosophers were from just conceptions concerning this inestimable subject.

Infidels have left this important concern of man, substantially, as they found it. I cannot, at the present time, attempt to repeat their various doctrines. It will be sufficient to observe, at the present time, that Mr Hume, one of the last and ablest of them, has taught us in form, that modesty, humility, repentance of sin, and the forgiveness of injuries, are vices; and that pride, therefore, impudence, resentment, revenge, and obstinacy in sin, are by necessary consequence, virtues. This scheme needs no comment. Virtue, such as this, would lay the world waste, and render him who possessed it a fiend.

From what a glorious height do the Scriptures look down on this grovelling, deformed, self-contradictory, chaos of opinions. How sublime is the scheme which they exhibit concerning this amazing subject! Virtue, they inform us, is the love of doing good: an active principle; the real and whole energy of an intelligent mind, exerted for the exalted purpose of producing happiness. In the exertions of this principle, in the enjoyment which attends it, and in the happiness which it creates, the Scriptures place the supreme good of man, and of every other intelligent being. Here, and here only, is it placed with true wisdom, and immovable certainty. The mind in this manner is happy within, by its self-approbation; and without, by being in the highest degree useful to others, and by receiving from the hand of others all the good which the same usefulness in them can return to itself. Here all the provision, which is either possible or desirable, is made for enjoyment unmingled and complete. The character, the personal character, becomes glorious; the affections delightful; the conduct divine. In a community governed by this principle, every individual, however great or however small, is honourable and lovely, both in his own sight and that of others: every one is useful, also; every one is happy.

2. The great practical inference from this doctrine, is, that doing good is the only proper employment of man.

You, my friends and brethren, were created for this great purpose; not to gain reputation, learning, wealth, knowledge, power, honour, or pleasure; but to do good; not to gain even heaven itself, or immortal life; but to ascend to heaven, and to acquire immortal life, that in that happy world you may employ the immense of duration in an endless diffusion of beneficence, and an endless exercise of piety and praise. Make, then, the end for which God designed your existence and your faculties, the voluntary and proper end of all your wishes, designs, and labours.

With sober and affecting meditation set it before yourselves in form and system, as the purpose for which you were made, endowed, preserved, and blessed hitherto; as the purpose, which is prescribed by the will of God; and as the purpose to which you are, therefore, voluntarily and supremely to devote yourselves. Let each of you say to himself, "I was formed for the great and glorious purpose of doing good. This was the will of my Maker; it is my own supreme interest; it is the supreme interest of my fellow creatures in me. Be this, then, the ultimate end of my thoughts, wishes, and labours; and let nothing hinder me from pursuing it always. While I lawfully seek for reputation, property, learning, eloquence, power, or any other earthly good, I am resolved to seek them, only in subordination to this great purpose; as means, merely, to this end. To form and to execute this resolution, give me grace, wisdom, and strength, O thou Father of all mercies! that I may perform thy holy will, and in some measure resemble thy perfect and glorious character, through Jesus Christ. Amen."

This solemn proposition of the subject to yourselves would, almost of course, give it a distinction and importance in your view, which would induce you to keep it supremely and habitually in sight, and render it a standard, to which all your conduct would be referred for approbation or rejection; a moral scale, by which you would measure every thought and pursuit; a touchstone, by which you would distinguish every species of alloy from the most fine gold. It would, also, direct your aims to a higher mark; and give your efforts a nobler character. Men usually, even good men, rather compound in their affections with conscience and the Scriptures, for a mixture of worldliness and virtue, than insist on observing nothing but the dictates of virtue. They aim at being virtuous; and not at being only, and eminently, virtuous. One reason for this is, they take it for granted, that they shall never cease to sin in the present world, and, therefore, never mistrust either how practicable, or how important it is, that they should vigorously determine to avoid all sin, and practice nothing but virtue. Their designs are divided between their worldly business and religion. These they consider as two separate, and in a degree incoherent, objects: both necessary, but still clashing; when they ought to consider their worldly business merely as one great dictate and duty of religion; one great branch of the virtue which they are to exhibit, and of the good which they are to do. Worldly business is to be done; but it is to be done only as a part of our religion and duty. Even our amusements are always to be regarded in this manner; and are useful and lawful only as parts of our duty, and as means of enabling us better to perform other duties of higher importance. From exact obedience to the great rule 'whether ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God,' there is no exemption.

Were the solemn proposition which I have urged, to be formed, and habitually kept in sight; the character of man would soon be, not sinless indeed, but incompar-

ably more holy, blameless, and undefiled, than we now usually find it. Human virtue would be less clouded; would assume a brighter and more celestial aspect; and would be gilded with a clearer and more genial sunshine.

In whatever sphere of life you are placed, employ all your powers, and all your means, of doing good as diligently and vigorously as you can. Direct your efforts to the well-being of those who are within your reach, and not to the inhabitants of a distant age, or country; of a future generation, or of China or Peru. Neglect not an humble kind office within your power, for a vast and sublime one which you cannot accomplish. The Scriptures require you to feed the hungry, and to clothe the naked; to instruct the ignorant, and reclaim the vicious. Philosophical philanthropy calls for the commiseration of nations, the overthrow of governments, the improvement of the vast society of man, and the exaltation of this wretched world to freedom, science, and happiness. The only objection to your labouring in this magnificent field seems to be, that your labours will be to no purpose. On the scriptural plan, you will at least do something; and your two mites will not be forgotten. Extend your efforts, however, as far as you can extend them, to any effect; to as many and as great objects, as providence places within your reach; and as many ways, as you shall find in your power. Promote, as much as possible, relief, comfort, health, knowledge, virtue, and happiness, both as private and public objects. Promote them by your talents, your property, your influence, your labours, and your example. Let every day, when passing in review before the scrutinizing eye of conscience, present a regular series of beneficence, which will soften the bed of your repose, and rise as a sweet memorial before God.

As objects of your kindness always select the most deserving. The Scriptures have directed you to 'do good unto all men, and especially to those of the household of faith.' To the soundness of this precept common sense bears, also, the fullest attestation. It was reserved for philosophy to discern, that the true and proper scenes of employing benevolence were the galley and the jail; and that its chief aim should be, not to make men good and virtuous, but to prevent thieves, murderers, and traitors, from coming to the dungeon or the gibbet, which they had merited. Let your favourite object be the honest, the industrious, the sober, the virtuous; and both feel and relieve their distresses. Refuse not others; but give to these a universal preference. When you relieve the sufferings of the vicious and infamous, close your beneficence with solemn reproof, and pungent counsel; and remember, if you withdraw them from vice to virtue, you render them a kindness, infinitely greater, than if you elevate them to wealth and honour. In this way you will save a soul from death, and cover a multitude of sins.

With all your resolutions and efforts, you will need, every day, assistance from God. Every day, ask it in humble, fervent prayer. No real blessing ever descends to man, but as an answer to prayer. Particularly this rich and glorious blessing of a life patiently spent in well-doing, cannot be expected unless it be asked for. Three times a-day retire with Daniel to your chambers. God will be there, and will grant you a glorious answer of peace.

To such a life can you want motives? Let me remind you, that it is, and, I flatter myself, it has been proved to be, not only the most honourable, but the only honourable, character; the character which secures the secret approbation of those who do not assume it; and the open esteem, love, and praise, of those who do: that it is the only character, which is truly and eminently happy; which possesses peace within, and enjoyment without; which is found in heaven, and constitutes the happiness of that exalted world: that it is the character of angels, of Christ, and of God; the beauty of the divine kingdom, the glory of Jehovah, and the source of all the good which is enjoyed in immensity and eternity.

It is the only character which will endure. The world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he who doeth the will of God abideth for ever. The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, the wretched inventory of a selfish worldly mind, find all their poor, though boasted, gratifications on this side of the grave. Their miserable possessors riot, and dig, and climb, during their passing day: and then vanish, and are seen no more: where will they next be found?

He, on the contrary, 'who by patient continuance in well-doing hath sought for glory, honour, and immortality,' 'will lie down in the bed of peace, will fall asleep in the Lord Jesus,' and awake with new life, and joy, and glory, beyond the grave. In the great trial, he will be found, and pronounced, to have 'well done,' and to have been a 'good and faithful servant' of his divine Master; and will be directed to 'enter into the joy of his Lord.'

In the great and final day, he will be acquitted, acknowledged, and glorified, before the assembled universe; because, when the least of Christ's brethren was 'an hungered, he gave him meat; when he was thirsty, he gave him drink; when he was a stranger, he took him in; when he was naked, he clothed him; when he was sick, and in prison, he ministered unto him.' Of so high and valuable a nature will he find this beneficence, that it will be received, and rewarded, by Christ, as done to himself. To heaven he will be an acceptable inhabitant; and meet with an open and abundant entrance into that happy world. Glorified saints will there hail him as their brother; angels will welcome him as their companion. There, also, will he find, that he has begun a career of excellence, which will never end. Endued, there, with stronger principles and nobler powers, in a happier field, with more desirable companions, and forming all his plans of beneficence for eternal duration, he will fill up the succession of ages with a glorious and immortal progress of doing good; and become daily a brighter, a more perfect, a more divine ornament and blessing to the virtuous universe.

And now, my friends and brethren, 'I commend you to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up' in this evangelical character, 'and to give you an inheritance among all them that are sanctified.' Amen.

SERMON XCVIII.

THE LAW OF GOD.—THE SECOND GREAT COMMANDMENT.—THE EFFECTS OF BENEVOLENCE ON PUBLIC HAPPINESS.

I have showed you all things, how that, so labouring, ye ought to support the weak; and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.—Acts xx. 35.

In a preceding Discourse, I considered at length the influence of a disposition to do good on the personal happiness of him in whom it exists; and attempted to show, that this disposition is more productive than any other of such happiness. It is now my design to prove, that it possesses a no less superior efficacy in producing public happiness; or the happiness of society in all its various forms.

Of this disposition, commonly styled disinterested benevolence, and denoted in the New Testament by the word αγαπη, rendered in our translation *love* and *charity*, we have an extensive, most accurate, and most beautiful, description in the xiii. chapter of the first epistle to the Corinthians. In this chapter, it is exhibited to be superior to every natural and supernatural endowment, and to every acquisition made by man. It is proved to be the source of all good, natural and moral; or rather the source of all natural, and the substance of all moral, good. It is shown to be the only real excellence of intelligent creatures; the means of their existence, and their continuance, in the kingdom of God; and the only cause of his complacency in their character. Finally, it is declared that this disposition shall endure until all other things, which are admired and esteemed by men, shall be forgotten; and, when they shall have ceased, together with their use and importance, shall brighten and flourish for ever.

Generally, it is declared, if I mistake not, in this chapter, that love, in its various modifications and exercises, is the amount of all those which are commonly called the graces of the Christian spirit; or, as they are often styled, the Christian virtues. Particularly, it is exhibited to us as long-suffering, contentment, modesty, humility, decency, disinterestedness, meekness, charitableness, hatred of iniquity, love to truth, patience, faith, hope, and fortitude. With this, the most extended and the most detailed account of the subject, furnished by the Scriptures, all the other exhibitions, contained in the sacred volume, perfectly agree. In them all, when connected together by the mind, as may without difficulty be perceived, this great truth is abundantly shown: viz. that the love of the Gospel, or the spirit of doing good, is the source of all happiness, public and private; and is productive, intentionally, of no unnecessary evil.

This truth is generally, but forcibly, taught in the text, with regard to society, as well as with regard to individuals. If we remember, that all societies are composed of individuals; we cannot hesitate to admit, that whatever renders them happy must in exactly the same manner and degree, be the source of public happiness. If it is more blessed to give than to receive, if it is more blessed to cherish a spirit of doing good to others, than a disposition to gain it from them, in individual instances; the community, in which this disposition universally reigned, could not fail to enjoy this superior happiness in its fullest extent.

Equally manifest is it, that the same disposition could not be productive of evil. 'Love,' saith St Paul, 'worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.' In other words, this great and glorious characteristic of love, that it is productive of no ill, rendered it an object of such excellence to the view of God, that he framed his law in such a manner, as to require nothing of his intelligent creatures beside this attribute and its proper exercises. We are not indeed to suppose this the only reason, why the divine law was framed in this manner. The good, of which this disposition is the parent, was, as we are abundantly taught in the Scriptures, a commanding reason also, why it was required by the law of God. To secure this good, and prevent in this manner the existence of the evil, which would necessarily result from any other disposition, was, at the same time, supremely glorious to the infinite lawgiver.

It cannot fail of being an interesting employment to a Christian assembly to contemplate the operations of this spirit upon human society. In the progress of such contemplation, so many blessings will rise up to our view, and will be so easily seen to flow necessarily from this disposition; that we cannot fail to feel deeply the degraded, mischievous, miserable nature of that selfishness, which is so directly contrasted to it, and which so generally controls the affections and conduct of man. With scarcely less strength shall we realize, also, the excellence and amiableness of that spirit, from which good so extensively flows; which makes heaven the residence of supreme enjoyment; and which might make even this melancholy world no unworthy resemblance of heaven.

On a theme so extensive as this, and comprehending such a vast multitude of particulars, it would be easy to make many important observations. Those which fall within the compass of my design must, however, be all included within the limits of a single discourse. They will, therefore, be few, and of necessity general.

I. *Evangelical love, or the spirit of communicating happiness, will, of course, induce us to be contented with our own providential allotments.*

'Love,' saith St Paul, 'envieth not. Love seeketh not her own.'

It is easily demonstrated by reason, as well as abundantly declared in the Scriptures, that the infinitely wise and benevolent God orders all things aright. 'Thus saith the Lord, let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: But let him that glorieth glory in this; that he understandeth and knoweth me; that I am the Lord which exercise loving-

kindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth; for in these things I delight, saith the Lord.' With such a government as this, it is evident, all persons ought to be satisfied; for all persons clearly ought to wish, that that which is righteous, wise, and benevolent, should be invariably done. He who is dissatisfied, therefore, cannot, without voluntary blindness, fail to discern, that in this temper he is guilty of sin. At the same time, the good man is taught, and will from interest and duty alike remember, that 'all things work together for good to them that love God;' and, therefore, for good to him, as being one of this happy number. Such a man, with this conviction, must be contented of course. His understanding, prepared always to admit the dictates of truth, and his heart, always ready to welcome them, demand, and generate, a contented spirit. In such a man discontentment with his own situation, and envy on account of the superior enjoyments of others, can find no place, unless when the 'law in the members, warring against the law of the mind, brings him into captivity.' Were his love, therefore, perfect; his contentment would be also perfect.

The importance of this disposition to the happiness of man, may be advantageously illustrated by calling up to our view the immense evils which spring from discontentment. How vast is their number; how terrible their nature! What hatred does it generate towards our fellow creatures; what wrath; what contention; what revenge! How many slanders does it produce; how many frauds! What a multitude of perjuries, litigations, murders, and wars! What a mass of guilt does it create! What an accumulation of misery! Were the great men of this world, alone, to be satisfied with the wealth, splendour, and power, allotted to them; were they to thirst no more for the enjoyments bestowed on their rivals; the whole face of this earthly system would in a great measure be changed. Oppression would break his iron rod; and war would cease to ravage the habitations of men.

In producing these evils, it is impossible for a mind, governed by the spirit of doing good, to take any share. Such a mind must of necessity rejoice in the righteous and benevolent dispensations of God. All these it would regard, as springing from his perfect character, and as accomplishing his perfect designs. Its own allotments, therefore, it would consider at the best possible, upon the whole, for the time, and the circumstances; because they were determined by this wisdom and goodness. If a man, possessed of such a mind, were afflicted; he would 'not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when he was rebuked of him;' but he would remember, that 'whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth;' 'and that he 'scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.' In this character of a son, with filial affection and reverence to 'the Father of his spirit,' while thus employed in the eminently parental office of chastening him for his good, he would sustain his afflictions with patience, fortitude, and submission; would endeavour to derive, and would certainly derive, from them 'the peaceable fruits of righteousness.' His mind would become more and more serene, patient, and enduring; more sensible of his dependence on God; more resigned to his disposal; and more intimately possessed of 'fellowship with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ.' Every day, and by means of every affliction, he would become more weaned from the world, more spiritually-minded, less dependent for his happiness on outward objects, and more effectually sustained by the peace and joy of the gospel. In such a mind, passion would daily lose its inordinate and mischievous dominion; and reason, conscience, and piety, daily increase theirs. The views and feelings which assimilate him to an animal, would gradually lessen; and those which constitute him a rational being, continually increase. The distinction in the scale of moral existence, for which he was originally formed, he would gradually acquire; and in the end would find himself an inhabitant of heaven fitted by a wholesome discipline for an immediate participation of its pure and unfading enjoyments.

In prosperity, the same man would acknowledge God as the giver of all his blessings. The enjoyments allotted to him, he would regard not as acquired from his Maker by bargain and sale, purchased by works which himself had wrought, and earned by his own industry and ingenuity; but as gifts, descending from the Author of all good, as sovereign and merciful communications from the eternal Benefactor. To this Benefactor all his affections, prayers, and praises would ascend: and the character which this glorious Being would sustain in the view of such a mind, would be the proper and transcendent character of JEHOVAH.

It is the lot of all men to be more or less injured by their fellow men. In the sufferance of these injuries, most men become impatient, angry, and revengeful; and usually look no farther, while smarting under the infliction, than to the hand from which it is immediately derived. But such a mind will remember, that the injuries done by men, are also providential chastisements from God, directed by the highest wisdom, and accomplishing the most desirable purposes. However untoward, therefore, however painful, his sufferings may seem for a season; he will consider them, chiefly, as necessary parts of a perfect providence, and as real, though mysterious means, of accomplishing perfect good. In this view, they will appear comparatively light; and will be sustained with equanimity, and even with comfort. The promises of the Gospel, ever present, and ever fresh, will steadily furnish additional and abundant consolation. In these, he will find his own good secured beyond defeat; and will both hope, and quietly wait for, the salvation of God. Fashioned and tempered in this manner into submission, patience, and meekness, the work of righteousness will in such a mind, be peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness, and assurance for ever.

In this vast particular, therefore, extending to so many objects, spreading its influence over all the days and hours of life, man would gain, beyond measure, by assuming this divine disposition. The spirit of doing good would be, in his bosom, a well of water, flowing out unto everlasting life. The delightful nature of benevolent affections, the animating enjoyment inherent in beneficence, would gild with sunshine the gloom of affliction, and add new beauty and splendour to seasons of prosperity. Towards God, it would be exercised in the whole course of diversified obedience; particularly in complacency and gratitude, reverence and resignation: the proper efforts of a good mind to render to him according to his benefits. Towards man, it would operate in the production of happiness and the relief of distress; the employment of God himself, and peculiarly the source of his own infinite happiness. Thus would

it unceasingly do good, and gain good: and, while he who was the subject of it diffused enjoyment through his own bosom, he would extend it also to all around him.

It has doubtless been observed, that I have illustrated this subject, hitherto, by applying it to the circumstances of an individual. It is hardly necessary to remark, that what is thus true of one man must be equally true of all others, who are governed by the same spirit. This contentment, therefore, this serenity, this exquisite enjoyment would, if such a disposition universally prevailed, be felt by a whole community, and diffused over the world. Every man would thus act, thus gain, thus enjoy. What a mass of happiness would in this manner be accumulated; and how would the darkness of this melancholy world be changed into a glorious resemblance of everlasting day!

II. *The same spirit would do justice to all men.*

Love rejoiceth not in iniquity.

Justice is either commutative, or distributive. Commutative justice is rendering an equivalent for what we receive, whether of property or kind offices. Distributive justice is the rendering of such rewards as are due to those who obey law, and government, and of such punishments as are due to those who disobey and rebel. In both senses, justice is the mere measure of benevolence. What a change would be wrought in this world by an exact fulfilment of commutative justice only! With what astonishment should we see every debt paid, at the time, and in the manner, in which it was due! every promise faithfully fulfilled! every loan of money, utensils, or other property, returned without injury or delay! every commodity sold according to its real value, and that value truly declared! every character carefully and justly defended, and none unjustly attacked! every kindness gratefully felt, and exactly requited! How great a part of human corruptions would cease! How great a part of the customary litigations would be swept away! What a multitude of prosecutions would vanish! What a host of hard bargains, cheats, and jockeys, would be driven from among men! How soon would the judge find himself enjoying a comparative sinecure, and the jail crumble into ruin for want of inhabitants!

But this mighty change would be still increased by the reign of distributive justice. In its laws, the legislature would regard only the good of its subjects. In his decisions, the judge, and in his administrations, the executive magistrate, would be governed by the same great and general interest. Of course, laws would be usefully formed and equitably administered; and the public peace, approbation, and prosperity, would be uniformly secured.

To the government, the people at large would willingly render the same justice, as being influenced by the same principle. Justice, in an important sense, is due from the people to their rulers; and can be either rendered, or denied. When rendered, much good, and when denied, much evil, is always done to the community. If the benevolence of the gospel governed men of all classes, this justice would be rendered cheerfully and universally. Strong in the public confidence, rulers would be at full liberty to devise and to pursue every useful measure, without danger of slander or opposition, without faction or tumult. The community would be a great and happy family, peaceful, harmonious, and safe; and, at the head of it, magistrates would be the common parents, actuated by no design, and busied in no employment, but to render themselves as useful, and the people as happy, as was in their power. How different such a nation from those that have hitherto existed in this tumultuous world!

III. *The same spirit would invariably speak truth.*

'Love,' saith St Paul, 'rejoiceth in the truth.'

Truth is the basis of society, in all worlds where society exists. Angels could not be social without it. Thieves and robbers support their dreadful social state by speaking it to each other. To be social beings at all, we must exercise confidence. But we cannot confide, where truth is not spoken. Lying, in all its forms, is the gangrene of society, and corrupts the mass just so far as it spreads. The sense of falsehood is a sense of danger; a sense of danger is distress. Suspicion, jealousy, hatred, malignant designs, and the dreadful execution of those designs, grow, successively, out of deception. Under the united dominion of these evils, the mind in which they exist becomes gradually a seat of woe, a haunt of dreadful passions and dreadful expectations. In the progress of intellectual nature a world of beings thus situated, would be a collection of fiends, and convert their residence into a hell. On this globe, where much truth is spoken, and where falsehood is only mixed; where the spirit, and the art of deceiving are imperfect, a great part of our sufferings, as well as of our sins, is formed by violations of truth.

What a mighty and glorious change would at once be accomplished in the circumstances of mankind, were truth to become their only and universal language! Were no false facts hereafter to be declared, no false arguments to be alleged, no false doctrines to be taught, no false pretensions to be made, no false friendships to be professed, and no false colourings to be employed, to discourage and deform truth; what a host of villains would vanish! What a multitude of impositions, treacheries, and distresses, would fade out of the picture of human woe!

To realize the nature and extent of this mighty change, cast your eyes, for a moment, over the face of this melancholy world. Behold all the interests of man exposed and hazarded, his peace invaded, his purposes frustrated, his business ruined, and his hopes blasted by the various votaries of falsehood; his private affairs molested by lying servants, his friendship abused by treacherous friends, his good name dishonoured by slanderous neighbours, his learning and science perverted by philosophists, his rights and privileges wrested from him by fraudulent governments, and his salvation prevented by religious impostors. How immense is the abuse which he suffers, how comprehensive, how minute; spreading everywhere, and reaching to every thing, which is important, which is dear, to the heart! Thieves and robbers conceal and accomplish their malignant invasions of property and happiness under the darkness of midnight; and fly with terror and haste the detecting eye of day. The wretches, of whom I have spoken, shroud themselves in moral darkness, and equally dread the exploring beams of truth. Were this glorious light of the universe to burst the clouds, which envelope our darkened world, and exhibit in clear and distinct view all things as they are; what a host of

enemies, what a crowd of spectres, would fly from the dreadful detection! See the tale-bearer, hurrying from the indignant hisses of those whom he has pierced into the innermost parts of the soul! The perjurer shrinks from the abhorrence of those sacred tribunals of justice, which his enormous guilt has dishonoured and defiled; and trembles at the expected infliction of that divine wrath, which he has impiously invoked. The liar sneaks from the haunts of man; while infamy pursues his flight with her hiss of contempt, and her whip of scorpions. The sophist immures himself in his cell, amid the foul animals who are its proper inhabitants; while justice inscribes over the entrance, "Here is buried the betrayer of the souls of men." The seducer, loathed, execrated, torn by a phrenzied conscience, and wrung with remorse and agony, hurries out of sight, to find his last refuge among his kindred fiends. Behind them, the whole train of deceivers, appalled and withered, vanish from the searching beams; and sink down to the regions of darkness and despair. The earthly creation, which has groaned and travailed in pain, together, until now, under the vast miseries which these enemies of God and men have wrought, wherever they have roamed, is lightened of the insupportable burden. The gloom disappears, and universal nature smiles to behold its redemption drawing nigh. Tribunals of justice are purified at once. Individuals, families, and neighbourhoods, feel their wounds close, their breaches vanish, and their peace return. Religion rides in triumph through the world; and God is pleased to 'dwell anew among men.'

Think not, that I am too ardent in this representation. Falsehood is the first enemy of intelligent beings. The world was ruined, the human race were murdered at first by a lie. 'The Father of lies,' is the appropriate title of the worst of all beings; a title of supreme and eternal infamy, branded by the Almighty hand. All the deceivers, who have followed in his train, partake of his character; are slaves, self-sold to toil in his foul and malignant drudgery, and heirs of his undying infamy and woe. 'There shall in no wise enter into the city any thing that defileth, or that loveth or maketh a lie;' but, on the contrary, 'all liars shall have their part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone.'

Truth, on the other hand, is the foundation on which rests the moral universe; the stability of the divine kingdom; the light of heaven; the glory of Jehovah. 'The Truth,' is one of the peculiar names of Him, 'who is the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person.' Truth is the great bond which unites angels to each other, and to their God; the chain which binds together the intelligent system; preserving all the parts in harmony and beauty, and arranging the worlds of which it is composed, around the great centre of light, happiness, and glory.

IV. *From the same disposition would spring, universally, those kind offices, which are its immediate offspring, and which constitute the peculiar amiableness of intelligent beings.*

'Love suffereth long and is kind.'

The interchanges of conduct between such beings, are in their nature and variety endless. From inferiors to superiors, they assume the names of our veneration, homage, respect, reverence, submission, and obedience; together with many others of the same general nature. From superiors to inferiors, they are in the like manner varied through all the shades of authority, government, precept, regard, countenance, favour, compassion, forgiveness, instruction, advice, reproof, and a great variety of similar offices. Between equals, they are performed in the more familiar, but not less necessary, acts of friendship, esteem, civility, giving, lending, aiding, and a multitude of others. These, united, constitute a vast proportion of all that excellence of which intelligent beings are capable; and of all that duty for which they are designed by their Creator. To enjoyment, kindness is no less necessary, than truth and justice. Truth begins, justice regulates, and kindness finishes, rational happiness. Truth is the basis, justice the measure, and kindness the substance. All are alike, and absolutely indispensable; and of all benevolence, is the soul, the essence, the amount.

A world of kindness is a copy of heaven. A world without kindness is an image of hell. Eden originally derived its beauty and glory from the kind and amiable character of its inhabitants; and the verdure, the bloom, the splendour of all its ornaments, were merely a faint resemblance of the beauty of mind, the moral life and loveliness, which glowed in our first parents. Had they preserved this character, the world would still have continued to flourish with immortal life and beauty; and the character itself would have furnished one natural and desirable ingredient in the happiness of beings like them, who, by the nature of their disposition, were capable of being happy.

Were the same character to revive in the present inhabitants of the world now in ruins around us, the bloom and beauty of paradise would spontaneously return. Three-fourths of the miseries of man are made by himself; and of these a vast proportion is formed by his unkindness. Were the malignant character banished; were sweetness and tenderness of disposition to return to the human breast, and benevolence once more to regulate human conduct; a lustre and loveliness, hitherto unknown, would be spread over the inanimate creation; and God would supply to our enjoyment all which would then be lacking.

In the exercise of this disposition, parents would be truly kind to their children, and would labour, not to gratify their pride, avarice, and sensuality, but to do them real and universal good, to form their minds to virtue and happiness, to obedience and endless life, to excellence and loveliness in the sight of God. In the path of this true wisdom they would walk before; and their offspring, following cheerfully after them, would find it to be only 'pleasantness and peace.' Brothers and sisters, under this happy influence, would become brothers and sisters indeed. In their hearts, and on their tongues, would dwell the law of kindness to each other, and of piety to their parents. Every son would make a glad father; no daughter would be a heaviness to her mother. Every returning day would assume the peace and serenity of the sabbath; and every house would be converted into a little heaven.

From the house, this expansive disposition would enlarge the circuit of its benefactions, so as to comprehend the neighbourhood. Happy within, every family would delight to extend its happiness to all without, who are near enough to know and to share its kind offices. The beams of charity would shine from one

habitation to another; and every hamlet and village would be formed into a constellation of beauty and splendour. Peace, the sister of Love; and Joy, the third in that delightful family, would be constant visitants at every fire-side; and spread their smiles and their influence over every collection of human dwellings.

To the poor, the wanderer, and the stranger, every door would be open, to invite them in; every heart would welcome their entrance; and every hand, relieve their wants and distresses. The rich would be rich, only to bless; and the poor would be poor, only to be blessed. The great would employ their 'ten talents' in gaining more; and the small, their 'one talent' in the same honourable and profitable exchange. Kings and rulers would be, indeed, what they have been styled, but in many instances, without a claim to the character, 'the fathers of their country.' The 'iron rod of oppression' would be finally broken and cast away; and the golden sceptre of love, and peace, and charity, would be extended for the encouragement and relief of all who approached. Bribery, intrigue, caballing, and the whole train of public corruptors, would be hissed out of the habitations of men; and the courts of rulers become, not the scenes of guilt and mischief, but the residence of honour, dignity, and evangelical example.

Nor would this great bond of perfectness merely unite the members of a single community with each other; but, extending its power, like the attraction of the sun, would join all nations in one common union of peace and good-will. No more would the trumpet summon to arms; no more would the beacon kindle its fires, to spread the alarm of invasion; no more would the instruments of death be furbished against the day of battle. 'The sword' would be literally 'beaten into a ploughshare, and the spear into a pruning hook; nation would no more lift up sword against nation; nor kingdom against kingdom; neither would they learn war any more.' The human wolf, forgetting all his native ferocity, would cease to thirst for the blood of the lamb; and cruelty, slaughter, and desolation, to lay waste the miserable habitations of men. 'The walls,' within and without which violence resounded and ravaged, 'would be called Salvation;' and 'the gates,' before which destruction frowned at the head of an invading host, 'would be surnamed Praise.'

V. *The same disposition would manifest itself in universal and unceasing piety to God.*

The infinite mind is the infinite benefactor of the universe. As the source and centre of all existence; as the great benefactor of all beings; as the subject of divine blessedness and excellence; God would be regarded by such a disposition with supreme benevolence and complacency. Piety is nothing but this disposition directed to this great and glorious Being. The love, which is the fulfilling of the second command of the moral law, is also perfect obedience to the first, which is like unto the second. Without love, fear becomes a base and pernicious passion, totally destitute of amiableness, and excellency; united with love, or in a mind, where love reigns, it is changed into the sublime character of reverence; the proper and filial regard to God from his children. Dependence without love, is nothing. Without love, confidence cannot exist. Hope and joy equally spring from it. Gratitude is but one manner in which it is exercised.

He who loves his neighbour on any account, with the benevolence of the gospel, will and must, of course, love his Creator. If he exercises evangelical confidence at all, he cannot but exercise it supremely in God. If he be grateful to a human benefactor, he must be, beyond measure, more grateful to the divine Benefactor. If he love moral excellence at all, he must, more than in all other excellence, delight in that which glows with unceasing glory in the eternal mind.

In God, therefore, this desirable disposition would find the highest object of all its attachments, the supreme end of all its conduct. To him the devotion of such a spirit would be complete, unceasing, and endless. To please, obey, and glorify him would be the instinctive and the commanding aim of the man in whom it was found; and, in the case supposed, in all men. All men would be changed into children of God. The earth would become one universal temple, from which prayer, and praise, and faith, and love, would ascend before the throne of God and the Lamb, every morning and every evening. Time, hitherto a period of sense and sin, of impiety, and rebellion, would be converted into a universal sabbath of peace and worship. 'Holiness to the Lord' would be written on all the pursuits and employments of mankind. 'Zion, the city of our God,' would extend its walls from the rising to the setting sun; and comprehend all the great family of Adam within its circuit; while on its gates would be inscribed in immortal characters, Jehovah is here.

Let me now ask, whether the love of the gospel, the spirit of doing good, is not in the view of all who hear me, a disposition more desirable than the present disposition of man? Think what the world now is; and what, since the apostasy, it ever has been. Call to mind the private wretchedness, guilt, and debasement, which, within and without you, deform the human character, and destroy human happiness. Call to mind the public sins, which have blackened the world from the beginning; and the public miseries, which have rung with groans and shrieks, throughout the whole reign of time, and from one end of heaven to the other. What a vast proportion of these evils has man created for himself, and his fellow creatures! How small a portion has God created! and how mild and proper a punishment has this been for the authors of the rest! Of this complication of guilt and woe, every man is, in some degree, the subject and the author. All men are daily employed in complaining of others; and none, almost, in reforming themselves. Were each individual to begin the task of withdrawing from the common mass, the evils which he occasions, the work would be easily done. Those produced by men would be annihilated, and those occasioned by God would cease; because, where there were no transgressions, God would not exercise his strange work of punishment.

How mighty would be the change! Benevolence would take place of malignity, friendship of contention, peace of war, truth of falsehood, and happiness of misery. This dreary world would become a paradise. The brutal, deformed character of man, would give place to the holiness and dignity of angels, and all the perplexed, melancholy, and distressing scene of time would assume the order, beauty, and glory, of the celestial system.

With the nature and effects of the present human character, the selfishness of man, so fondly, proudly, and obstinately cherished by every human breast, you

are all, at least in some degree, acquainted. It is scarcely necessary that I should recall to your minds the universal corruption of the antediluvian world; and the violence and pollution which rendered this earth too impure and deformed, to be any longer seen by the perfect eye of Jehovah. It is scarcely necessary to remind you of the premature apostasy which followed the deluge; the brutal idolatry, which, like a cloud from the bottomless pit, darkened this great globe to the four ends of heaven; the putrid infection which tainted Sodom and Gomorrah; the rank and rotten growth of sin which poisoned and destroyed the nations of Canaan; the deplorable defections of Israel and Judah; the bloody oppressions of Assyria, Babylon, and Persia; the monstrous ambition and wild ravages of Alexander; the base treacheries, and deformed cruelties of his followers; the iron-handed plunder, butchery, and devastation of Rome; the terrible ravages of Mohammed and his disciples; or the fearful waste of man by Alaric, Attila, and their barbarous companions in slaughter. As little necessity is there to detail the wars and ruins of modern Europe; the massacres of the Romish hierarchy, the tortures of the Inquisition, the absolutions and indulgences issued from the Vatican, to pardon sin, and to sanction rebellion against God. Your minds must be familiarized to the lamentable degradation, the amazing miseries, the death-like slavery of the nations, which fill the continent of Africa. You cannot be unacquainted with the swinish brutism of the Chinese; the more brutal deformity, the tiger-like thirst for blood, of the Hindoos, and of the strangers who have successively invaded Hindostan; the fell and fiend-like cruelty that has made modern Persia a desert; and the stupid but furious superstition, and the tainted impurity of Turkey. To these monstrous corruptions, these wonderful sins of nations claiming, generally, the name of civilized, add the crimes of the savage world; and fasten your eyes for a moment on the wolfish rage, which reigns and riots in the human animals, prowling, regularly, for blood and havoc around the deserts of America and Asia; and you will be presented with an imperfect, but for my purpose a sufficient, exemplification of the spirit which rules the heart of man, and actuates the vast family of Adam.

But this spirit is unnecessary to man. The disposition which I have described, might just as easily inform the mind, and control the conduct. We might as easily be benevolent, as selfish; virtuous as sinful. No new faculties are necessary; and no change is required, but of the disposition. How superior is the disposition here illustrated, to that whose effects have been so uniformly dreadful! Hitherto I have used the language of supposition only; and have declared, that, if such were the character of our race, such also would be the state of this unhappy world. Now I inform you that such, one day, will be the true character and state of man.

The period will one day arrive; the period is now on the wing; the day will certainly dawn: the morning-star is, perhaps, even now ascending in the east, of that day in which Christ will return and reign on the earth. I neither intend nor believe, he will appear in person, until the great and final day, which the Scriptures emphatically call 'his second coming:' for 'the heavens must receive him until the times of the restitution of all things.' But he will appear in his providence, and by his Spirit, to renew the face of the earth. 'A new heart and a right spirit will he create within them. His law he will write in their hearts; and his fear will he put in their minds; and their sins, and their iniquities, will he remember no more.' This new heart, this right spirit, will be no other than the disposition which has been here considered; the very obedience of the law, which will be thus written; the new creation, which is thus promised.

By the implantation of this holy character in the soul, a change will be accomplished, which is exhibited in the Scriptures in terms of hyperbolical and singular sublimity. In their present state of apostasy, mankind are considered in this sacred volume, as being all buried in a death-like sleep. From this benumbing lethargy, hopeless and endless, unless removed by Almighty power, they are represented as roused anew to consciousness, to feeling, and to action, by the awakening voice of God. In the present state, they are declared to be madmen; groping in the gloom, wantoning in the excesses, and venting the rage, of bedlam. In the new one, they are exhibited as restored to reason, to sobriety, to intellectual dignity and usefulness, and as introduced again to the society, converse, and esteem, of rational beings. Originally, they are prisoners to sin and Satan, the victims of turpitude, and the sport of fiends; yet they are prisoners of hope. In their renovation, they have heard 'liberty proclaimed to the captive, and the opening of the prison doors to them that are bound;' and at the sound of these glad tidings, they have shaken off their chains, and escaped from their dungeon into 'the glorious liberty of the sons of God.' In their present state they are pronounced to be dead, and fallen together in one great valley of the shadow of death, the appointed and immense receptacle of departed men, where their bones are dispersed over the waste; dried, whitened, and returning to their original dust. A voice from heaven, resounding through the regions of this immense catacomb, commands the scattered fragments to assemble from the four corners of heaven; to re-unite in their proper places; and to constitute anew the forms of men. A noise, a shaking, a rustling, is heard over the vast Golgotha; a general commotion begins; and, moved by an instinctive power, bone seeks its kindred bone; the sinews and flesh spontaneously arise, and cover the naked form; and the spirit of life breathes with one divine and universal energy on the unnumbered multitude. Inspired thus with breath and life, the great host of mankind instinctively rise, and stand on their feet, and live again with immortal life. The great world of death is filled with animated beings; and throughout its amazing regions, those who were dead are alive again, and those who were lost to the creation, are found.

This resurrection is no other than a resurrection to spiritual life; no other than an assumption of this new and heavenly character. This character, this disposition, will constitute the sum and the glory, of the Millennial state, and the foundation of all its blessings. When the heavens shall drop down dew from above, the skies pour down righteousness, and the earth open, and bring forth salvation; all the external good, all the splendour and distinction of that happy period, will follow as things of course; as consequences, which, in the divine system, virtue draws in its train. 'The Lord of hosts will, therefore, make for all nations, a feast of fa'

things, a feast of wines on the lees well refined. The Lord of hosts will swallow up death in victory; and will wipe away the tears from all faces; and will take away the reproach of his people from all the earth. He will lay the stones of Zion with fair colours, and her foundations with sapphires; will make her windows of agates, her gates of carbuncles, and all her borders of pleasant stones. And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness; and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.'

SERMON XCIX.

THE LAW OF GOD.—THE SECOND GREAT COMMANDMENT.—UTILITY THE FOUNDATION OF VIRTUE.

I have showed you all things, how that, so labouring, ye ought to support the weak; and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.—Acts xx. 35.

In my two last Discourses, I endeavoured to show by a variety of arguments, that a disposition voluntarily employed in doing good, is productive of more personal and public happiness, than any other can be. In those discourses, and in several preceding ones, it has, if I mistake not, been sufficiently proved, that the same disposition in the Creator and his intelligent creatures is the source, not only of more happiness to the creation at large, than any other, but of all the happiness which has existed, or will ever exist.

Virtue, or moral excellence, is an object of such high import, as to have engaged, in every enlightened country and period, the deepest attention of mankind. It has, of course, been the subject of the most laborious investigations, and of very numerous discussions. Inquisitive men have asked, with no small anxiety, 'What is virtue? What is its nature? What is its excellence? and, what is the foundation on which this excellence rests?' To these questions, widely different and directly opposite answers have been given. In modern times, and in this, as well as other countries, much debate has existed concerning the foundation of virtue. It has been said to be founded in the nature of things; in the reason of things; in the fitness of things; in the will of God; and in utility. My intention in this Discourse is to examine the nature of this subject.

The phrase, the foundation of virtue, has been very differently understood by different writers. Indeed, the word foundation, in this case seems to be a defective one, as being ambiguous; and therefore exposed to different interpretations. When virtue is said to be founded in the will of God, or in utility, some writers appear to intend by this phraseology, that the will of God, or utility, is the rule, measure, or directory of virtuous conduct. Others evidently intend, that one or the other of these things is what constitutes its virtue; makes it valuable, excellent, lovely, praiseworthy, and rewardable. It is, therefore, absolutely necessary for me to observe, antecedently to entering on this discussion, that I use the phrase in the sense last mentioned; and intend, by the foundation of virtue, that which constitutes its value and excellence. It is necessary also to premise farther, that by the word utility, I mean a tendency to produce happiness.

Having premised these things, I shall endeavour, in the following Discourse, to support this doctrine, that virtue is founded in utility.

The text is a general and indirect declaration of this doctrine. The word 'blessed,' is sometimes used to denote a state happy in itself, and sometimes a state made happy or blessed by God. 'To give,' in the sense of the text, is voluntarily to communicate happiness; or, in other words, to be voluntarily useful. As we are in fact made happy by God, whenever we are happy, it is evident that those moral beings who are most happy, being made so by him, as a reward of their character and conduct, and not merely by the nature of that character and conduct, are most approved by him. That which is most approved by God, is in itself most excellent. But the text informs us, that voluntary usefulness is most approved by God, because it is peculiarly blessed by him; and is therefore the highest excellence. A man may be virtuous in receiving good at the hands of his fellow creatures; but his virtue will consist only in the disposition with which he receives it; his gratitude, his desire to glorify God, and his wishes to requite, whenever it shall be in his power, his created benefactors. This is being useful in the only way which the situation here supposed allows; and the only thing which is virtuous or excellent in the mere state of receiving good.

To give or communicate good, is a nobler and more excellent state of being than that of receiving good can be, because the giver is voluntarily the originator of happiness. In this conduct he resembles God himself, the giver of all good, in that characteristic which is the peculiar excellence and glory of his nature. Accordingly, God loves, and for this reason blesses him in a pre-eminent degree. The proof of his superior excellence is complete in the fact, that he is peculiarly blessed; for these peculiar blessings which he receives are indubitable evidence of the peculiar favour of God, and the peculiar favour of God is equal evidence of peculiar excellence in him who is thus blessed. But the only excellence here alleged or supposed by Christ, is the spirit of doing good; or, in other words, the spirit of voluntary usefulness. In this spirit, then, virtue or moral excellence consists; and the only excellence, here supposed, is of course founded in utility.

To the evidence furnished by the text, both reason

and revelation add ample confirmation. This I trust will sufficiently appear in the course of the following observations:—

1. Virtue is not founded in the will of God.

Those who hold the doctrine which I have here denied, may have been led unwittingly to adopt it from an apprehension, that they could not ascribe too much to God. This apprehension is without doubt generally just; yet it is not just in the absolute sense. There is neither irreverence nor mistake in saying that Omnipotence cannot create that which will be self-contradictory, make two and two five, or recall the existence of a past event, because these things would be impossible in their own nature. In the same manner, to ascribe to God that which is not done by him, though the ascription may flow from reverence to his character, is not yet dictated by reverence. That which God in fact does, is more honourable to him than any thing else can be; and no error can in its nature be reverential towards God or required by him of his creatures.

The doctrine, that virtue is founded in the will of God, supposes, that that which is now virtue, became such: became excellent, valuable, praiseworthy, and rewardable, because God willed it to be so; and, had he not willed it to be so, it would not have been virtue. Of course, if we were to suppose intelligent beings created and left, without any law, to choose their conduct; or, if we were to suppose the universe to exist just as it now exists, and exist thus either by chance, or necessity; that which is now virtuous, excellent, and praiseworthy, would at the utmost possess a nature merely indifferent; and although all other things remained just as they now are, would cease to be excellent, lovely, and deserving of approbation. According to the same scheme also, that which is now sinful, or vicious, would cease to be of this nature; and no longer merit hatred, blame, or punishment. In plainer language, veracity and lying, honesty and fraud, justice and oppression, kindness and cruelty, although exactly the same things which they now are, and although producing exactly the same effects, would no more possess their present, opposite moral character, but would equally deserve our love and approbation, or our hatred and disesteem. If virtue and vice are such, only because God willed them to be such; if virtue is excellent, and vice worthless, only because he willed them to be so; then vice in itself is just as excellent as virtue, and virtue just as worthless as vice. Let me ask, Can any man believe this to be true?

Farther: the supposition that virtue is founded in the will of God, implies, that God willed virtue to be excellent without any reason. If virtue and vice had originally, or as they were seen by the eye of God, no moral difference in their nature, then there was plainly no reason why God should prefer, or why he actually preferred, one of them to the other. There was, for example, no reason why he chose and required that intelligent creatures should love him and each other, rather than that they should hate him and hate each other. In choosing and requiring that they should exercise this love, God acted therefore without any motive whatever. Certainly, no sober man will attribute this conduct to God.

This supposition also is inconsistent with the omniscience of God. Every thing which exists, or which will ever exist, was, antecedently to its existence, or, in other words, eternally and immutably, present to the divine mind. In the same manner, all other possible things, that is, things that God could have created if he had pleased, were also present to his view. Every man knows that a vast multitude of such things are successively present to his own imagination, and that he can think of new worlds, new beings to inhabit them, and new furniture to replenish them. But, unquestionably, God knows all things which are known by his creatures, and infinitely more. When created things were thus present to his eye, antecedently to their existence, they were exactly the same things in his view, which they afterward were when they began to exist, had exactly the same natures, sustained exactly the same relations, and were just as good, indifferent, or evil, just as excellent or worthless, as amiable or hateful, as commendable or blameworthy, as rewardable or punishable, as they afterward were in fact. This may be illustrated by a familiar example. Most persons have read more or less of those fictitious histories which are called novels; and every person knows that the several actors exhibited in them never had any real existence. Yet every one knows equally well, that the characters which they severally sustain are as really good or evil, lovely or hateful, praiseworthy or blamable, as the same characters of the same persons would be, had they all been living men and women. It is therefore unanswerably evident, that moral characters, when merely seen in contemplation, are, independently of their actual existence in living beings, and therefore before they have existed in such beings, as well as when they never exist at all in this manner, good or evil to the eye of the mind. Of course, they are good or evil in their own nature. Of course, they were seen to be good or evil by the omniscience of God. It is therefore inconsistent with the doctrine, that God is omniscient, to say that virtue is founded in the will of God.

Again: The scheme which I am controverting, not only involves in it, that mankind, with all their impiety, injustice, cruelty, oppression, wars, and butcheries, are in their nature equally amiable, and excellent as angels, with all their truth and benevolence; but also, that the character of fiends is, in itself and independently of the fact that God chose it should be otherwise, just as lovely, excellent, and praiseworthy as that of angels. If then God had willed the character which Satan adopted and sustains to be moral excellence, and that which Gabriel sustains to be moral worthlessness, these two beings, continuing in every other respect the same, would have interchanged their characters. Satan would have become entirely lovely, and Gabriel entirely detestable. Must not he who can believe this doctrine, as easily believe, that if God had willed it, two and two would have become five? Is it at all easier to believe that truth and falsehood can interchange their natures, than that a square and a circle can interchange theirs?

Finally: If virtue and vice, or sin and holiness, are founded only in the will of God, then I ask, What is the nature of that will? We are accustomed to say, the Scriptures reveal God as holy, righteous, good, and 'glorious in holiness;' expressions, which, together with many others of the same nature, indicate that God himself, and therefore that the will of God, is excellent, and supremely deserving of his own infinite love, and of the highest love of all intelligent creatures. Does this excellence of God depend on the fact, that he willed his moral character, and therefore his will, to be

excellent? Or is the character of God, and of consequence his will, excellent in its own nature? If the divine character be not excellent in its own nature, and independently of any act of the divine will determining that it should be so, then, if God had been a being infinitely malevolent, and by an act of his will had determined that his character should be infinitely excellent, it would of course have become infinitely excellent; and he himself would have deserved to be loved, praised, and glorified for his infinite malice, cruelty, and oppression, just as he now does for his infinite goodness, truth, faithfulness, and mercy. According to this scheme, therefore, there is no original moral difference between the characters of an infinitely malevolent being, and an infinitely benevolent one; because this difference depends on a mere arbitrary act of will, and not at all on the respective natures of the things themselves. That a malevolent being would have made this determination, there is no more reason to doubt, than that it would be made by a benevolent being; for it cannot be doubted that a malevolent being would have entirely loved and honoured himself. The question, whether God is a benevolent or malevolent being, seems therefore to be nugatory; for all our inquiries concerning the subject which have any practical importance, terminate in this single question, What has God chosen? We have of course no interest in asking what is his moral nature.

The Scriptures certainly exhibit this subject in a very different light. They everywhere consider moral things, that is, both moral beings and their actions, as differing altogether in their several natures, and, independently of any act of the divine will, determining that they should thus differ. Particularly they exhibit God himself not only as being holy, righteous, just, true, faithful, kind, and merciful, but as excellent on account of these things; infinitely excellent, infinitely glorious, infinitely deserving of the love, that is, the complacency (the kind of love everywhere intended in this Discourse) of his intelligent creatures. Accordingly, God is often spoken of as excellent, and as excellency in the abstract. Thus, he is styled, 'the Excellency of Jacob.' His 'name' is said to be 'excellent in all the earth.'—'How excellent,' saith the psalmist, 'is thy loving-kindness.'—'The Lord of hosts,' says Isaiah, 'is excellent in working.' In all these passages it is plainly declared, that God is excellent in his own nature. In the same manner the Scriptures assert, that 'his law is perfect,' and 'his commandment pure;' that 'his statutes are right,' and 'his judgments altogether righteous;' and that 'his commandment is holy, just, and good;' that is, that these things possess the several kinds of excellence attributed to them, in their own nature. For if the Scriptures intended only that they were good, because God willed them to be so, when they were before neither good nor evil, it would have been mere tautology to have used this language. It would have been no more than saying, that the law, the commandments, and the statutes of God were his law, commandments, and statutes; this fact being, according to the scheme here opposed, all that in which their excellence lies. In the same manner, when it is said, 'Thou art good, and doest good;' it ought to be said, 'Thou art what thou art, and doest what thou doest;' for this is all that is meant, according to the scheme in question.

In the same manner, the Scriptures declare, that 'the righteous Lord loveth righteousness,' and thus teach us, that there is in righteousness a cause, a reason, or, in other words, a nature, for which it is, and deserves to be loved. They also assure us, that he 'hates wickedness,' and that it is 'an abomination to him.' There is therefore a reason why he hates it. As he always hated the latter, and loved the former, and therefore, before the one was forbidden and the other required of his intelligent creatures, it is certain that the one was hateful and the other lovely, in its own nature.

In Jer. ix. 24, it is said, 'Let him that glorieth glory in this; that he understandeth, and knoweth me, that I am the Lord, which exercise loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the Lord.' In this passage God requires mankind to glory, not merely because he acts, but because he acts in such a manner; because he 'exercises loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth;' and informs us that he himself delights in these things; in other words, because they are lovely in his sight.

In Heb. vi. 18, it is said, that 'it is impossible for God to lie.' If at any given time it is impossible for God to lie, it has been always impossible.' For what reason? If truth and falsehood are in their own nature indifferent, then certainly it was once just as easy for God to lie, as to speak truth. The only reason why it is now impossible for him to utter falsehood, is, that he is utterly indisposed to this conduct. But if falsehood and truth have the same moral nature in themselves, there can be no reason why he was originally disposed to speak truth rather than falsehood. Yet he is infinitely disposed to speak truth, and infinitely indisposed to utter falsehood. Falsehood is therefore totally odious in itself, and truth altogether desirable.

Every thing contained in the Scriptures relative to this subject is of the same tenor, so far as I have been able to understand them, with the passages which I have quoted. Nor have I found in them a single hint that virtue and vice have not in themselves a totally different moral nature, or that they depend for their excellence and worthlessness on an act of the divine will. On the contrary, the whole drift of the Scriptures is to exhibit them as possessed of these characteristics in themselves; and as for this reason chosen and required on the one hand, and rejected and forbidden on the other.

There are persons, who speak of the will of God as constituting the nature of things, when they only mean that it gives them existence. These persons appear not to discern that the nature of the thing is exactly the same whether it exists, or is only seen in contemplation. The Achilles of Homer, the Æneas of Virgil, the Lear of Shakspeare, and the Grandison of Richardson, have all the same character which real men, answering severally to the descriptions of them, would possess. The will of God gives birth to the existence of all things. But the things themselves, as seen by the divine mind, have exactly the same nature, and sustain the same relations to each other; have the same value or worthlessness, the same excellence or turpitude, which they have when they really exist. This nature is what makes them desirable or undesirable to the eye of God, and induces them either to choose or reject them. While it is true, therefore, that the will of God gives birth to all things, and to their several

natures, as really existing in fact, it is equally true that, as seen by the divine mind, the same things had exactly the same nature before they existed. A house before it is built, and when formed merely in a plan, has exactly the same figure and proportions as seen by the mind of the builder, which it has after it has been built according to this plan. Truth and falsehood, right and wrong in creatures, were exactly the same things to the eye of Omniscience before and after they existed.

From these considerations it is, I apprehend, evident, that the foundation of virtue is not in the will of God, but in the nature of things. The next object of inquiry therefore is, Where in the nature of things, shall we find this foundation? I begin my answer to this question by observing,

2. That there is no ultimate good but happiness.

By ultimate good I intend that which is originally denominated good. Good is of two kinds only: Happiness, and the causes or means of happiness. Happiness is the ultimate good; the causes or means of happiness are good, only because they produce it. Thus fruit is good, because it is pleasant to the taste. The tree on which it grows is good, because it produces it. Health is good in itself; a medicine is good, because it preserves or restores it.

We are accustomed to hear so much said, and truly said, concerning the excellence, beauty, and glory of virtue, that we are ready to conceive and speak of it as being original or ultimate good, and independently of the happiness which it brings with it. Nay, we are ready to feel dissatisfied with ourselves and others for calling this position in question; to consider this conduct as involving a kind of irreverence towards this glorious object; as diminishing its importance, and obscuring its lustre. This, however, arises from mere misapprehension. If virtue brought with it no enjoyment to us, and produced no happiness to others, it would be wholly destitute of all the importance, beauty, and glory, with which it is now invested. Let any good man ask himself what that is for which he values his own virtue; what constitutes the commendations of it in the conversation and writings, particularly the sermons, with which he is acquainted; and what is the amount of all that for which it is commended in the Scriptures; and he will find every idea which he forms of it, distinctly and definitely, completely, summed up in these two things; that it is the means of glory to God, and of good to his creatures. I have shown in a former Discourse that to glorify God, that is, voluntarily (the thing which is here intended), is exactly the same conduct towards him which, when directed towards creatures, produces their happiness. It is, in truth, doing all that which it is in our power to do towards the happiness of the Creator. The happiness of God consists in the enjoyment furnished, partly by his sufficiency for all great and glorious purposes, and partly by the actual accomplishment of these purposes. I separate these things only for the sake of exhibiting them more distinctly to view, and am well aware that, as they exist in the divine mind, they are absolutely inseparable. 'The Lord,' saith the psalmist, 'shall rejoice in his works.' Had these works never existed, God would not thus rejoice. God is also said to delight in the upright; and to delight in his church. Were there no upright persons, were there no church, this delight would cease. It is, therefore, true in the proper sense, that virtuous persons, by voluntarily glorifying God, become the objects of his delight; or, in other words, the means of happiness or enjoyment to him. It will not be supposed that God is, for this reason, dependent on his creatures for his happiness, or for any part of it. These very creatures are absolutely dependent on him, and are made by himself the objects of his delight; and such they become by the same voluntary conduct which, in other cases, produces happiness in creatures. When we consider virtue as it respects creatures only, the character which I have given to it is more easily seen, and more readily comprehended. It may easily be seen, in this case, that all its value consists in the enjoyment which either attends or follows it. All the exercises of virtue are delightful in themselves. It is delightful to do good to others, to see them happy, and made happy by our means, to enjoy peace of conscience, and self-approbation. These, and the like enjoyments may be said to attend virtue, and, it is well known, enter largely into every account which is given of its excellence. The consequences of virtue are no other than the good which it produces in originating and increasing social happiness; and these, together with the articles involved in the two preceding considerations, make up the whole amount of all the commendations of this divine object, given either by the Scriptures, or by mankind. The excellence of virtue, therefore, consists wholly in this; that it is the cause of good, that is, of happiness; the ultimate good, the only thing for which virtue is valuable.

Virtue in God, or benevolence, is, on all hands, considered as the glory and excellency of the divine character. What is benevolence? The love of doing good, or a disposition to produce happiness. In what does its excellence consist? In this, that it is the voluntary cause of happiness. Take away this single attribute of virtue, and it will be easily seen that its excellence is all taken away also.

These observations prove, if I mistake not, that happiness is the only ultimate good; and that virtue is termed good, only as being the cause of happiness.

3. Virtue is the only original cause of happiness.

It is hardly necessary to say, that involuntary beings can, of themselves, produce nothing, as being absolutely inactive; and that there are no active beings, beside those which are voluntary. But voluntary beings produce happiness only when they are disposed to produce it; and the only disposition which prompts to the production of it is virtue. This is so obvious, after what has been said, as to need no farther illustration.

Contrivance and activity are the original sources of all the effects or changes which take place in the universe, particularly of all the happiness which it contains. Contrivance and activity in the Creator gave birth to all existence, except his own. Contrivance and activity in intelligent creatures, under God, give birth to all the happiness of which they are the sources to themselves and each other.

Minds are active only by means of the power of willing. The two great dispositions of minds, by which all their volitions are characterized and directed, are benevolence and selfishness. Benevolence is virtue, selfishness is sin. Benevolence aims to promote happiness in all beings capable of happiness: selfishness at the promotion of the private, separate happiness of one, subordinating to it that of all others, and opposing that of

others, whenever it is considered as inconsistent with that of one's self. Benevolence, therefore, directs the whole active power or energy of the mind in which it exists, to the production of the most extensive happiness. This is what I intend by the utility of virtue; and that in which, as it appears to my own view, all its excellence is found. Sin is naturally and necessarily the parent of misery; since it arms every individual against the interest of every other.

Were sin in its own proper tendency to produce invariably the same good which it is the tendency of virtue to produce, were it the means invariably of the same glory to God, and of the same enjoyment to the universe, no reason is apparent to me why it would not become excellent, commendable, and rewardable, in the same manner as virtue now is. Were virtue regularly to effectuate the same dishonour to God and the same misery to intelligent creatures now effectuated by sin, I see no reason why we should not attribute to it all the odiousness, blameworthiness, and desert of punishment, which we now attribute to sin. All this is, I confess, impossible, and is rendered so by the nature of these things. Still the supposition may be allowably made for the purposes of discussion.

The great objection to this doctrine arises from a misapprehension of the subject. It is this; that if virtue is founded in utility, then utility becomes the measure of virtue, and of course the rule of all our moral conduct. This is the error of Godwin; and, in an indefinite degree, of Paley, and several other writers. Were we omniscient, and able to discern the true nature of all the effects of our conduct, this consequence must, undoubtedly, be admitted. To the eye of God it is the real rule. It will not, I trust, be denied, that he has chosen and required that to be done by his intelligent creatures which is most useful, or, in other words, most productive of good to the universe, and of glory to himself; rather than that which is less so. But to us utility, as judged of by ourselves, cannot be a proper rule of moral conduct. The real usefulness of our conduct, or its usefulness upon the whole, lies in the nature of all its effects, considered as one aggregate. But nothing is more evident than that few, very few indeed, of these can ever be known to us by our own foresight. If the information given us by the Scriptures concerning this subject were to be lost, we should be surprised to see how small was the number of cases in which this knowledge was attainable, even in a moderate degree; and how much uncertainty attended even these. As, therefore, we are unable to discern with truth or probability the real usefulness of our conduct, it is impossible that our moral actions should be safely guided by this rule.

The Bible is, with the plainest evidence, the only safe rule by which moral beings can, in this world, direct their conduct. The precepts of this sacred volume were all formed by him who alone 'sees the end from the beginning,' and who alone, therefore, understands the real nature of all moral actions. No other being is able to determine how far any action is upon the whole useful, or noxious, or to make utility the measure of virtue. As well might a man determine that a path, whose direction he can discern only for a furlong, will conduct him in a straight course to a city distant from him a thousand miles, as to determine that an action, whose immediate tendency he perceives to be useful, will therefore be useful through a thousand years, or even through ten. How much less able must he be to perceive what will be its real tendency in the remote ages of endless duration. It is impossible, therefore, that utility, as decided by our judgment, should become the rule of moral action.

It has also been objected to this doctrine, that if virtue is founded in utility, every thing which is useful, must so far be virtuous. This objection it is hardly necessary to answer. Voluntary usefulness is the only virtue. A smatterer in moral philosophy knows that understanding and will are necessary to the existence of virtue. He who informs us, that if virtue is founded in utility, animals, vegetables, and minerals, the sun, and the moon, and the stars, must be virtuous, so far as they are useful, is either disposed to trifle with mankind for his amusement, or supposes them to be triflers.

REMARKS.

1. From these observations we learn, in an interesting manner, the desirableness of virtue.

The whole tendency of virtue is to promote happiness, and this is its only ultimate tendency. It prefers, of course, the greater happiness to the less, and the greatest always to that which can exist in a subordinate degree. It diffuses happiness everywhere, and to every being capable of receiving it, so far as this diffusion is in its power. In this respect it knows no distinction of family, country, or world, and operates to the benefit of those who are near, more than to that of those who are distant, only because its operations will be more effectual, and because, when all pursue this course the greatest good will be done to all. Its efficacy also is complete. The object at which it aims it can accomplish. It can contrive, it can direct, it can effectuate. To do good is its happiness as well as its tendency. It will, therefore, never be inattentive, never discouraged, never disposed to relax its efforts. Thus it is a perennial spring, whose waters never fail; a spring at which thousands and millions may slake their thirst for enjoyment, and of which the streams are always pure, healthful, and refreshing.

2. We learn, from the same observations, the odious nature of sin.

Sin, or selfishness, aiming supremely at the private, separate good of an individual, and subordinating to it the good of all others, confines its efforts, of course, to the narrow sphere of one's self. All the individuals also, in whom this spirit prevails, have each a personal good, to which each subordinates every other good. There are, therefore, as many separate interests in a collection of selfish beings as there are individuals, and to each of these interests the individual whose it is, intends to make those of all others subservient. Of consequence, these interests cannot fail to clash, and the individuals to oppose and contend with each other. Hence an unceasing course of hatred, wrath, revenge, and violence, must prevail among beings of this character; of private quarrels and public wars. All who oppose this darling interest are regarded by the individual as his enemies; and thus all naturally become the enemies of all. Where this disposition is in a great measure unrestrained, it makes an individual a tyrant, and a society a collection of banditti. Where it is wholly unrestrained, it converts intelligent beings into fiends, and their habitation into hell.

The ruling principle, here, is to gain good from

others, and not to communicate it to them. This darling spirit, so cherished by mankind, so active in the present world, so indulged, flattered, and boasted of by those who possess it, is, instead of being wise and profitable, plainly foolish, shameful, ruinous, and deserving of the most intense reprobation. Notwithstanding all the restraints laid upon it by the good providence of God; notwithstanding the shortness of life, which prevents us from forming permanent plans, making great acquisitions to ourselves, and producing great mischiefs to others; notwithstanding the weakness, frailty, and fear which continually attend us; notwithstanding the efficacy of natural affection, the power of conscience, and the benevolent influence of religion on the affairs of mankind; it makes the present world an uncomfortable and melancholy residence and creates three-fourths of the misery suffered by the race of Adam.

All these evils exist, because men are disinclined to do good, or to be voluntarily useful. Were they only disposed to promote each other's happiness, or, in other words, to be useful to each other, the world would become a pleasant and desirable habitation. The calamities immediately brought upon us by providence would be found to be few; those induced by men upon themselves and each other would vanish; and in their place beneficence would spread its innumerable blessings.

3. These observations strongly exhibit to us the miserable state of the world of perdition.

In this melancholy region no good is done, nor intended to be done. No good is therefore enjoyed. Still, the mind retains its original activity; and is wise and vigorous to do evil, although it has neither knowledge nor inclination to do good. Here all the passions of a selfish spirit are let loose, and riot, and reign, and ravage. Here, therefore, all are enemies. Here the wretched individual surveying the vast regions around him, and casting his eyes forward into the immeasurable progress, of eternity, sees himself absolutely alone in the midst of millions, in solitude complete and endless. Here voluntary usefulness is for ever unknown and unheard of; while selfishness in all its dreadful forms, assumes an undisputed, and unresisted dominion, a terrible despotism: and fills the world around her with rage and wretchedness, with terror and doubt, with desolation and despair.

4. How delightful a view do these observations give of heaven.

Heaven is the world of voluntary usefulness. The only disposition of angels, and 'the spirits of just men made perfect,' is to do good; their only employment to produce happiness. In this enjoyment all the energy of sanctified and perfect minds is exerted without weariness, and without end. How vast, then, how incomprehensible, how endlessly increasing, must be the mass of happiness brought by their united efforts into being! How ample a provision must it be for all the continually expanding wishes, the continually enlarging capacities, of its glorious inhabitants! How wonderfully also must the sum of enjoyment be enhanced to each, when we remember that he will experience the same delight in the good enjoyed by others, as in that which is immediately his own! Who would not labour to gain an entrance into such a world as this? Who would not bend all his efforts, exhaust all his powers, encounter any earthly suffering, and resolutely overcome every earthly obstacle, to acquire that divine and delightful character of voluntary usefulness, which makes heaven such a world; which makes it the place of God's peculiar presence, the means of his highest glory, and the mansion of everlasting life, peace, and joy to his children!

SERMON C.

THE LAW OF GOD.—THE DECALOGUE.—THE FIRST COMMANDMENT.

Thou shalt have no other gods before me.—Exod. xx. 3.

In the series of Discourses which I have lately delivered concerning the two great commands of the moral law, it has, if I mistake not, been sufficiently shown, that the disposition required by the Creator of his intelligent creatures in this law, is disinterested love, or the spirit of doing good. The tendency of this disposition is always to do what is right. It will not however follow, that the mind in which it exists will be able always to discern the course of conduct which it ought, upon the whole, to pursue. The disposition may with absolute correctness dictate what is absolutely proper to be done in a case already before the view of the mind, and yet the mind be wholly ignorant whether that case, or the conduct in question, is such as would, upon the whole, be best for it to pursue, or whether superior wisdom would not be able to devise for it other and much more desirable courses of action. A child may be perfectly holy, and yet possess too little understanding to know in what way he may best act; in what way he may most promote the glory of God, the good of his fellow creatures, or the good of himself. His disposition may prompt to that which is exactly right in all the conduct which is within the reach of his understanding. Yet, if he had more comprehensive views, he might discern far more desirable modes of action, in which he might be much more useful than in any which he is at present able to devise. He may be able to apply the two great commands of the moral law, which have been so extensively considered, with exact propriety to all such cases as are actually within his view, and yet be utterly unable to devise for himself those kinds of conduct in which his obedience to these commands might be most profitably employed.

What is true of a child is true, in different degrees,

of all intelligent creatures. God only, as was shown in a former Discourse, is able to discern and to prescribe the conduct which, upon the whole, it is proper for such creatures to pursue. He sees from the beginning to the end, and perfectly understands the nature and the consequences of all intelligent action. This knowledge which he alone possesses, and which is indispensable to this purpose, enables him to accomplish it in a manner absolutely perfect.

What is true in this respect of intelligent creatures universally, is peculiarly true of sinful creatures. The disposition of sinners leads them of course to that conduct which is wrong and mischievous. They are, therefore, always in danger of erring from mere disposition. Besides, sin renders the mind voluntarily ignorant; and in this manner also exposes it continually to error. A great part of all the false opinions entertained by mankind concerning their duty are to be attributed solely to the biases of a sinful disposition. None are so blind, none so erroneous, as those who are unwilling to see.

From a merciful regard to these circumstances, particularly, of mankind, God has been pleased to reveal to them his pleasure and their duty; to disclose to them all those modes of moral action, all those kinds of moral conduct in which they may most promote his glory, and their own good. The importance of this revelation is evinced in the strongest manner, by the moral situation of that part of the human race to whom it has never been published. I need not inform you, that they have been wholly ignorant of the true God, and of a great part of the principles and precepts of the moral system; that they have worshipped men, animals, evil spirits, and gods of gold and silver, of wood and stone. I need not inform you, that they have violated every moral precept, and every dictate of natural affection. I need not inform you, that without revelation we should have been heathens also; and should, in all probability, have been this day prostrating ourselves before an ox or an ape, or passing children through the fire unto Moloch.

Among the several parts of the revelation, which has raised our moral condition so greatly above that of the heathen, the decalogue is eminently distinguished. The decalogue is a larger summary of our duty than that which is contained in the two great commands already considered. The same things, in substance, are required in it; but they are branched out into various important particulars, all of them supremely necessary to be known by us. To enforce their importance on our minds, God was pleased to utter the several precepts contained in this summary with his own voice, and to write them with his own finger on two tables of stone, fashioned by himself. They were published also amid the thunderings and lightnings of Mount Sinai, from the bosom of the cloud by which it was enveloped, and out of the flame which ascended from its summit.

The four first of the commands contained in the decalogue regulate our immediate duty to God; the six last, our duty to men. The former were written on one, properly called the first table; the latter on another, usually styled the second table.

Two of these commands, one of the first and one of the second table, are positive, that is, direct injunctions of our duty; the remaining eight are negative, or prohibitory. Both classes, however, are of exactly the same extent; those which are positive, forbidding the conduct which is contrary to what they enjoin; and those which are negative, requiring that which is contrary to what they forbid.

The first of these commands is the text. The duty enjoined in it is of such a nature, that, to a mind governed by the dictates of reason, an express injunction of it would seem in a great measure unnecessary, if not altogether superfluous. So vast is the difference between the real God and every possible substitute, that sober contemplation would scarcely suspect it to be possible for a man, who was not bereft of reason, to put any other being into his place, even under the influence of the most wandering fancy. How unlike all other beings must he evidently be, who made the heavens and the earth, whose breath kindled the sun and the stars, and whose hand rolls the planets through immensity! How infinitely superior does he obviously appear to every thing which he has made, and how infinitely remote from any rival or any second! Still, experience has amply testified, that mankind have almost without ceasing, substituted other gods for Jehovah. Nay, it has clearly evinced, not only that we need to be taught the duty required by him in the text, but that no precepts, no instructions, and no motives have been sufficient to keep the world in obedience to this first and greatest law of moral conduct. Nothing indeed has so strongly evinced the madness of the human heart, as the conduct which it has exhibited towards the Creator, and the idolatry which it has rendered to a vast multitude of the works of his hands.

The word 'gods,' in this passage, may be regarded as denoting, not only the various objects of religious worship, but also all the objects of supreme regard, affection, or esteem. The command, it will be observed, is expressed in the absolute or universal manner; and may be fairly considered as including every thing to which mankind render, or can be supposed to render, such regard. The phrase 'before me,' is equivalent to the expressions, in my sight, in my presence; and teaches us, that no such gods are to be admitted within the omnipresence, or within the view of the omniscience, of Jehovah. With these explanations, it will be easily seen, that the text indispensably requires us to acknowledge the real God as our God; and forbids us to regard any other being in this character.

To acknowledge Jehovah as our God, is to love him supremely, to fear before him with all the heart, and to serve him throughout all our days, in absolute preference to every other being. In this manner we testify, that we esteem him infinitely more excellent, venerable, and deserving of our obedience than all other beings. After the observations which I have heretofore made concerning these subjects, it will be unnecessary to expatiate on them at the present time. I shall only observe, therefore, that this is the highest, the noblest, and the best service which we can render to any being, and the only way in which we can acknowledge any being as God. When we render this service to Jehovah, we acknowledge him in his true character. He is infinitely the greatest and the best of all beings; and we are under infinitely greater obligations to him than to any other. Of course, his claims to this service from us, and from all other intelligent creatures, are supreme and exclusive. When it is rendered by them, God is acknowledged to be, what he is, thus divinely great

and excellent. At the same time, and in the same manner, we declare, that by his character and by his blessings he has laid us under the highest obligations to such conduct.

As this is the only true, natural, and proper acknowledgment of God, so, when we render the same service to any creature, we acknowledge that creature as our god. In this conduct we are guilty of two gross and abominable sins. In the first place, we elevate the being who is thus regarded, to the character and station of a god; and, in the second place, we remove the true God in our hearts from his own character of infinite glory and excellence, and from that exalted station which he holds, as the infinite ruler and benefactor of the universe. This sin is a complication of wickedness wonderfully various and dreadful. In truth, it is a comprehensive summary of iniquity, and the basis of all the crimes which are committed by intelligent creatures. The evil involved in it may in some measure be learned from the following observations:

1. We are in this conduct guilty of the grossest falsehood.

We practically deny that Jehovah is possessed of those attributes which alone demand such service from intelligent creatures; and, on the other hand, assert in the same manner, that the being to whom we render this service, is invested with these attributes. No falsehoods can be so gross or so abominable as these. Nor can they be uttered in any manner so forcible, so provoking, or so guilty. Our practice is the real interpreter of our thoughts. The tongue may utter any thing at pleasure; but the heart is always disclosed by the language of the life.

2. In this conduct, also, we are guilty of the greatest injustice.

This evil is likewise twofold. First we violate the rightful claim of Jehovah to the service of intelligent creatures; and, secondly, we render to a creature the service which is due to him alone. The right which God has to this service is supreme and unalienable. He is our Maker and Preserver. We are in the most absolute sense his property; and are bound therefore by the highest obligation, to be voluntarily his; cheerfully to resign ourselves to his pleasure, and to be employed in doing his will. The obligations arising from this source are not a little enhanced by the fact, that the service which he actually requires of us is in the highest degree profitable to ourselves; our highest excellence, our greatest honour, and our supreme happiness. At the same time these obligations are wonderfully increased by the consideration that God is infinitely excellent and amiable, and therefore claims this testimony of the heart as the just and perfect acknowledgment of his perfect character. Were he not our Creator, nor our Preserver, we could not still refuse to render him this regard, without the greatest injury to so glorious a being.

The created object to which we actually yield this service, is destitute of all claims to it. In rendering it to him, therefore, we add insult to injustice; and, not contented with denying and violating the rights of the Creator, we prefer to him, in this manner, a being who 'is less than nothing and vanity.'

3. We are also guilty of the vilest ingratitude.

From the wisdom, power, and goodness of God we derive our being, our blessings, and our hopes. He created us, he preserves us, and he daily 'loads us with his loving-kindness.' He gave his Son to die for us, and sent his Spirit to sanctify us. It is impossible that we should be in any circumstances which demand equal gratitude towards any, or towards all created beings. The service which he actually requires, as the requital of all this beneficence, is no other than in our thoughts, affections, and conduct, to acknowledge him to be what he is; to reverence him, as being infinitely great; to love him, as infinitely excellent; and to serve him, as the infinitely righteous and reasonable ruler of all things. What ingratitude can be compared with that of a creature who refuses this service? Yet even this ingratitude is mightily enhanced by the wanton wickedness of transferring the regard which is due to him only to one of his creatures, a creature like ourselves, perhaps inferior to ourselves; a being in this view of no worth, to whom we are under no obligations, and who has not the smallest claim to any such homage. What crime can be more provoking or more guilty than the preference of such a creature to such a God?

It was observed above, that the sin forbidden in the text is wickedness wonderfully complicated. Nothing would be more easy than to show that pride, rebellion, hatred of excellence, blasphemy, and many other sins, are included in this conduct. It would, however, be unnecessary for the present design, and the time which such an examination would demand, will, if I mistake not, be more profitably employed in attending to the following

REMARKS.

1. From these observations we learn, that idolatry is a sin of the first magnitude.

That a sin which combines in itself falsehood, injustice, and ingratitude, pride, rebellion, and blasphemy, all existing in the grossest and most impudent degree, is of the first magnitude, cannot be questioned with reason or decency. Equally evident is it, that a sin which is at the bottom of all other wickedness, must be peculiarly enormous. That such is the nature of idolatry, is unanswerably proved by the fact, that wherever God is acknowledged in the manner above described, the moral character is of course spotless and unblamable. The commencement of turpitude in an intelligent creature, is his alienation from God, and his preference of some other object to Jehovah. In proportion to the prevalence of this spirit, wickedness of every kind prevails; and in proportion to the degree in which the soul overcomes and renounces this preference, it becomes possessed of moral excellence in all its forms. This truth is strongly seen in the character and conduct of all those virtuous men whose history is recorded in the Scriptures. In a manner scarcely less forcible or certain, it is also seen in the experience of mankind. All virtue flourishes wherever God is acknowledged according to the import of the text; and wherever he is not thus acknowledged, all virtue decays and dies. The great, open, public acknowledgment of God is exhibited in the solemnities of the sabbath, and the sanctuary. Wherever these exist uniformly and prosperously, goodness of character and of life will be regularly found to prevail. Wherever they decline or vanish, virtue invariably vanishes with them.

Nor is this truth less evident from the personal experience of every Christian. Whenever he magnifies in his heart his Father, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, all his

affections are purified, evangelical, and heavenly. His conversation is such as becometh godliness; and his life 'adorns the doctrine of God his Saviour;' is a happy resemblance of the celestial character, and a delightful preparation for celestial enjoyment. But when he ceases for a time to yield this glory to his Maker, when the importance of the divine character is lessened or obscured, in his eyes, when God becomes to the view of his mind, less venerable, less excellent, and less lovely, his apprehensions of spiritual objects are clouded and dim; his virtuous affections are cold, inactive, and lifeless; his purposes are bounded by the present world, and centered in himself; and his life is divested of its former beauty, worth, and enjoyment. God is the sun of the soul. Wherever he shines, there is more moral day, warmth, life, and energy. There every thing excellent springs up beneath his quickening beams, grows unceasingly with vigour and beauty, and ripens into usefulness and enjoyment. In the absence of this divine luminary, the soul is darkened by night, and chilled by a moral winter; its views become dim, its affections frozen and torpid, and its progress through life a scene of desolation.

2. The same observations teach us that all mankind are guilty of idolatry.

Covetousness is styled 'idolatry' by St Paul; and 'stubbornness' by the prophet Samuel. To many other sins this title is obviously, and to all sin really, applicable. Sin universally is no other than selfishness, or a preference of one's self to all other beings, and of one's private interests and gratifications to the well-being of the universe, of God, and the intelligent creation. Of this selfishness all men are more or less the subjects. In the exercise of it, they love and serve themselves, 'rather than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.' No beings, except those who inhabit the world of perdition, are probably more undeserving of this high regard. We are not only little and insignificant, born of the dust and kindred to animals; but we are, and are in this very conduct, odious and abominable, 'drinking iniquity like water.' To ourselves we render that supreme regard which is due to God only. Thus we literally idolize ourselves; and, as every man living is guilty of this conduct, every man living is essentially an idolater.

This spirit manifests itself, however, in an almost endless variety of forms. The parent often idolizes his child; the beauty, her face and form; the man of genius, his talents; the ambitious man, his fame, power, or station; the miser, his gold; the accomplished man, his manners; the ostentatious man, his villa; and the sensualist, his pleasures. By all these, however, a single spirit is cherished, and discovered. The parent doats upon his child because it is his child. Had it been born of other parents, it might indeed be occasionally agreeable to him, but would never have become an object of his peculiar fondness.

This is unanswerably evinced by experience; particularly by the fact, that much more promising and engaging children are never thus doated upon when they are the children of his fellow men. What is true of this instance is generally true of the others. Our homage is rendered to our own talents, possessions, and enjoyments; not to those of our fellow men. One spirit, therefore, pervades and reigns throughout all this varied idolatry.

3. With these observations in view, we shall cease to wonder that mankind have been so extensively guilty of continued and enormous sins against each other.

Sin is one undivided disposition. If it exists in any intelligent being, it exists and operates towards any and every other being with whom he is concerned. It cannot exist towards God, and not towards man; or towards man, and not towards God. It is a wrong bias of the soul; and of course operates only to wrong, whatever being the operation may respect.

That those who are guilty of such falsehood towards God, should be guilty of gross falsehood towards each other, to whom they are under far less obligations of every kind, is certainly to be expected. That those who with such gross injustice violate all rights, the highest, the most absolute, should, without remorse, violate rights of so inferior a nature, is no less to be expected. Equally is it a thing of course, that beings, guilty of such enormous ingratitude, should be ungrateful to each other, whenever this conduct will serve a purpose. 'He that is unjust, will (in this sense) be unjust still; and he that is filthy, will be filthy still.'

In this manner are explained the monstrous iniquities which filled the heathen world. These evils commenced in their religion. They forsook Jehovah, and had 'other gods before him;' gods of all kinds, natures, and descriptions. A rational mind, sufficiently astonished at their defection from the true God, is lost in amazement while contemplating the objects which they actually worshipped. No being, real or imaginary, was excluded from a list of their deities, or prevented from the homage of their devotions, by any degree of stupidity, folly, or wickedness. They worshipped blocks; they worshipped brutes; they worshipped men, usually the worst of men; they worshipped devils.

Their religion, in all its solemn services, was exactly suited to the character of their gods. Beyond measure was it stupid, silly, impure, and depraved. It was replete with enormous and unnatural cruelty. Specimens of this wickedness, and those innumerable, are found in the various kinds of torture enjoined as a religious penance for their sins; and in the sacrifice of human victims, adopted as expiations for the guilt of their surviving countrymen. Among these, youths of the noblest birth, the brightest talents, and the most promising character, were in several nations butchered by hundreds, to satisfy the vengeance of their gods. In Hindostan, beside other human victims, twenty thousand women are declared, with unquestionable evidence to be even now offered up annually, as victims to religion, on the funeral piles of their deceased husbands. Equally replenished was this religion with wonderful falsehood. All the oracles, divinations, visions, dreams, and prophecies of heathenism were a mere collection of lies. The same spirit of falsehood pervaded their mythology, their mysteries, their doctrines, their worship, and the means of preserving it. As their religion had no foundation in reason or revelation, they were in a sense compelled, if it was to be preserved at all, to resort to fraud and delusion, for the means both of supporting the worship itself, and the authority of those who prescribed it, among the infatuated worshippers. Thus 'the gods of the heathen were vanity and a lie; they that made them were like unto them; and so was every one who put his trust in them.' Nor was this scheme less deformed by pollution. In Egypt, Syria,

Paphos, Babylon, and Hindostan, particularly, both matrons and virgins were religiously consecrated to impurity.

By the cruelty, falsehood, and pollution acted here, the heathen nations were effectually prepared to perpetuate the same wickedness elsewhere. Here it was sanctioned by religion; the mind therefore could not consider it as very criminal elsewhere. As all were thus taught, these nations became generally corrupted beyond every thing which the most sanguine imagination could have conceived.

All this, however, is naturally the result of idolatry. That which is the object of religious worship, is of course the most sublime and perfect object which is realized by the devotee. When this object therefore is low, debased, impure; when it is fraught with falsehood, injustice, and cruelty; sunk as it is immeasurably below the proper character of a god, it still keeps its station of superiority; and is still regarded with the reverence due to the highest known object of contemplation. Of consequence, all things beside sink with it; and hold a station in the eye of the mind proportionally depressed. The mind itself particularly, being destitute of any higher conceptions than those which respect this debased object, conforms all its views, affections, and conduct to the character of its deity, and, while it worships him with a mixture of folly and wickedness, it extends the same folly and wickedness in its various conduct towards all other beings with which it corresponds. Thus a debased god becomes the foundation of a debased religion, and a debased religion of universal turpitude of character.

4. Hence we see that the Scriptures represent idolatry justly, and annex to it no higher punishment than it deserves.

The debased and miserable character which I have described was the real character of the Canaanites. They were guilty of all these iniquities, and were therefore justly the objects of the divine indignation. Infinitely remote from that innocence attributed to them by infidels, they had grown worse and worse, under the ordinary influence of idolatry, from the beginning. At length their iniquity became full, and they were wiped away as a blot, as a stain upon the creation of God.

The same things are, with some qualifications, true of the Israelites. In the progress of their various defections to idolatry, they became corrupted in the same dreadful manner; were guilty of the same impurity, cruelty, and falsehood; butchered each other without remorse; were disloyal, rebellious, treacherous; followed abandoned villains, to overturn the government established by God himself; waged furious civil wars with each other; and made their sons pass through the fire unto Moloch. God, with wonderful patience and mercy waited long, and sent many prophets to reclaim them; yet nothing cured them of their idolatry but their final overthrow, and their deportation to Babylon.

What is true of these nations with regard to this subject, is true of the heathen in general. All the nations who have been devoted to idolatry have addicted themselves to these and all other crimes, and have been dreadfully depraved in their whole moral character. Wherever men of discernment and integrity have resided among such nations, and given an account of them to the public, this melancholy truth has, notwithstanding all the allegations of infidels to the contrary, been evinced beyond every decent denial, or reasonable doubt.

5. These observations teach us the wisdom and goodness of God in separating the Jews from mankind, as a peculiar people to himself.

All the preceding experiments which had been made in the providence of God, for the purpose of preserving in this corrupted world the knowledge and worship of Jehovah, had failed of accomplishing the end. God had revealed himself in an immediate and extraordinary manner to our first parents, and to their descendants through many generations. All these also he had planted in a world which, though under the curse, retained still so much of its original nature, and was fraught with so many blessings, as to continue the life of man through a thousand years. Under this dispensation 'all flesh corrupted his way upon the earth.' The world 'was filled with violence,' and became so universally profligate, that 'it repented the Lord that he had made man.' The deluge then emptied it of its inhabitants to sweep away wickedness, which could no longer be endured from under the whole heaven. Even this did not cure the evil. The same spirit notwithstanding the remembrance of this terrible destruction, revived almost immediately among the descendants of Noah: and at the time when Abraham was called, all nations were on the point of losing the knowledge of the one, living, and true God. Had not the Jews been separated from the rest of mankind, and by mercies and miracles of a singular nature recalled, from time to time, to the worship of Jehovah, this glorious being would long since have been forgotten in the world. We ourselves, and all the inhabitants of this happy land, would now have been bowing ourselves to stocks, offering up our children as victims to Moloch, and prostituting ourselves and our families in religious and regular pollution before the shrines of idolatry. The only knowledge, the only worship of Jehovah at this day existing in the world is derived ultimately from the revelation which he made of himself to the Jews, and the various dispensations by which it was preserved.

6. We learn hence also the malignant nature of atheism.

Atheism, like idolatry, is infinitely remote from being a mere innocent speculation, a mere set of harmless opinions. In its very nature it involves the grossest falsehood, injustice and ingratitude; and is, of course, the parent of all other sins in all possible degrees. The mind in which it exists must, in order to the reception of it, have become the seat of wonderful depravity, and is prepared by it for every conceivable perpetration. I do not deny, that an atheist may live decently in the world. But, whenever this is the fact, he lives in this manner, solely because the commission of the several crimes to which he finds a temptation, is accompanied by some apprehended danger, some serious difficulty, or some painful inconvenience; some evil so great, as to overbalance the pleasure which he expects from committing the crime. But he never lives in this manner from principle, never from the want of disposition to sin. Let it be barely convenient and safe for him, and there is no iniquity which his head will not contrive, his heart cherish, and his hands carry into execution. From an atheist, no man, no people, no human interest can ever be safe, unless when danger to himself preserves them from the effects of his profligacy.

7. We see with what exact propriety the Scriptures have represented the violation of our immediate duty to God as the source of all other sin.

Impiety is plainly the beginning, the fountain of guilt, from which flows every stream. Those who are thus false, unjust, and ungrateful to God, will of course exhibit the same conduct with respect to their fellow creatures. Virtue is a single, indivisible principle, operating as virtue towards every being with whom it is concerned; towards God, towards our neighbour, and towards ourselves. Towards all it operates alike; producing in every case the fruits of virtue, viz., virtuous affections and virtuous conduct. As the obligations to be virtuous towards God, or, in other words, to be pious, are the highest possible, so he who is insensible to these obligations, and violates these, will be insensible to all other obligations, and violate them also. The apprehension that virtue can exist partially, that is, that we can be disposed to perform our duty towards God and not towards man, or towards man and not towards God, is chimerical; the result of ignorance, or inconsideration, and unsupported either by facts or arguments.

External virtue, as it is sometimes called, that is, moral goodness, supposed to exist in external conduct only, and unsupported by virtue in the heart, is a mere dream, a mere shadow. Instead of virtue, it is nothing but convenience, nothing but a pretence, nothing but a cheat. Virtue is inherent in the soul, in the disposition, as light and warmth in the sunbeams; and is the energy of an intelligent being, voluntarily directed to that which is right and good. If piety therefore be not found in a man, he has no pretensions to virtue of any kind.

Such is the scheme of the Scriptures. How plainly is it true! In laying the foundation of virtue here, how evidently have they laid the only possible foundation! And how strongly do they approve themselves to the conscience, as truth, and as deserving the character of a revelation from God! At the same time, how evidently are all other schemes of morality visionary and vain; buildings erected on sand, and destined from the beginning to a speedy and final overthrow.

SERMON CI.

THE LAW OF GOD.—THE DECALOGUE.—THE SECOND COMMANDMENT.

Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, nor any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them; for I, the Lord thy God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.—Exod. xx. 4—6.

The command in the text differs from that which was considered in the preceding Discourse, in this manner: that forbade the acknowledgment of false gods, universally; this prohibits the worship of idols; or idolatry, properly so called. All worship rendered to false gods is not uncommonly styled idolatry; but the name in the strict sense, is applicable to the worship of idols only; or of those images, pictures, and other symbols, which were considered by the heathen as representatives of their gods.

In the preceding Discourse I observed, that the duty enjoined in the first command is of such a nature, that to a mind governed by the dictates of reason, an express injunction of it would seem in a great measure unnecessary, if not altogether superfluous. Of the command in the text it may with equal propriety be observed, that to such a mind no precept given in the Scriptures could seem more unnecessary, or more superfluous. Nothing to the eye of reason can appear more wonderful, or more improbable, than that beings endowed with intelligence should bow themselves before the stock of a tree, or acknowledge an image molten or carved by themselves, as an object of their worship. Experience has, however, in the most ample manner refuted these very natural and very obvious dictates of reason; and has shown, to the everlasting disgrace of the human name, that not only some, but almost all men have, throughout most ages of the world, prostrated themselves before these miserable objects; and in their conversation, their books, their laws, and their religious services, acknowledged them as their gods. The importance, the absolute necessity, of this command, therefore, are evinced beyond every reasonable question.

The observations which I propose to make concerning it, I shall comprise under the following heads:—

I. *The history of idol-worship;*

II. *Its extent;*

III. *The manner in which it has been performed.*

I. *I will recite to you a brief and very general history of idol-worship.*

We are not informed in the Scriptures of the precise time in which idolatry commenced. It is, however, abundantly evident, that it began not long after the deluge. According to the chronology commonly received, Abraham was born in the year 1997 before Christ, and in the year of the world 2008; three hundred and fifty-two years after the flood, and two years only after the death of Noah. Early as this date is, the ancestors of Abraham seem to have been idola-

ters for several generations. Joshua, in a solemn assembly of the tribes of Israel at Shechem, addressed the principal men of that nation after the following manner: 'Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood, in old time; even Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nahor; and they served other gods.' From this passage it appears, that Terah himself was, in the early periods of life, a worshipper of false gods. In the fifth chapter of the book of Judith, the following account is given of this subject, in a speech of Achior, commander of the host of the Ammonites, to Holofernes, general of the Assyrian army. 'This people are descended of the Chaldeans; and they sojourned heretofore in Mesopotamia, because they would not follow the gods of their fathers which were in the land of Chaldea. For they left the way of their ancestors, and worshipped the God of heaven, whom they knew: so they cast them out from the face of their gods; and they fled into Mesopotamia, and sojourned there many days.' This story, which was probably traditionary among the Jews and neighbouring nations, and is not improbably true, informs us, that Terah, and his children with him, worshipped the true God, before they quitted Ur of the Chaldees; and that they were driven out from this, their original residence, by their countrymen, because they had addicted themselves to the worship of Jehovah. It would seem, therefore, that the Chaldeans had already become such bigots to the worship of their gods, as to persecute Terah and his family for dissenting from what had become their established religion. This event took place, four hundred and twenty-two years only after the deluge. Gentilism, therefore, or the worship of false gods, must have commenced many years before this date; both because it was the religion of Abraham's ancestors, and because it had become so universal in Chaldea, as to be the foundation of a national persecution of Terah and his family.

Sir William Jones has, I think, in the most satisfactory manner proved that the system of gentilism among all the ancient nations, who adopted it, was the same. This remarkable fact, if admitted, furnishes unanswerable evidence that it was derived from a single source. For it is impossible that different and distant nations should have severally invented so complicated a system; comprising so many gods, having the same names, having the same fabulous history of their origin and character, worshipped with the same numerous and diversified rights, and having the same various and peculiar offices assigned to them. The best account of this extraordinary fact which I have met with, is contained in Byrant's Analysis of the Ancient Heathen Mythology. This learned and able writer has, in my view, rendered it highly probable that the religion was begun by the Cushites, or that mixed multitude, who attached themselves to Nimrod, according to the common chronology, about the year of the world 1750; and formed themselves seven years after, into a nation, or body politic, under his dominion. These people, in their dispersion, spread over many parts of the earth: and by their enterprise, heroism, arts, and ingenuity, appear to have had the first great and controlling influence over the affairs of men, both secular and religious; an influence, the effects of which wonderfully remain at the present time.

The objects and the rites of worship adopted by these people seem almost all to have been found in the history of the deluge, of Noah, and of his family. At first, they probably intended only to commemorate, in a solemn manner, this awful and disastrous event, and the wonderful preservation of this family. That a man of so excellent and extraordinary a character; a man singled out by the voice of God from a world, on account of his piety; a man, who was the only pious head of a family, amidst all the millions of the human race; a man, who had survived the ruins of one world, and begun the settlement and population of another; a man, who had been miraculously preserved from a universal deluge; a man, to whom the postdiluvians owed all their religion, their knowledge, their arts, and even their existence; should be commemorated with singular feelings, particularly with singular veneration, was a thing of course. Equally natural and necessary was it, that the most solemn remembrance should be retained and expressed of such an amazing event as the destruction of a world. High veneration for any being easily slides, in such minds as ours, into religious reverence; especially when it is publicly and solemnly expressed by ceremonies of an affecting and awful nature. When Noah particularly, and his sons generally, had been often, and for a series of years, commemorated in this manner, the history of man has amply taught us that it was no strange thing to find them ultimately raised to the rank and character of deities. This event would naturally take place the sooner, on account of the astonishing facts included in their singular history. The imagination, wrought up to enthusiasm and terror while realizing the astonishing scenes through which they had passed, could hardly fail to lend its powerful aid towards this act of canonization; and would, without much reluctance, attribute to them a divine character. If we remember how much more willingly mankind have ever worshipped false gods than the true one, we shall, I think, without much hesitation, admit the probability of the account which has here been given concerning this subject.

The proofs that the authors of gentilism had a primary reference to Noah, his family, and their history, appear to me to be complete in the different symbols, ceremonies, objects of commemoration, and names of persons and things, together with the whole mythological history of this subject. Multitudes of allusions are found in all these things to Noah himself, his three sons, the number of his family, their singular history, the deluge, the ark, the dove, the olive branch, and various other particulars. Many of these are too explicit to be mistaken; and many others less explicit, yet taken together, and in connexion with these, corroborate, with no small force, the account which has here been given.

When this scheme was once begun, it was a thing of course, that it should be rapidly progressive. When mankind had departed from the true God, it was natural for a restless imagination to multiply the objects of its dependence and worship. Among the objects which would easily engross the religious attention of these people, and of all who were inclined to their system, the sun, moon, and stars, would undoubtedly be some of the first. The exaltation, splendour, immutability, and beneficial influence of these glorious luminaries are so affecting to the human mind, as to hold always a distinguished place in its contemplations. Nothing visible is more fitted to excite sublime emo-

tions, or to awaken curiosity and astonishment, nor, when God was once forgotten, to inspire religious reverence. Accordingly we find, that before the days of Job, the worship of the heavenly bodies had become extensive. This divine writer* says, chap. xxxi. 26—28, 'If I beheld the sun when it shined, or the moon walking in brightness; and my heart hath been secretly enticed, or my mouth hath kissed my hand; this also were an iniquity to be punished by the judge; for I should have denied the God that is above.' Job probably lived between one thousand six hundred, and one thousand seven hundred years before Christ, or about three hundred and fifty years after the birth of Abraham, according to the common chronology. With this account of the early worship of these celestial objects, profane history entirely accords.

But the mind was unsatisfied even with these deities. The business of multiplying them was carried on with astonishing rapidity. The worship of deceased men had already been rendered to Noah and his family. This was soon extended to others, and then to others still, in such a manner, that the number soon became enormous. Hesiod informs us, that the δαιμονες, or demons, who appear to have been no other than departed men, and who were supposed to inhabit the middle regions between earth and heaven, amounted to more than thirty thousand. In opposition to these deceased beings, God is especially called in the sacred volume the living God.† From deceased men the transition was easy to animals, to vegetables, to inanimate objects, and to the visionary beings of imagination. Gods were soon found everywhere; in mountains, rivers, springs, the ocean, the earth, the winds, light, darkness, groves, and generally in every thing which was particularly interesting to the fancy.

Among the reasons which influenced the mind to this restless and endless creation of deities, the first place is due, perhaps, to the apprehension that this conduct was an evidence of peculiar piety; and therefore a direct mode of obtaining blessings from some or other of the objects worshipped. Another reason was, the complaisance of one nation to another, which led them to adopt their respective deities. The objects of worship were, to a great extent, the same in different nations; yet, being called by different names, and worshipped with ceremonies, differing in some degree at least, according to the diversity of manners in different nations, they came, at length, to be considered as different gods. The Athenians, under the influence of both these causes, appear to have adopted most of the deities of whom they had any knowledge.

Another reason for this conduct, judiciously assigned by Dr Blair, is the tendency of the human imagination to lend animation, thought, and agency to the several inanimate objects with which it is conversant, and by which it is strongly affected; particularly to those which are solemn, awful, and sublime. The transition from the personification of these objects, to the belief that they are really animated by an indwelling conscious principle, and to a consequent religious reverence for them, is neither unnatural nor difficult after the mind has once become devoted to idolatry. In the early stages of society the imagination is eminently strong, active, and susceptible. Always ready to admire, to be astonished, to be transported, it easily acquires an ascendancy over the reason, then always weak; and, together with the passions, directs almost the whole conduct of man.

It is scarcely credible, that the human mind originally worshipped inanimate objects *directly*. The absurdity of believing that that which had no life in itself, and therefore no agency nor consciousness, could hear prayers, or answer them, could be gratified with praises or sacrifices, could inflict judgments, or confer benefits, is so palpable, that even a savage can hardly be supposed to have admitted it. Much less can those people have admitted it who appear to have been the originators of idolatry. So far were the Cushites from being savages, that they appear to have been the most enlightened and enterprising of the human race at the time when gentilism commenced. It is highly probable, that all these objects were at first regarded as peculiar manifestations of the real Deity; fitted especially to display his attributes to man, and to make the most forcible impressions of his agency. In process of time, however, they began to be considered, especially by the ignorant multitude, as being really gods: and the worship originally addressed to a being supposed to be manifested by the symbol, seems ultimately to have been rendered to the symbol itself. The stock and the stone, intended at first to bring the real Deity before the senses, took at length the place of that Deity, and became in the end the real objects of worship.

It is evident, from several ancient writers quoted by Shuckford,* particularly Clemens Alexandrinus, Herodian, and Pausanias, that pillars of stone, and after them rude blocks of wood, were the first symbols made by mankind of their several deities. Such, it is supposed, were the *teraphim* of Laban, stolen from him by his daughter; and such, plainly, were the religious symbols formed at early periods by the Greeks, and some other nations. Stones in their native, rude state, such, for example, as that erected by Jacob at Bethel, seem extensively to have been set up, at early periods, with various religious views and designs, by the worshippers of the true God. The pillars devoted to idolatrous purposes seem to have been derived from these. They were not, however, long satisfied with these unsightly objects. The Egyptians appear to have had carved images devoted to the purposes of religion, and, without any doubt, molten ones also, before the time of Moses; for we find the children of Israel forming a molten calf at the foot of Mount Sinai. The practice of forming idols in this manner being once begun, seems to have spread with great rapidity among the nations who maintained a mutual correspondence. In the more distant and insulated colonies of men their existence began at much later periods. In Italy, all visible symbols of the Deity were prohibited by Numa Pompilius; and were not introduced into Rome, according to the testimony of Plutarch, so late as one hundred and seventy years after the building of that city, that is, A. M. 3426, in the time of Nebuchadnezzar. Among the savages of this country, images seem to have been little used.

* I consider Job as the author of this book.
† Farmer on Miracles.

* See Shuckford's Sacred and Profane History Connected, vol. i. p. 315, edit. 1819, published by W. Baynes and Son, Paternoster Row, London.

II. *I shall now make a few observations concerning the extent of idol worship.*

The system of gentilism commenced, as has been already remarked, in the plain of Shinar. The Cushites, who were the authors of it, ruled for a short period most of their brethren in the neighbouring countries. Soon after the confusion of languages, an event which seems to have been chiefly confined to them and their associates, and which entirely disqualified them for all the efforts depending on union and concert, they began to disperse into different parts of the earth. Speedily after this they appear to have been attacked by their brethren of the family of Shem, settled in Nineveh and its neighbourhood, and heretofore reduced under their dominion. On this occasion the Cushites were completely routed, and forced to fly with great expedition into different parts of the earth. One body of them fled into Hindostan; in the records of which country, various events of their history are still found. Another made their way into Canaan, where they were again attacked by the same people under the command of Chedorlaomer, and again overthrown. Hence they fled into Egypt, the western parts of Arabia, and the northern and eastern parts of Abyssinia. From Egypt they were again driven; and went into Phœnicia, the Lesser Asia, Greece, Thrace, Italy, and other countries bordering on the Mediterranean and Euxine seas. Whithersoever they went, they carried with them their enterprise, arts, learning, and religion. Most of the countries in which they settled embraced their idolatry at early periods. At a very early period we find it the religion of the ancestors of Abraham in Chaldea. These were descendants of Shem who outlived Abraham himself; and who, with all his piety and authority, was still unable to prevent this senseless desertion of the true religion. In Hindostan also it spread at a very early date; as it did also in the western countries of Asia, in Egypt, and most or all of the eastern parts of Europe. The worship of the true God was, however, not universally renounced, until many ages after the commencement of gentilism. Melchizedec, Job, his friends, and undoubtedly many of his countrymen, the people of the Thebais, or Upper Egypt, and probably many others in different parts of the world, still retained the true religion, long after idolatry had been embraced by a great portion of the human race. After the settlement of the Israelites in Canaan we find few traces of the true religion. We are not, however, to suppose it to have been wholly banished from all other countries till some time afterward. The precise period when the whole world, beside the Jews, became idolatrous, I am unable to determine.

In the fourth century after the birth of Christ a new kind of idolatry, or rather idolatry in a new form, began to exist in the Christian church. This was the worship of saints and angels, and afterward of images, pictures, relics, and other fantastical objects of devotion. This idolatry, though at first vigorously opposed by the body of the church, and afterward by individuals and small collections of men, spread speedily over the whole of Christendom, and was adopted both by the learned and unlearned of every country. Thus in one form or another the worship of false gods has prevailed throughout most of the inhabited world, and the greatest part of the reign of time. I shall now,

III. *Make a few observations on the manner in which this worship has been performed.*

I have already mentioned idols, as being intended originally to be means of worshipping God; symbols of the divine character and attributes, designed to impress them powerfully on the senses, and thus to excite in the mind animated sentiments of awe and devotion. Beside the use of these images, gentilism copied closely in its worship the ritual originally enjoined by God, and adopted in the pure worship. Prayers, praises, sacrifices, and oblations were all offered to its various deities. Fastings, ablutions, and penances of many kinds, were enjoined to their infatuated votaries. Temples were erected on them, altars built, shrines formed, and regular orders of priests established, and consecrated to an exclusive performance of their religious services. Oracles, also, which were sometimes pretended expressions of the will of these gods concerning the immediate duties of men, and sometimes professed predictions of future events, were delivered in most, or all of the countries where idolatry prevailed. The victims offered were to a great extent the same which were prescribed in the law of Moses; probably the same which had been offered from the beginning; for we find Noah, immediately after the deluge, 'offering of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, burnt-offerings on the altar' which he had made. It well deserves to be remarked, that in all the records of heathen worship which have come down to us, the votaries appear neither to have asked nor given thanks for moral good. Secular enjoyments of every kind they universally solicited; but goodness of heart seems never to have been thought of as a gift coming from the gods. Accordingly Cicero, who must have been well acquainted with this subject, says, 'Who ever thanked the gods for his virtue?'

Processions seem also to have been extensively used as a part of the religious ceremonial of gentilism. These, together with the magnificence in its temples, the costliness of its images, and the pomp of its services, were all intended to affect the senses in the deepest manner. Indeed, nothing else could be done to keep this system alive. Argument was only hostile to it. The light of sound reason would have dispelled its darkness in a moment. But the senses, and through them the imagination, could be strongly addressed; and these could entirely govern the man.

To add to the splendour of all the other objects connected with this service, and to render the oblation more affecting to the suppliant, as well as more acceptable to the Deity, offerings of every kind were made more and more expensive. Gold, silver, gems, the choicest aromatics, and unguents and essences made of them, still more precious than gold itself, were frequent presents to the gods of idolatry. Hecatombs were early substituted for single victims; and, to render the worship still more propitiatory, these were soon exchanged for human sacrifices. To complete the efficacy of the oblation, these sacrifices were selected from the brightest and most promising youths of the nation, the sons of the noble and the princely, and infants in the most lovely and endearing period of life. Victims of this kind, also, were multiplied to a wonderful degree. Twenty thousand human beings are supposed to have expired annually on the altars of Mexico alone; and

all these were offered up with circumstances of cruelty and horror which, but for the most indubitable testimony, would transcend belief. To these dreadful services, violating every feeling of humanity, but wonderfully affecting the imagination, were added ablutions, burdensome on account of their frequency, and often on account of the great distance of the sacred waters from the residence of the suppliant; and various kinds of penance, terrible and excruciating in their nature, and overwhelming by their duration, were customarily added. Thus, though reason and humanity were wounded and prostrated, the imagination was completely possessed by the demons of superstition; and miserable man, voluntarily losing the government of himself, became the sport of fiends and furies, and fitted only for the gloom and chains of bedlam.

With the same design, and under the same impulse, mankind sought the most salutary and the most awful recesses for the celebration of their religious rites.* In dark and lonely groves, on the summits of lofty eminences, and in the depths of awful caverns, the most solemn rites of gentile worship were performed at early periods. These scenes of stillness, solitude, and terror, were perfectly suited to rouse the imagination to ecstacy, and to enhance the gloomy fervours of their religion. To them succeeded temples of astonishing magnificence, exhausting in their erection the wealth of nations, and the labour of ages. These also were ornamented within and without with every thing which riches, ingenuity, and art could supply, or which was calculated to impress the mind of the votary with astonishment, religious awe, and profound reverence for the beings to whom these structures were consecrated.

It cannot, I think, be necessary for me to employ any arguments for the purpose of enforcing the prohibition in the text on the minds of my audience. The importance of it to the Jews at the time when it was given, and to the great body of mankind, both before and since, is abundantly evident from the observations which have been already made. But in this land, and in the present state of religious society here, no transgression is less likely to exist than that which is forbidden in this passage of Scripture. Instead of attempting to enforce this precept, therefore, on those who hear me, I shall employ the remaining time in making a few practical—

REMARKS.

1. How degrading, melancholy, and sinful a character is here presented to us of man.

This subject, perhaps more than any other, holds out to our view a wonderful exhibition of the depravity of the human heart. What sight can be more strange, more humiliating, more debasing to an intelligent nature, than that of rational and immortal minds originally virtuous as they came from the hand of God, destined to the possession of endless life, and formed for such noble and sublime purposes, prostrating themselves not only before the sun, and moon, and 'the host of heaven,' but before men, evil spirits, visionary beings, animals, vegetables, blocks of wood, and figures of stone! All these beings, such minds have converted into deities; and, falling down before them, have said unto them, 'Deliver us, for ye are our gods.' Is it not beyond measure amazing, to see a human being, a rational immortal being, go into a forest, cut down a tree, transport it home on a waggon, burn one part of it on his hearth, hew and carve another part of it into an idol, and call it a god! Is it not amazing to see such a man confessing himself inferior to a stock fashioned by his own hands, acknowledging his dependence on it for his life, his blessings, and his hopes, placing his trust in it, building to it temples, erecting altars, and offering up to it prayers and praises! Is it not more amazing to behold the same man sacrificing living victims to a mass of wood, rational victims, nay more, youths of the noblest families, the brightest talents, and the fairest hopes; nay, more still, his own beloved offspring, the children of his own bowels!

What shall we say, then, what shall we not say, when we behold kings, heroes, and sages employed in this manner? When we see towns, provinces, countries, and continents, nay, the whole earth, all uniting in this infatuated worship, with a universal forgetfulness of Jehovah, the Creator, Preserver, and Benefactor of all beings; notwithstanding the hourly demonstration of his perfections and agency in the visible universe!

Still more astonished ought we to be, if we can be more astonished, to see the Israelites, after all the wonders of Egypt, Sinai, and Canaan, in the midst of all the marvellous blessings given to their nation, with the word of God in their hands, while his prophets were daily announcing to them his revelations, while his awful oracles from the mercy-seat were still sounding in their ears, within his temple, before his altar, and beneath the awful splendour of the Shechinah, 'forgetting the God that made them, and lightly esteeming the Rock of their salvation;' wandering after the idolatry of the heathen, bowing before their gods, partaking of their sacrifices, absorbed in their follies, and embracing their wickedness with all their heart.

To complete this dreadful picture of human depravity, the whole Christian world, with few, very few, exceptions, was for many centuries buried and lost in this stupid, shameful, monstrous worship. The progeny of Noah, who began this unnatural defection from their Creator, became idolaters while the waves of the deluge had scarcely ceased to roar around this wasted world. The Jews became idolaters at the foot of Sinai, beneath the thunders of the Almighty. The Christian world became idolaters when the Redeemer was, in a sense, bleeding on the cross before their eyes. How debased, then, how sinful, how miserable a being is man!

2. These observations teach us the indispensable necessity of a revelation to such a world as this.

It has been shown that, at an early period after the flood, the whole human race lost the knowledge of the true God, and sank into the moral stupidity and wickedness of gentilism. That rational beings should be created or exist for any end which does not involve in it the knowledge and worship of the true God, is a doctrine indefensible by a single rational argument. What purpose could beings destitute of this knowledge and worship be supposed to answer? What purpose, I mean, which God could propose, or which he could admit as useful, as desirable, as worthy of himself? Can he be supposed to have formed rational and immortal beings to be ignorant of Him, the only source of good, of wisdom, excellence, and happiness? Can he be supposed to have made such beings capable of knowing

* See Maurice's Antiquities, vol. ii.

and glorifying him, for the debased and wretched end of worshipping gods of gold, silver, wood, and stone? Of worshipping them also with services deformed with falsehood, cruelty, and impurity; and attended by a total destruction of all wisdom, and all virtue? Such, however, to a vast extent, has been, and such, without revelation, would have for ever been, the condition of mankind. Revelation only has taught and preserved the knowledge and worship of the true God in this guilty world; and Mohammedans and infidels are no less indebted to revelation for this knowledge, than are Jews and Christians.

Piety has been heretofore shown to be the foundation of all other virtue, the first and greatest branch of this glorious subject, without which, the virtue exercised towards our fellow creatures, and towards ourselves, cannot exist. But piety is impossible on the system of gentilism. The great constituents of this divine affection of the heart are love, reverence, and resignation. But how can love, reverence, and resignation, be exercised towards an ox, a crocodile, a cat, a frog, a fly, an onion, a stick of wood, or a block of marble? Here plainly there is nothing to be loved, reverenced, or regarded with resignation. In the mean time, perpetual frauds, falsehoods, cruelties, and impurities, added a total corruption of all the affections and conduct of man towards himself and his fellow men, to the supreme debasement of his character, produced, of course, by the acknowledgment and worship of heathen gods. This system, therefore, banished moral excellence from the mind; and introduced into its place every thing that was despicable, worthless, and wicked. He who does not see the absolute necessity of a revelation to beings situated as the inhabitants of this world were, must be voluntarily blind, and must love to be deceived.

'You, my hearers, are now in the house of God. You know his existence, presence, character, and agency. You are employed in his worship. You have heard the glorious tidings of forgiving, redeeming and sanctifying love. The Redeemer of mankind, and the expiation which he has made of sin, have been announced to you from the cradle. This house is to you 'the gate of heaven.' Here the highway commences which leads to that glorious world. Immortal life here dawns upon you. A voice from amidst the throne of God invites you here, to take of the water of life freely. All these blessings are brought to you by revelation. But for revelation, you would have been this day worshipping a demon or an ox, or falling down before the stock of a tree. But for revelation, you might this day have been imbruing your hands in the blood of one of your number, butchered as a miserable victim to Moloch. 'Blessing, and honour, and glory, and thanksgiving, be unto our God, for this unspeakable gift,' through Jesus Christ our Lord! Amen.

SERMON CII.

THE LAW OF GOD.—DECALOGUE.—THE THIRD COMMANDMENT. THE NATURE OF PROFANENESS.

Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless, that taketh his name in vain.—Exod. xx. 7.

In the two preceding Discourses I have considered at some length the nature of the sins forbidden in the first and second commands of the Decalogue. I did not think it necessary, after the ample discussion of the duties of piety so lately delivered from this place, to dwell anew upon the same duties, as required by the former of these commands; nor on account of the state of Christian society in this country, to insist on the prohibition contained in the latter. Considering the subjects of both as sufficiently canvassed for the design of these Discourses, I shall now proceed to examine the nature of the precept given to us in the text.

The name of God, as used in the Scriptures, has by divines of all descriptions been generally regarded as denoting his name literally; his titles of every kind; his perfections; and, generally, every thing by which his character and his pleasure are made known to mankind.

'To take the name of God in vain,' is to use all or either of these to no valuable purpose, or to evil purposes, or with falsehood, or with irreverence.

Of him who does this, God declares, that 'he will not hold him guiltless;' that is, that he will hold him guilty; especially in the great day of trial and decision.

In discoursing on this subject, I shall examine,

I. *The nature,*

II. *The guilt,*

III. *The danger of this sin.*

I. *I shall examine with attention the nature of this sin.*

The nature of this sin may be advantageously unfolded by considering it as it respects the name and the works of God.

By the name of God, I intend the several names and titles by which he has been pleased to distinguish himself, and to manifest his character to mankind. In his works I shall include every thing which he has wrought, instituted, and declared, as an especial manifestation of his presence, perfection, and agency.

The name of God is profaned, that is, treated with the irreverence which is the object of the prohibition in the text,

1. In perjury, or false swearing.

'Ye shall not swear by my name falsely; neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God: I am Jehovah,'

Lev. xx. 12. To swear falsely is to invoke God to witness a lie. It is scarcely possible to conceive of a grosser insult to the Creator of the universe than this. He, as all men perfectly well know, infinitely loves truth and infinitely detests falsehood; and has said, that 'there shall in no wise enter into the heavenly city any one who loveth or maketh a lie.' To call him then in this solemn manner to witness a falsehood, is to laugh, at his love of truth, his disposition and power to support it, and that glorious purity of his character, before which 'the heavens are unclean, and the angels charged with folly.'

2. When the name of God is used in any light, irreverent manner, the same sin is committed.

The most prominent and most usual modes of transgressing in this manner, are profane cursing and swearing. In cases of this nature the name of God is frequently employed to accompany and enhance diversion; frequently as the means of giving vent with peculiar force to the violence of anger; often, also, it is used to aggravate denunciations of revenge; and very often dishonoured by unhallowed lips in imprecations of evil on our fellow men. In every one of these methods the name of God is profaned, times without number, every day.

This glorious and awful Being, as I have already observed, has all possible claims to the highest reverence. Every thing teaches us this doctrine: the creation and the providence of God, reason and revelation. It is enforced by every page of divine truth, and by every dictate of the human conscience. In a word, on all things within and without us, that 'glorious and fearful name, Jehovah our God,' is written in sunbeams. In the same clear and luminous manner is everywhere displayed the indispensable duty of reverencing him with that 'fear of the Lord, which is wisdom, and that departure from evil, which is understanding.' Nor can his claims to the performance of this duty be ever relinquished.

Indeed, mankind appear almost universally to possess a clear conviction of the truth of this doctrine, and of the indispensable nature of this duty. In all ordinary circumstances the worst of men acknowledge both without hesitation, even those who most frequently and most heinously commit the sin which the doctrine prohibits. Of this sin, God seems to have established in the consciences of mankind a stronger and more uniform disapprobation than of most others. In few cases of transgression is there so little disagreement as in this. Almost all other sins men labour to justify. I know not that I have ever heard any man attempt soberly to justify profaneness of this nature. He whose tongue is still vibrating with cursing and swearing, will usually acknowledge that his conduct is inexcusable. Arguments to prove the reality of this sin are therefore unnecessary.

3. We are guilty of this sin also when we invoke the name of God lightly and irreverently in prayer, or without that seriousness, humility, and religious awe, which are indispensable to the acceptable performance of this duty.

At all times, in all circumstances, are we required to render to Jehovah our supreme reverence and unfeigned devotion, whenever he becomes the object of our contemplation, or our conduct. His character is always and immutably the same; infinitely great, awful, holy, and excellent. Our relation to him, also, is invariably the same, that of rational and dependent creatures. But especially is this reverence and this devotion to exist in prayer. In the performance of this duty, so solemn in its nature, and bringing us so near the throne of majesty and mercy, the character of God, our own inferiority, dependence, obligations, sin, guilt, danger, and infinite necessity of the divine favour and blessing, are brought up in full view, and forced home upon the heart. Here, therefore, all inducements to reverential thoughts of God, and all advantages for entertaining them, are represented to the mind. To exhibit irreverence in this case, therefore, is to break over these inducements, and sottishly to neglect these advantages. God here is not treated irreverently in the hour of inconsideration, of strong temptation, and surprising sin; but in the season of seriousness, and professed devotion. We worship God acceptably, when we worship him 'with reverence and godly fear.' 'God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of his saints, and to be had in reverence by all them that are about him.' The same spirit is in the same manner demanded in our private and secret devotions. When, therefore, the mind regards its Maker in this act of devotion with lightness and irreverence, it is not only clear that it is guilty of the sin forbidden in the text, and of great sin; but it is fearfully probable, when this is habitually its conduct, that it is at all times the subject of a general spirit of profanation.

4. A still more heinous transgression, of the same nature, in using the name of God irreverently in the solemn act of dedicating the soul to him in the covenant of grace.

In this, the most solemn transaction in which man is ever concerned on this side of the grave, all things, even some which are not applicable to the taking of an oath, or the duty of prayer, conspire in the highest degree to make it affecting to the mind. The day, the place, the occasion, the transaction, are invested with peculiar solemnity by their very nature. A pre-eminent solemnity, also, is thrown upon this transaction by the character of the person immediately concerned; a sinner, professedly restored to the divine favour; the subject of dedication, an immortal mind; the Being to whom the dedication is made, a pardoning God; the means by which the worshipper has been permitted thus to dedicate himself, the righteousness of the Redeemer; the ends for which he thus offers himself up, the glory of God and his own eternal salvation. All these things united, plainly render this the most interesting transaction in which the soul is ever engaged in the present world. To act lightly and irreverently then in a concern so solemn, so eminently affecting, is to be profane against all inducements to our duty; against some not existing in any other religious service. In this conduct, all these most sacred things, God, Christ, the work of redemption, forgiving love, the sabbath, the sanctuary, the restoration and salvation of the soul, are, if it be done deliberately and with understanding, treated with the grossest contempt, and the most impious mockery. In deliberate conduct of this nature, the mind proves itself to be depraved altogether beyond the common measure; and the 'conscience' is evidently not far from being 'seared, as with a hot iron.'

Generally, he who regards God with levity and irreverence in any religious service whatever when this

irreverence is directed immediately towards his character, is guilty of profaneness in the mode specified under the second head. In other words, he is guilty of profaneness of the same nature, and existing substantially under the same form, with that which is found in profane cursing and swearing. The irreverence, which constitutes the peculiar guilt of this latter sin exists also in the former, and in both is immediately directed against God himself. Both therefore are justly considered as cases of the same nature.

As this sin respects the works of God, or, in other words, whatever he has done, declared, or instituted, the profaneness, whenever it exists, is in its nature, exactly the same as, but different in the mode of its existence from, that exhibited under the former general head. In all instances included under that head, it is directed against God immediately; but mediately in those now referred to; the irreverence being pointed immediately against the works themselves, and through them against their Author.

God is often treated with irreverence,

1. In the works of creation and providence.

The works of creation and providence are merely manifestations of their Author. In all of them his character is more or less visible; his wisdom, power, and goodness; his self-existence and independence; his omnipresence and omnipotence; his omniscience and immutability. These perfections are so clearly and so extensively manifested in his works, that, without more than common stupidity, we cannot be ignorant of them. Of consequence, we clearly perceive them to be the works of God; and whenever we complain of them, or murmur at them, or despise them, or ridicule them, the complaints, the murmurs, the contempt, and the ridicule are intended ultimately, not against the works themselves, but against their Author. No man ever thought of treating in this manner inanimate objects, or mere events. He who made these objects and controls these events, is the only being against whom the irreverence is intentionally directed. This is so obviously true, that probably it was never seriously questioned.

The same sin is committed in the same manner whenever we assert or insinuate that these works were made to no end, or to no end worthy of their Author. In such a case the character of God is profanely impeached through his works, because we accuse him of weakness and folly. No folly can be more conspicuous than that which is visible in doing any thing, and especially very great things, without any end in view, or without any such end as is suited to the splendour of the apparatus, or the character of the workman. Of this folly in the case before us we accuse God.

Profaneness of an exactly similar nature is practised when, in considering the works of God, we intentionally or negligently keep his agency out of view, and attribute to second causes that which plainly belongs to the first cause. There are philosophers, and ever have been, who, through choice or carelessness, have considered the beings and events in the earth and the visible heavens as proceeding in a manner and from a cause resembling that which the heathen attributed to fate. Instead of supposing them to be all directed by an intelligent cause to purposes formed by unerring wisdom, and conducted regularly by that wisdom to the accomplishment of those purposes; they are regarded and spoken of as operating of themselves only, without any direction, without any end to be accomplished, without any wisdom to guide, or intelligent agency to control.

The works of God were by him intended to be, and are in fact, manifestations of himself; proofs of his character, presence, and agency. In this light he requires men continually to regard them; and to refuse this regard is considered by him as grossly wicked, and highly deserving of punishment. Accordingly, David says, Psal. xxviii. 5, 'Because they regard not the works of the Lord, nor the operation of his hands, he shall destory them and not build them up.' Isaiah also, chap. v. 12—14, speaking of the Jews, says, 'They regard not the work of the Lord, neither consider the operation of his hands. Therefore my people are gone into captivity, because they have no knowledge; and their honourable men are famished, and their multitude dried up with thirst. Therefore, hell hath enlarged herself and opened her mouth without measure; and their glory and their multitude, and their pomp; and he that rejoiceth shall descend into it.'

I am apprehensive that even good men are prone to pay less attention to the works of creation and providence than piety demands, and the Scriptures require. We say and hear so much concerning the insufficiency of these works to unfold the character of God, and the nature of genuine religion, and find the truth of what we thus say and hear so clearly proved, that we are prone, not very unnaturally, to consider them as almost uninstructive in moral things, and in a great measure useless to the promotion of piety. This, however, is a palpable and dangerous error. The works alone, without the aid of the Scriptures, would, I acknowledge, be far less instructive than they now are, and utterly insufficient to guide us in the way of righteousness. The Scriptures were designed to be a comment on these works; to explain their nature, and to show us the agency, purposes, wisdom, and goodness of God in their formation. Thus explained, thus illumined, they become means of knowledge very extensive and eminently useful. He who does not find in the various, beautiful, sublime, awful, and astonishing objects presented to us in creation and providence, irresistible and glorious reasons for admiring, adoring, loving, and praising his Creator, has not a claim to evangelical piety. David did not act in this manner. All who, like David, feel the spirit of the gospel, will like him also rejoice in those works in which God himself rejoices; will delight to contemplate them with wonder, reverence, and gratitude; will find God everywhere in the works of his hands; and, passing beyond those second causes, which are merely instruments of his agency, will see everywhere displayed the finger and character of the divine workman.

2. The same irreverence is abundantly exercised towards the word of God.

Irreverence in this particular exists in a multitude of forms and degrees, altogether too numerous to be mentioned on this occasion. I shall select a few from this number.

(1.) The Scriptures are not unfrequently made the object or the means of sport and jesting. David says of himself, 'My heart standeth in awe at thy word:' and again, addressing his Maker, 'O how sweet are thy words unto my taste!' God, speaking by the prophet Isaiah, says, 'To this man will I look; even to him

that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at my word.'—'Hear the word of the Lord, ye that tremble at his word. He shall appear to your joy; and your brethren that hated you shall be ashamed.' Such is the character of good men; and such are the promises to those who 'tremble at the word of God.' But how different is the spirit of those who jest with this sacred and awful volume; who can find sport and merriment in the book which unfolds the infinitely great, solemn, and awful character of Jehovah; which denounces his wrath against all the workers of iniquity; which opens to our view the Redeemer of mankind on the cross; which discloses to us all the glories of heaven, and the strait and narrow way to that happy world; which presents to us the terrors of hell, with the dreadful road that leads to final perdition; and which shows us ourselves as objects of the divine indignation, in imminent danger of endless ruin, and yet as prisoners of hope, and candidates for life eternal! What can be found here to excite diversion; to become the theme of gayety, the subject of laughter, the foundation of amusement and trifling? What must be the spirit of him who can divert himself over the grave; who can make death the topic of wit; who can laugh before the bar of the final judgment, and sport with the miseries of perdition! He must, indeed, 'have forgotten the God that made him, and lightly esteemed the rock of his salvation.'

(2.) The same irreverence is exercised, when the Scriptures are neglected. 'Thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name,' Psal. cxxxviii. 2. This passage is thus paraphrased by Dr Watts:—

> 'I'll sing thy truth and mercy, Lord:
> I'll sing the wonders of thy word:
> Not all thy works and names below,
> So much thy power and glory show.'

If God then has magnified his word in this manner; if he has rendered it the means of displaying his character so much more perfectly than the works of creation and providence; if he has thus rendered it immensely important to mankind; if he himself appears in it so immediately, so clearly, and so gloriously, how inexcusable must we be, if we do not regard it with the solemn concern, the deep attention, and the profound reverence, due to his infinite majesty? But negligence of the Scriptures is the absolute prevention, the certain death, of all such emotions. What veneration can he possess for the Bible, or for the Author of it, who leaves it to moulder on a shelf; or who reads it, when he reads it at all, with carelessness and stupidity; who is equally regardless of its doctrines, and its precepts; and who renders to it universally less respect than to a novel, or a play?

(3.) The same irreverence is exercised towards the Scriptures, when we do not duly respect their authority. When the Scriptures are acknowledged to be the word of God, an end is put to all questions concerning the truth of their doctrines, and the reasonableness of their precepts. If they are his word, every thing contained in them, unless it be some error of a transcriber or printer, is true and right. Nor is this all. As 'all Scripture is given by inspiration of God;' so he has declared the whole to be 'profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness.' As they are, he has declared that they are the genuine means of 'perfecting the man of God,' and of 'furnishing him thoroughly unto every good work.' The plain duty of all men, therefore, is carefully to understand, implicitly to believe, and exactly to obey them. If then we find some doctrines partially revealed, some mysterious and inexplicable in their nature, and these, or others, contradicting our own preconceived opinions; if we doubt, or disbelieve such doctrines, because our own philosophy is unsatisfied with them, opposed to them, or unable to explain them, we wholly fail of the reverence due to him who has declared them; and, in a manner highly affrontive, to impeach his wisdom and veracity.

The Bereans 'received the word' preached by the apostles, 'with all readiness of mind;' and, to be satisfied whether it was true, did not appeal to their own reason, but to 'the Scriptures,' which they 'searched daily' for this end. All who possess the liberal and noble-minded disposition ascribed to them, will pursue exactly the same conduct; and will say with St Paul, 'Let God be true, but every man a liar.' It was from this disposition that they believed in the evangelical sense, and were saved. All who possess the same spirit will share in the same faith, and the same salvation. What can be more preposterous, more indecent, more irreverential to God, than for beings 'of yesterday, who know nothing,' to question the wisdom and the truth of his declarations; and, instead of believing what he has said, upon the ground of his veracity, to insist on perceiving, before we give credit to it, the truth and reasonableness of the doctrines declared, by means of our own philosophy. To men whose sincerity we consider as proved, we readily yield our belief, whenever they declare such things as they had opportunity certainly to know. God knows all things with absolute certainty. Ought he not then to be believed in whatever he is pleased to declare? Is not his veracity greater than that of men? 'If,' then, 'we receive the witness of men, the witness of God,' saith St John, 'is greater. He that believeth not God, hath made him a liar.' What wonderful irreverence is this towards God! What an impudent insult! How tremendous a profanation of his glorious character!

(4.) Of the same nature is the contempt, obloquy, and ridicule often cast upon the Scriptures. The Scriptures, in instances not very unfrequent, receive this treatment from those who professedly believe them, and much more frequently from infidels. A man who has not hitherto seen sufficient evidence to prove the divine origin of the Scriptures, may be fairly considered as warranted to withhold from them his assent. At the same time he is indispensably bound to investigate this evidence as fast and as far as he is able; and to yield himself to it whenever it is perceived, with candour and equity. But nothing can justify, or even palliate, the manner in which infidels have conducted their opposition to this book. There is no mode of attack which they have thought too gross to be adopted in this warfare. The frauds which they have practised upon Christianity have been without number, and without limits. All the weakness, folly, superstition, and enthusiasm inherent in the nature of man, they have charged upon its doctrines; although these very doctrines contradict and condemn them all. All the vices inwoven in the human character, all the enormities perpetrated by the pride, injustice, and cruelty of man, they have charged upon its precepts, notwithstanding these very precepts prohibit every one of them, and threaten them universally with endless punishment. The religion

itself, they have regularly styled superstition, enthusiasm, and fanaticism; and have thus endeavoured to prepossess, and to a vast extent have actually prepossessed, great multitudes of mankind against it, under the mere influence of nicknames. Where they could not convince or refute, an evil which has universally attended their efforts, they have succeeded, at least equally well, by perplexing and entangling. Instead of open, direct, arguments, fairly stated, and fully discussed, they have insinuated doubts, started difficulties, and hinted objections, leaving the minds of the young, the ignorant, and the unskilful to embarrass themselves by dwelling on those subjects which they had neither learning to investigate, nor capacity to understand. In this situation, such minds are as effectually overthrown, from a consciousness of their inability to defend themselves, as by the power of an acknowledged demonstration.

What they have been unable to effect in these modes, they have endeavoured to accomplish by wit. A book, professing to be the word of God, to communicate his will to mankind, and to disclose eternal life and eternal death to every human being, together with the terms and means by which one of these may be obtained, and the other must be suffered; a book, believed truly to sustain this character by a great part of those to whom it has been published, particularly by most of the learned, and by almost all whom their fellow men have regarded as wise and virtuous, has unquestionable claims to be examined with solemn thought and unbiassed investigation. The question concerning its divine origin is of infinite moment to every child of Adam. He who can sport with this subject, would with the same propriety laugh while he heard the sentence of death pronounced upon him, and dance around the grave which was dug to receive him. Suppose the Scriptures were in fact the word of God; suppose the infidel at the foot of Mount Sinai; suppose he heard the trumpet sound and the thunders roll, saw the lightning blaze, the cloud embosom the mountain, and the flame of devouring fire reach the heavens, and perceived the earth to tremble beneath his feet; suppose the final day arrived, and the same infidel to hear the call of the archangel, the trump of God, and the shout of the heavenly host, and to see the graves open, the dead arise, the Judge descend, the plains and the mountains kindled with the final conflagration, and the 'heavens and the earth flee away;' would he be inclined to jesting, to sport, and to ridicule? The Scriptures declare themselves to be the word of the glorious Being who spoke from Sinai, and who will again come to 'judge the quick and the dead.' The very terms by which the infidel and all his fellow men will be tried on this dreadful day, the Scriptures profess to unfold; the very terms on which to us are suspended both heaven and hell. Should the Scriptures be indeed the word of that God, what will become of the infidel? Should they not, what will he lose by believing them? Where, then, is the place for his sport? where the foundation for his trifling?

Could the contempt or the ridicule which he employs really affect the question, and exhibit it in any new light to the understanding of man, something at least might be pleaded in extenuation of this conduct. But ridicule, however gross the banter, or refined the wit, cannot be proof. A sneer cannot be an argument. The question, after every effort of this nature, is left just where it was; while the inquirer is insnared, deceived, and ruined. How melancholy an employment, to destroy a soul for the sake of uttering a jest!

To complete this wretched pursuit of this wretched purpose, the infidel assaults the Scriptures with obscenity. In periods and places in which coarse manners prevail, when the animal side of man is left naked, and the feelings and conduct of the brute obtrude themselves without a blush, this obscenity breaks out in gross ribaldry, and the shameless dialect of the workhouse and the brothel. In more chastened society, the impurity, lest it should be too offensive, is veiled by decency of expression; steals upon the mind in an innuendo; glances at it in a hint, and peeps from behind an obscure suggestion. What a shocking mixture is here presented to the thoughts of a sober, and even of a decent man! obscenity blended with the truths contained in the word of God! How obviously must the mind which can voluntarily, which can laboriously, unite these things, be 'the habitation of devils;' the hold of every foul spirit, and a 'cage of every unclean and hateful bird!' How irreverent, how profane, how abominable, how filthy must it appear to Him 'in whose sight the heavens are unclean!'

3. This irreverence is, perhaps, not less exercised towards the institutions or ordinances of God.

God has instituted, as important means of displaying his own character, preserving his worship, and promoting his religion in the world, the sabbath, public and private prayer and praise; the preaching of the gospel, public and private humiliation and fasting, the church of Christ, its communion, its sacraments, and its discipline. As all these are his institutions, and seen to be his, it is obvious that irreverence towards them is irreverence towards himself; and in this manner has the subject ever been considered in the Christian world. It will be easily seen, that the various ways in which this numerous train of sacred things is profaned, are so many as to render it impracticable to specify them on the present occasion. I shall therefore attempt only to mention such as are most usual or most prominent.

The sabbath is undoubtedly the great support of religion in the world; for wherever it is unknown or unregarded, religion is unknown. Accordingly, God has been pleased to make it the subject of one of the commands of the Decalogue. This holy day is profaned, and the author of it treated with gross irreverence, whenever it is devoted to pleasure, or to secular business; whenever we ride or walk, when neither necessity nor mercy demands; whenever we read books of amusement and diversion, or devote our conversation to any topics unsuited to the holy nature of this day. Nor is it less really profaned when we spend its sacred hours in idleness or sleep, or when in any other manner we refuse, or neglect to employ them in the great duties of religion. Equally, and more obviously, are we guilty of this profanation when we speak of the sabbath with contempt, and ridicule or laugh at others for regarding it with the reverence enjoined in the Scriptures, decry the institution as useless, as injurious to the interests of mankind, and as deserving the regard of none but weak and enthusiastic minds; or when, with direct hostility we deny its sacred nature, labour to weaken its authority, and endeavour to destroy its holy, heavenly influence on mankind. In all these cases we impeach the wisdom, equity, or goodness of its author; declare him, when instituting it, to have acted unworthily of himself; and,

in plain language, cast contempt on him, as well as on his institution. No man ever thought of treating with contempt this holy day, considered merely as a seventh part of time; no man ever directed the shafts of ridicule at Monday. Aside from the fact, that it was instituted by God as a sacred day, the Sabbath would be no more despised, and regarded with no more hostility, than any other day of the week. The hostility and contempt, therefore, are directed against the institution, against its sacred nature, against its holy and glorious author.

The worship of God is profaned whenever, for reasons plainly insufficient, we refuse to be present in his house upon the sabbath; or, when present, neglect cordially to unite in its solemn services, or spend the time allotted to them in sleep or diversion; or when we sport with the services themselves; or when our minds rise in hostility against the faithful preaching of the gospel; or when we make the worship of God an object of our scorn and ridicule. Nor are we less really guilty of this crime, whenever we allure or persuade others to the same conduct. The worship of God was designed to be the great means of leading us to eternal life. God appears in it as a forgiving God, as a God reconcilable to sinners, as redeeming them from under the curse of the law, and as reinstamping his own image on their minds. He who will not come to meet him, when appearing in this most venerable and endearing of all characters, or who when he has come will treat him with neglect, opposition, and contempt, is guilty of an insult on the Creator, at which the stoutest heart ought to tremble. What an account of this conduct must he expect to give at the final day!

The Christian sacraments are not often openly profaned. The elements employed have, indeed, been touched with unhallowed hands; and the ordinances themselves have, in solitary instances, been insulted by blasphemous mimicry. But the cases have been so rare, and have been regarded by those who knew them with such abhorrence, as scarcely to need any reprobation from me. I shall therefore only say, that, according to the first feelings of the human mind, feelings which seem never to have been materially weakened, unless by absolute profligacy, they are universally held in the most reverential estimation; and all disregard, thoughtlessness, and levity are not only by the Scriptures, but by common sense also, proscribed in our attendance upon them. If we are not wonderfully insensible, we cannot fail of exercising a profound reverence, when in this peculiarly solemn and affecting manner we draw so near to a forgiving God.

Private and secret worship is much more frequently the object of levity and contempt. Family prayer peculiarly has been attacked on all sides by loose and light-minded men; and, I doubt not, has been hunted out of many a family, and prevented from entering many others, by the sneers of scorn, and the jests of derision. Why should not men pray? Why should not families pray? Are we not dependent creatures? Do we not need every thing at the hand of God? Who beside God can supply our wants? Has he not required us to pray? If we do not pray, will he bless us? Has he not made asking the indispensable condition of receiving? The man who will not pray is a madman. The family which will not pray are lunatics!

God has required us to 'pray always with all prayer,' and therefore to perform regularly the duties of both private and secret devotion. When we ourselves neglect either, or when we oppose the performance of them in our fellow men, we neglect or oppose the command of Jehovah. He who laughs and sneers at secret and family prayer, points his jests, his contempt, and his mockery against his Creator. Where can folly or frenzy be found more absolute than this? The wretch who is guilty of it is a helpless, sinful, miserable creature, dependent for existence, for enjoyment, and for hope on the mere sovereign mercy of God; is promised all blessings which he needs if he will pray for them, and is assured that if he will not pray, he not only will be entitled to no blessings whatever, but that those which he regards as blessings, and which, if he faithfully performed this duty, would prove such, will be converted into curses. This wretch not only refuses to pray himself, but with gross impiety insults his Maker anew, by preventing his fellow men from praying also.

I shall only add, that irreverence, the same in substance with that which has been here specified, may exist in thought, and in action, as well as in words. In some of the cases which I have mentioned, it has been indeed supposed to terminate in thought. It may thus terminate in all cases which do not involve our intercourse with our fellow men. In this intercourse it may be exhibited in actions, and those of very various kinds. Of these a very few have been mentioned. It is only necessary to observe, that whenever our hearts teem with irreverent thoughts towards God, or towards any thing because it is his, it makes little difference whether we express our impiety by the tongue, or by the hands. The irreverence is the same; the design is the same; the moral action is the same. It is the rising of pride, enmity, and rebellion against God; the open, impudent contention of a creature against his Creator; the struggle, the swelling, the writhing of a worm against Jehovah!

SERMON CIII.

THE LAW OF GOD.—THE DECALOGUE.—THE THIRD COMMANDMENT.—THE GUILT OF PROFANENESS.

Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless, that taketh his name in vain.—Exod. xx. 7.

In the preceding Discourse, I proposed, after making several introductory remarks, to examine,

I. *The nature,*

II. *The guilt,*

III. *The danger, of the sin forbidden in this command.*

The first of these I considered at length in that Discourse. I shall now proceed to make some observations concerning the second; viz., the guilt of this sin. The guilt of this sin is evident,

1. From the tenor of the command.

Profaneness is one of the eight great crimes which God thought proper to make the express subjects of prohibition in the Decalogue. In the order in which he was pleased to speak and to write them, it holds the third place. All the importance which this wonderful law derived from being uttered by the voice, and being written with the finger of God, from his manifest appearance in this lower world, and from the awful splendour and amazing majesty with which he appeared, this precept, equally with the others, challenges to itself. In addition to these things, it is the only precept in the whole number which annexes an express threatening to the crime which is prohibited. From all these circumstances it is abundantly evident, that the guilt of this sin is of no common dye in the sight of Jehovah. All these circumstances were intended to be significant, and are obviously significant, in a manner pre-eminently solemn and affecting. How should we ourselves feel if the Creator of the universe were to inform us by the mouth of an acknowledged prophet, that he would appear in this world on an appointed day, to publish his awful pleasure to mankind! With what anxious, trembling expectation should we wait for the destined period! With what solemnity and apprehension should we behold the day dawn! With what silent awe should we see the cloudy chariot descend and hear the archangel proclaim the approach of his Maker! How should we shudder at the sound of the trumpet, and the quaking of the earth! Would not our 'hearts die within us,' when the thunders began to roll, the lightnings to blaze, and 'the flames of devouring fire' to rise up to the heavens! In the midst of these tremendous scenes, with what silent, deathlike amazement should we listen to hear the voice of the Almighty! Would it not seem wonderful, would it not appear delirious, for any man to call in question the authority of his commands, or the absolute rectitude of his pleasure, to refuse the duties which he enjoined, or to perpetrate the crimes which he forbade? Who, after hearing from the mouth of God the awful prohibition, 'Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain,' and the fearful threatening annexed to it, 'for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who taketh his name in vain,' would not quake with terror at the very thought of committing a sin thus alarmingly forbidden? Who would demand an argument to convince him that such a sin was eminently evil in the sight of his Maker?

2. This sin is an immediate attack on God himself, and is therefore peculiarly guilty.

The hostilities of mankind against any intelligent being may be carried on mediately, or immediately. Mediately, against his property, if he be a human being, or against his other external interests: immediately against his character and person. In the same manner we may attack our Maker by attacking our fellow creatures, and violating such commands of his as regulate our duties to them; appropriately and usually styled the duties of morality. Or we may attack him immediately, by violating those commands which respect his person and character, and enjoin the various duties of piety. All the transgressions which I have recited are directed against objects confessedly belonging to God, and known to be his, in immediate possession: his name, his titles, his works, his word, and his institutions. As *his* only do they become the objects of irreverence at all. In all these cases, therefore, as here described, we attack God in the most direct manner which is in our power. A king or a parent may be insulted by an affront offered immediately to his officer, his messenger, or any other acting under his authority. No person will deny the affront here to be real, nor, as the case may be, to be very serious. Still it was probably never questioned, that when this same affront was offered directly to the parent or the king himself, it became far more gross, an insult of greater magnitude and greater guilt. Accordingly, such affronts have been always more seriously resented, and more severely punished.

In all the cases mentioned in the preceding Discourse, God is necessarily and most solemnly present to the mind of man. Whatever impiety, therefore, whatever irreverence, whatever profaneness, is exhibited in these cases, is directed immediately against him; against his character, against his person. He who is the subject of it, 'stretcheth out his hand against God, and strengtheneth himself against the Almighty. He runneth on him, even on his neck; upon the thick bosses of his buckler.' How can the man who is summoned to take a solemn oath, who is employed in the eminently solemn duty of prayer, or in the pre-eminently solemn duty of dedicating himself to God in the covenant of peace, fail to have a lively and affecting sense of the presence of his Maker! How can he fail to realize, that all the levity, thoughtlessness, insincerity, and irreverence of which he is guilty, is levelled directly against God! Who else is, who else can be, the object of this conduct? Who else is concerned with it? Whose name is here mocked? Whose institutions are set at nought? If the criminal be weak enough to suspect that he is not in this case trifling with his Maker and wickedly profaning his glorious name, he is probably the only being in the universe sufficiently bewildered to adopt this unsound and unhappy opinion.

What is true of these acts of worship is true with little variation of every other.

In that light-minded use of the names and titles of God which is appropriately called profaneness, the circumstances are, I acknowledge, in some respects materially different. It seems wonderful, indeed, that whenever the name of God is mentioned, any mind should not be filled with awe, and affectingly realize the presence of this majestic being. The Jews would not pronounce the incommunicable name Jehovah, except in one peculiarly solemn act of religious worship. Such of the Mohammedans as cannot read, carefully lay aside any written or printed paper, because they know not but it may have upon it the name of God. But in this, and in every other Christian country, there is reason to fear that multitudes, and probably that most or all those who are habitually profane, use 'this glorious and fearful name' without even a thought that God is present to hear them.

In his own proper character of the glorious and eternal Jehovah, 'who hath prepared his throne in the heavens, and whose kingdom ruleth over all,' it is impossible to regard him with serious, or even with

sober thought, and not be filled with reverential awe. It is impossible to realize who, and what, and where he is, and not be filled with fear and trembling. He called into being the heavens and the earth, 'upholds them by the word of his power,' rules them with an irresistible hand, gives life and death to whomsoever he pleases, is present wherever we are, looks with an intuitive survey into the secret chambers of the soul, records all our thoughts, words, and actions in the book of his remembrance, and will bring them before our eyes at the final day. On his bounty and forbearance we live. When he gives, we receive; when he withholds, we die. His smile makes heaven; his frown creates hell. Those who fear, and love, and serve him, he will bless; those who rebel against him he will destroy. Who then, unless lost to sense and decency, will not 'tremble at his presence,' and lie low in the dust before him?

But in this deplorable transgression, the profane swearer brings God into his thoughts (if he think at all) and into his conversation, with a character altogether familiar, and with considerations and views of the most debasing vulgarity. The same man, when in the presence of his fellow men, acknowledged by him to be of respectable character, would set a guard on his conduct, particularly on his tongue, and would speak of them, and to them, and before them, with sobriety, care, and decorum; and would watchfully give them every reasonable proof that he regarded them only with respect. From this decency in civilized life, a departure can scarcely be found; unless under the influence of strong passion, or pressing interest.

Surely the Creator of all things has as powerful claims to veneration as the worm which he has made. But, notwithstanding his glorious and awful character, notwithstanding we know that he is present to all our conduct, notwithstanding we know that he hears whatever we say, and sees whatever we think or do, we make this great and terrible Being the subject of the most irreverential, impudent thoughts, and of the most vulgar, affrontive, contemptuous language. Nay, all this is done by the profane person for no purpose, but to affront and insult him, and to induce others to affront and insult him also.

All this is done, not once, twice, or in a few solitary instances only; not in the season of forgetfulness, the unguarded hour of passion, or the moment of peculiar temptation, merely; but every day, in every place, and on every familiar occasion. In this manner God is habitually brought up to view, and continually insulted. Thus familiarized, thus habituated, to such thoughts and to such language, the profane person soon becomes unable to think or speak concerning his Maker in any other manner. All his thoughts concerning him become a regular course of irreverence; and all his language a tissue of impudence and insult. God, the great and terrible God, 'in whose hand his breath is; in whom he lives, and moves, and has his being;' the God by whom he is soon to be judged, and rewarded with endless life or endless death, becomes speedily to him a mere object of vulgar abuse and gross derision. With what views must this awful Being regard the miserable wretch who thus degrades his character? What must be the appearance of this wretch at the final day?

From God, the source and substance of every thing sacred, the transition to all other sacred things is easy, and, in a sense, instinctive. From him religion derives its existence, its obligation, its power, its hopes, and its rewards. Separated from him, there can be no piety. Separated from him, there can be no morality. Who does not see that without God there could be no Bible, no sabbath, no worship, no holiness, and no heaven? He therefore who is accustomed to profane the name of God, cuts off his connexion with all things serious and sacred. But nothing else is, comparatively, of any use to man. Whatever is gay and amusing, and at the same time innocent, and in some sense useful, is useful only to refresh the mind for a more vigorous application to things of a serious and sacred nature. In these lie all the real and substantial interests of man; the foundations of a virtuous, useful, and happy life, and a glorious immortality. To lose our connexion with them, therefore, is to lose our all. Of course, the profane person voluntarily squanders the blessings of time and eternity; and with a portentous prodigality makes himself 'poor, and wretched, and miserable;' a nuisance to the world, and an outcast from heaven.

3. Profaneness is in most instances a violation of peculiarly clear and peculiarly solemn inducements to our duty.

I have already remarked under the preceding head that, in many of the cases specified in the former Discourse, it is impossible that the presence and character of God should not be realized by the profane person. But the character and presence of God united, present to every mind not wholly destitute of sobriety a combination of the most solemn and powerful motives to the performance of its duty. The Being by whom we were created, and on whom we depend for life, together with all its blessings and hopes, who 'will bring every work, with every secret thing, into judgment,' and 'who will reward every man according to the deeds done in the body,' with a retribution final and endless, is an object so awful, so interesting, so overwhelming, that one would naturally think no sacrifice too great, no duty too difficult or discouraging, if the performance would secure his favour.

To the considerations which have been here mentioned, others of singular importance are always to be added, when we are examining almost all the cases of profaneness specified in the preceding Discourse. In the word and institutions of God, and in all the religious services rendered to him according to the dictates of the gospel, he is presented to us as the Father, the Redeemer, and the Sanctifier of mankind, in the most endearing and venerable of all offices; the offices of accomplishing an expiation for sin, renewing the soul, pardoning its transgressions, and entitling it again to the blessings of infinite love. These blessings, literally infinite, flowing only from the sovereign and boundless mercy of Jehovah, are proffered to a mind apostatized, rebellious, and ruined; a mind incapable of renewing itself, and therefore, if left to itself, hopeless of the divine favour, and an outcast from the virtuous, and happy universe. In such a situation, how deeply should we naturally suppose it must be affected with a sense of the infinite goodness, engaged so wonderfully in its behalf by the glorious blessings proffered to its acceptance, and by its own infinite need of a share in these blessings. If it will not be influenced by the presence of Jehovah, appearing in these amiable and wonderful characters, if it will not be moved by the

proffer of these invaluable and immortal blessings, what inducements can persuade it to perform its duty? If the pleasure of such a God, if the attainment of such a salvation, will not lay hold on the heart, where shall we look for motives of sufficient weight to engage its obedience?

But the profane person does not merely disobey, as we commonly understand this term: he disobeys in the most provoking manner. He treats his Maker as the Jews treated Christ. They did not merely reject this divine Saviour. They did not merely crucify him. They rejected him with scorn; they crucified him with insult. Thorns they gave him for a crown, and a reed for a sceptre. The respect which they professedly paid him was contempt; and the homage, mockery. Such, for substance, is the manner in which the profane person treats his God. With all the solemn inducements which have been mentioned before his eyes, he not only rejects this glorious Being, and his benevolent offers of eternal life to perishing sinners, but accompanies his rejection with irreverence, despite, and insolence; and cries, 'Who is the Almighty, that I should serve him?' If the 'ways of God' were not 'higher than our ways, as the heavens are higher than the earth,' what would become of this audacious, miserable being?

4. Profaneness is a sin to which there is scarcely any temptation.

In the commission of most sins, mankind usually expect and believe they shall obtain some natural good; and this is almost always the prime object of their sinful pursuit: good, forbidden indeed, and therefore, unlawful; yet still really good in the apprehension of the sinner. Thus persons commonly lie and cheat, for the sake of some gain; become intoxicated, on account of the pleasure experienced in the use of strong drink; are gluttons, to enjoy the delightful taste of dainty food; and thus in almost all other cases of transgression.

But in profaneness there seems to be no good, either enjoyed or expected, beside that which is found in the mere love and indulgence of sin. No person ever acquired property, health, reputation, place, power, nor, it would seem, pleasure, from profaneness. Those particular movements of the tongue which articulate profaneness, produce, so far as I am able to conjecture, no more agreeable sensations than any other. The words which embody profane thoughts, are neither smoother nor sweeter than any other words. If then profaneness were not sinful, such words would be pronounced no oftener than any other. The pleasure found in profaneness, such as it is, is therefore found chiefly, if not wholly, in the wickedness which it involves and expresses. The sin is the good; and not any thing peculiar to the manner in which it is committed, nor any thing which the profaneness is expected to be the means of acquiring. It may be said, that the profane person recommends himself to his companions, persons with whom he is pleased, and whom he wishes to please; and that, at the same time, he secures himself from their contempt and ridicule, to which otherwise he would be exposed. This, without doubt, is partially true, and comes nearer than any thing else which can be alleged to a seeming exception to the justice of the remark under consideration. Yet it is hardly a seeming exception. Nothing, but the wickedness of this conduct recommends the profane person to his companions, and those to whom he is recommended are sinners only. But for the love of wickedness in them, he could not become agreeable to them by this evil practice; and, but for the love of wickedness in him, he could not wish to be thus agreeable. Can it then be good, can it be gainful, will it be alleged to be gain, to recommend ourselves to sinners by the perpetration of sin? Is not the end which we propose, are not the means which we use, altogether disgraceful both to ourselves and them? Instead of being beneficial to either, are they not the means of corruption and ruin to both? Is the favour of men who love sin, and so ardently love it, as to love us merely for sinning, desirable or useful to us? Is it worth our labour? Does it deserve our wishes? Can it prove a balance for the guilt which we incur? Can it be of any value to us, although in desiring and obtaining it we were to incur no guilt?

But the profane person is not esteemed, even by his sinful companions. They may desire him as an associate, and they may relish his wickedness; but they approve of neither. Such persons have repeatedly declared to me, that they approved neither of themselves nor others when guilty of this sin; but regarded it as a stain upon the character of both. The companions of such a man may be pleased with him and his wickedness, because both may contribute to keep them in countenance, or make them diversion. They may wish to see him as bad, or worse than themselves, that the deep hues of their own guilt may fade at his side. Still they will make him, when he is not present, an object of their contempt and derision. In the same manner men love treason and treachery; and in this manner also despise the traitor. If the profane person will take pains to learn the real opinion of his companions, he will find that they invariably condemn his character on the one hand, and on the other hold it in contempt. In the mean time, he exposes himself uniformly to the abhorrence of virtuous, and even of sober, men. Of this no proof is necessary. The experience of every day informs us, that profane persons are a kind of Helots in society; men whom youth are admonished to dread and avoid; men, pointed out to children as warnings against iniquity, branded as nuisances to society, and marked as blots upon the creation of God.

Virtue is acknowledged to be distinguished and excellent, in some general proportion, at least, to the disinterestedness with which it is exercised. Sin, committed without motives of such magnitude as to be properly styled temptations, may be justly termed disinterested sin; sin, committed only from the love of sin, and not with a view to any natural good, in which it is to terminate. This must undoubtedly be acknowledged to be wickedness of a dye peculiarly deep, of a nature eminently guilty: and the author of it must, with as little doubt, be eminently vile, odious, and abominable, in the sight of God.

5. Profaneness is among the most distinguished means of corrupting our fellow men.

This observation I intend to apply exclusively to the profaneness of the tongue. It is indeed applicable, with much force, to profaneness, manifested in various kinds of action; but it is peculiarly applicable to the kind of profaneness which I have particularly specified.

Sins of the tongue are all social sins; necessarily social, and eminently social. They are practised only when men are present to hear and to witness; and they

are practised whenever men are present to hear. Thus a man is profane before his family; swears and curses, and ridicules sacred things in the social club, in the street, before his neighbours, and in the midst of a multitude. Persons of all ages become witnesses and learners. Thus children learn to lisp the curse, and the grey-haired sinner to mutter the faltering oath.

No man was ever profane alone, in a wilderness, or in his closet. To the very nature of this sin the presence of others seems so indispensable, that we cannot realize the commission of it by any man, unless in the midst of society. All the mischief of evil example is found in the social nature of man, and in the social nature of those sins to which the whole power of evil example is confined. Where sin is in its nature solitary, and the perpetration of course insulated, whatever other guilt it may involve, the sinner plainly cannot be charged with the guilt of corrupting others. In order to follow us in wickedness, others must know that we are wicked. When they hear of our wickedness at a distance, they are always, perhaps, in greater or less danger of being corrupted; because sympathy is always a powerful propensity of the mind, and because we have always a strong tendency to imitation. But when they are present to see sin in our actions, and to hear it from our tongues, it becomes the means of the most certain and efficacious corruption; because then the impression is, ordinarily, the strongest possible.

There is, however, one case, in which this corruption, though usually less efficacious in particular instances, is yet much more dreadfully operative, because it is much more extensively diffused. An author, when possessed of sufficient ingenuity, can spread this malignant influence wherever his writings can penetrate, and expand the force of an evil example over many countries, and through a long succession of ages. Millions of the human race may owe to such a man the commencement and progress of iniquity in their minds, and may imbibe pernicious sentiments, which, but for him, they would have never known, or would have regarded only with abhorrence. In this respect what will not infidels, especially those of distinguished talents, have to answer for at the final day?

But this evil may be very widely diffused without the aid of the press, or the circulation of volumes. The tongue is an instrument more than sufficiently adapted to this unhappy end. One profane person makes multitudes; corrupts his professed friends, his daily companions, his near relations, and all with whom he corresponds, so far as they are capable of being corrupted. They again corrupt others; and they, in their turn, spread the contagion through successive circles of mankind, increasing continually in their numbers and their expansion. Thus a profane inhabitant of this land may extend the mischiefs of his evil example to other countries, and to future ages; and a profane student of this seminary may, and probably will, be the cause of handing down profaneness to students yet unborn.

The mischiefs of evil example are always great; in the present case they are dreadful. The tongue is obviously the prime instrument of human corruption, of diffusing and perpetuating sin, of preventing the eternal life of our fellow men, of extending perdition over the earth, and of populating the world of misery. 'Behold,' saith St James, 'how great a matter (in the original, how great a forest) a little fire kindleth!' Small at first to the eye, it catches all the combustible materials within its reach, and, spreading its ravages wider and wider, consumes in the end every thing before it with a universal conflagration. Among all the evil examples which I have heard mentioned, or which have been alluded to within my knowledge, I do not remember, that a dumb man was ever named as one. No person, within my recollection, ever attributed his own sins to the example of such a man. Speaking men are the corruptors of their fellow men; and they corrupt pre-eminently by their speech. No individual ever began to swear profanely by himself; and few, very few, ever commenced the practice but from imitation. Like certain diseases of the human body, profaneness descends from person to person; and like the plague, is regularly caught by infection. Let every profane person, then, solemnly remember how much evil will be charged to him in the great day of account; how many miserable wretches will date their peculiar sinfulness of character, and a vast multitude of their actual transgressions, from the power of his example; how many of his fellow creatures he will contribute to plunge into eternal perdition; and how dreadfully, as well as justly, all these may wreak their insatiable vengeance on his head, for producing their final ruin; while he will be stripped of every excuse, and be forced by an angry conscience to say, Amen. Let him remember, that in this respect, if not in many others, he is a pest to human society, and a 'smoke in the nostrils' of his Maker. Finally; let him summon this character and this guilt before his eyes, whenever he repeats his profaneness, with a full conviction that, however he may flatter himself, all around him, as a vast and upright jury, sit daily on the trial of his crimes, and with an unanimous and honest verdict pronounce him guilty.

6. Profaneness prevents or destroys all reverence towards God, together with all those religious exercises, and their happy consequences, of which it is the source.

In the Discourse which I formerly delivered on this pre-eminently important religious attribute, I showed by a numerous train of scriptural passages, that it is peculiarly the means of rendering our worship acceptable to God;—of exciting and keeping alive an abhorrence of sin;—the great source of reformation;—eminently the source of rectitude in our dispositions and conduct towards mankind;—the foundation of peculiar blessings in the present world; and eminently the means of securing eternal life in the world to come. These blessings, as an aggregate, are infinitely necessary and infinitely valuable to every human being. To prevent them, or to destroy them, that is, to prevent ourselves or others from becoming the subjects of them, is an evil to which no limits can be assigned. But this dreadful work is effectually accomplished by profaneness. Profaneness itself is nothing but a high degree of irreverence to God. But no words are necessary to prove, that reverence and irreverence cannot exist together in the same mind; or that, where reverence does not exist, its happy effects cannot be found.

It is plainly impossible that he who indulges a spirit of profaneness should ever worship God in an acceptable manner. The spirit, once indulged, soon becomes habitual; and will be present and predominate at all times and on all occasions. It will accompany him to the house of God, and, if we could suppose such a man to attend private or secret devotion, would mingle itself

with his family prayers, and, entering with him into his closet, would there insult his Maker to his face. But the truth is, he will neither pray in his family nor in his closet. These exercises of piety he will only ridicule, and regard those who scrupulously perform them as the pitiful slaves of fear, voluntarily shackled by the chains of superstition. To the sanctuary he may, at times, go, from curiosity, a regard to reputation, and a remaining sense of decency. There, however, all his seeming devotion will be merely external; an offering 'of the blind and the lame; a sacrifice of swine's flesh; an abomination, which God cannot away with;' a dead form, a corpse without a soul, without life, corrupted, putrid, sending forth a 'savour of death unto death.'

Instead of exciting and keeping alive an abhorrence of sin in his mind, the profane person, by the very irreverence which he cherishes, excites and keeps alive all his other tendencies to iniquity. God, the only object of obedience, imperfectly obeyed by the best mind which ever inhabited this sinful world, soon becomes to him, by this very disposition, familiar, insignificant, and despised. Who could obey a being regarded in this manner? What anxiety can be occasioned by the thought of disobeying him? Who can be solicitous concerning the evil of sin, when such is in his view the object against which sin is to be committed? Which of us could be at all apprehensive of either the guilt or the danger of sinning against a being whom we regarded only with contempt?

The reformation of a profane person is out of the question. His progress is only downward. Profaneness is the mere floodgate of iniquity; and the stream, once let out, flows with a current, daily becoming more and more rapid and powerful. There is no crime to which profaneness does not lend efficacious and malignant aid. It is the very nurse of sin—the foster-parent of rebellion, ingratitude, and impiety.

The unjust judge, who feared not God, regarded not man. Such will be the conduct, whenever temptation invites, of all who do not fear God. Persons of this description may, I acknowledge, have originally the same natural affections with other men. But even these, so far as they are of any real use to others, will, if I have observed the conduct of mankind with success, be gradually worn away by the spirit of irreverence; and, while they last, will fail of producing their most proper and valuable effects. A profane person cannot long pray with his family. He cannot teach his children their duty. He cannot reprove them for sin. He cannot set them an example of piety. He cannot exhort them to seek salvation. He cannot take them by the hand, and lead them to heaven.

What blessings can he expect from the hand of God in the present world? He may, indeed, be rich. 'Oft,' says the poet,

> 'Oft on the vilest, riches are bestow'd,
> To show their meanness in the sight of God.'

Should he be rich, his wealth will be a curse and not a blessing; the means merely of increasing his pride, of hardening his heart, and of inclining him to 'treasure up wrath against the day of wrath,' and the revelation of the righteous judgment of God. He may, on account of his talents, his heroism, or some other cause, be held in estimation among his fellow men. But whatever reputation he may acquire in this manner, this, like his wealth, will prove only a curse to him; for, although 'highly esteemed among men,' he will be 'an abomination in the sight of God.'

Beyond the grave he can expect and can receive nothing but 'indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish.' His profaneness is an unceasing and fearful provocation of his Maker, and a terrible preparation for a future life of eternal blasphemy. All the ruin of futurity, and all the guilt and wretchedness of this life, he voluntarily brings upon himself by the indulgence of this odious, senseless, causeless sin; and this quietly and coolly prepares himself to be destroyed for ever. In 'sinning against God,' in this manner, he eminently 'wrongs his own soul,' and loves, invites, and solicits everlasting death.

SERMON CIV.

THE LAW OF GOD.—THE DECALOGUE.—THE THIRD COMMANDMENT. THE DANGER OF PROFANENESS.

Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain: for the Lord will not hold him guiltless, that taketh his name in vain.—Exod. xx. 7.

In the two preceding Discourses I considered at length the nature and the guilt of Profaneness. I shall now proceed, according to the plan originally proposed, to examine with some attention the danger of this sin.

All sin is dangerous. But there are different kinds and degrees of danger in different sins. On those which especially attend this sin, or which, though common to other sinful habits, are connected with profaneness in a remarkable manner, I mean to insist in the following Discourse.

I. Profaneness is eminently the source of corruption to the whole character.

That there is an intimate connexion between the thoughts and the tongue, is perfectly well known to all men of consideration. The nature of this connexion is, however, misapprehended, if I mistake not, by most men. All persons perceive, that their thoughts give birth to their words; while few seem to be aware, that their words, to a vast extent, originate and modify their thoughts. Almost all moral attributes and em-

ployments operate mutually as causes and effects. Thus irreverence of thought generates profaneness of expression; and profaneness of expression, in its turn, generates and enhances irreverence of thought. Thus, universally, the mind moves the tongue; and the tongue again, in its turn, moves the mind. The person who speaks evil will always think evil. By this I do not mean, that evil thoughts must precede evilspeaking; and that the man must, therefore, have been the subject of evil thoughts in order to have spoken evil. I mean, that evilspeaking, although an effect of evil thoughts, is, in its turn, a cause of new and other evil thoughts. He who thinks ill, will, undoubtedly, speak and act ill. This all men readily acknowledge. It is equally certain, although not equally well understood, that evil speech and evil actions directly corrupt the mind, and render it more sinful than it would ever become, if it were not to speak and act in this manner.

A familiar example or two will advantageously illustrate this subject. An angry man becomes at once more violent and wrathful, when he begins to vent his passion by words. What before was anger, soon becomes fury. Before, he was able to retain his spirit within some bounds of decency; but as soon as his tongue is let loose, his countenance will be distorted, his eyes flash, and his sentiments be the mere effusions of frenzy. A revengeful man kindles like a furnace from the moment in which he begins to execute his revenge. What before was the revenge of a human heart, is speedily changed into the fell malignity of a fiend.

St James has exhibited this tendency of the tongue to corrupt the mind, in language remarkable, exact, and forcible. He styles it an unruly member; a fire; a world of iniquity; and declares, that 'it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature.' Its influence on the mind itself, as well as on the affairs of mankind, he describes in this strong exclamation: 'Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!' That the eye of St James was directed to the profaneness of the tongue is obvious from what he says in the two succeeding verses: 'Therewith bless we God, and therewith curse we man. Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing.' Cursing, one dreadful kind of profaneness, was, according to his own account, in the eye of the apostle a kind of profaneness, mingled always with every other, and inseparable from every other. In this very sense, then, 'the tongue is full of deadly poison;' a fire that kindles the whole course of nature' in the soul, and 'defiles the whole body' and the whole mind.

Of the correctness of these apostolic declarations, experience furnishes ample proof. Among all the multitude of persons who have borne the character of profaneness, not one was ever believed, on account of his other conduct, by any competent judge acquainted with him, to be a virtuous man. Many persons have begun to be profane from mere inconsideration; and, at the commencement of their career, were no more depraved than such of their companions as abstained from this sin. In their progress, however, they became corrupted much more extensively within the same period, increased generally in wickedness, and particularly in hardness of heart, and lost every serious and even sober thought: all that course of thought, whence moral good might be derived, or whence might spring any hopeful effects towards salvation. This is a case which must, I think, have frequently met the eye of every man who is seriously attentive to the moral conduct of his fellow men, and strongly shows that the practice has itself deplorably corrupted them in other respects, and sets on fire the whole course of nature in their minds and lives. Hence, instead of being accounted virtuous on account of any thing in their other conduct, persons addicted to this sin have been regarded by common sense as gross sinners of course. 'A profane person' is, therefore, as you well know, in proverbial language, used regularly to denote a wicked, vicious wretch.

The truth plainly is, and all men discern it to be truth, that irreverence to God is a general source of wickedness. As I remarked in a former Discourse, religious reverence is the direct and peculiar source of reformation. Irreverence, its opposite, is in the same manner the direct source of degeneracy. This is indeed true of most sins, when habitually and allowedly practised. He who practises one sin in this manner, will almost necessarily relish other sins more. As the body, when corrupted and weakened by sickness, is more prepared for the admission of any disease which may arrest it; so the soul, corrupted by sin of any kind, becomes more fitted for the admission of every kind of wickedness which seeks admission. The conscience becomes less tender, less awake, less alarmed at the apprehension of guilt. The motives, also, which should induce us to abstain from iniquity, gradually lose their power. The love of sinning, the evil passions and appetites, gain strength by indulgence; and temptation, having repeatedly vanquished us, more easily vanquishes us again.

But irreverence, more than almost any other evil, brings us into this danger. Whenever God becomes an object of little importance or estimation in our view, the evil of sinning vanishes of course. The danger also speedily recedes from our view. The only great and solemn object in the universe, the only being who is of ultimate importance to us, loses all his awfulness and sanctity. The great and commanding motive is therefore gone; and there is nothing left to restrain us, but reputation or convenience. In this situation the mind is prepared for future perpetration, not only by an increased love to sinning, but by a strong and habitual feeling, operating with much more power than mere conviction, that sin is neither guilty nor dangerous; or, at the worst, as a thing of small moment. The soul is thus left free to the indulgence of its evil propensities; and the restraints, which once operated with no small efficacy, lose their hold on the mind.

An affecting exemplification of this doctrine is seen in the tendency of one exercise of profaneness to produce another. Persons addicted to profane swearing, are, I apprehend, much more prone than most others to the commission of perjury. An oath is an eminently solemn act of religious worship. The person who takes an oath, calls God to witness the manner in which he shall speak or act under the obligation which it imposes. If he shall speak truth, and nothing else; if he shall act faithfully in the office or trust which he is then assuming; he implores God to bless him here and hereafter. If he shall speak falsely, or act unfaithfully, he in the same solemn manner invokes on his head the divine vengeance through time and eternity.

Now it is plain beyond a doubt, that the solemn and awful character of God constitutes all the solemnity of

an oath. If he is considered by the person who takes it as holy and sin-hating, as the unchangeable enemy of faithlessness and falsehood; if he is realized as a present and awful witness both of the oath and the subsequent conduct; if he is believed to be the future and dreadful avenger of perjury and unfaithfulness; then we cannot but suppose, that the person who has thus sworn, will deeply feel his obligation to be sincere and faithful; will with deep anxiety speak the truth exactly, or discharge the duties of the assumed office in the fear of God.

But if, on the contrary, the juror, whether in evidence or in office, regards God as an object of little importance; as being either too weak, or too regardless of rectitude, to take any serious concern in the moral conduct of his creatures; as destitute of sacredness of character, and hatred of sin; as indifferent to truth and falsehood, faithfulness and treachery; as willing to be mocked with impunity, and abused without resentment; as existing, only to be a mere caterer to the wants and wishes of his creatures, and a mere object of profanation and contempt: then, plainly, the oath, in which he is invoked, can have little solemnity in the eyes, little influence on the heart, and little efficacy upon the conduct of the juror. To every such person it will become a thing of course; a mere wind-and-weather incident, an empty mockery of solemn sounds on a thoughtless tongue. Its obligation he will neither feel nor see. The duties which it requires he will not perform. There will therefore be no difference of conduct in this case, 'between him that sweareth and him that sweareth not.'

But how evident is it, that persons who swear profanely, speedily lose all sense of the awful character of the Creator. From trifling with him in this wonderful manner, they soon learn to consider him as a mere trifler. From insulting him daily, they soon regard him as a proper object of insult. From mocking him with such impious effrontery, they speedily think of him in scarcely any other character than that of a mere butt of mockery. Thus God is first degraded in the view of the mind by its own profaneness, and then intruded upon by perjury. He who swears profanely, will, in ordinary cases, soon swear falsely. Accordingly, custom-house oaths, proverbially false, are usually taken by profane men. Nay, such men have by their own perjuries rendered these oaths proverbially false. Oaths in evidence, also, taken by such men, are justly regarded as lying under a general imputation; as contributing not a little to unhinge the confidence of mankind in this their last reliance for truth and safety.

What is true of profane cursing and swearing, as to its corrupting power, is true of irreverence in every form. Disregard to God is the floodgate to all moral evil. He who enters upon this conduct, ought to consider himself as then entering upon a universal course of iniquity, and as then yielding himself as a slave, to do the whole drudgery of Satan.

2. Profaneness is a sin which is rapidly progressive.

This truth cannot but be discerned extensively, in the observations already made. Every act of profaning the name, perfections, works, word, and worship of God, is obviously a bold, presumptuous attack upon this glorious Being. The sinner, having once dared so far, becomes easily more daring, and passes rapidly from one state of wickedness to another, until he becomes finally hardened in rebellion against his Maker. That most necessary fear of God, which is the great restraint upon sinful men, is speedily lost. The sinner is then left without a check upon his wickedness, and voluntarily induces upon himself a flinty obstinacy, which is a kind of reprobation on this side of the grave.

At the same time, the tongue is a most convenient instrument of iniquity, always ready for easy use. We cannot always sin with the hands, and are not always sufficiently gratified by mere sins of thought. Much as it is to be lamented, there is no small source of pleasure found by wicked men in communicating their sinful thoughts and feelings to each other. The slanderer is never satisfied with merely thinking over slander. The liar would soon be discouraged, if he could not utter his lies. The profane swearer could hardly fail of becoming a reformed man, were it not for the pleasure, little as it is, which he finds in uttering his profaneness to others. The sins of the tongue are perpetrated alike with ease and delight every day, and in every place, where even a solitary individual can be found to listen. Hence transgressions of this kind are multiplied wonderfully. The thief steals, and the cheat defrauds occasionally only; but the slanderer will slander every day. The liar utters falsehood unceasingly. The profane person swears and curses everywhere, and multiplies his iniquities 'as the drops of the morning.' From the mind of such a person it is reasonably believed, that the Spirit of God, 'who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity,' will in a peculiar manner withdraw his influence. Can it be rationally supposed, that this celestial visitant will stay with man, to be a witness of irreverence and profanation? Ought not every profane person to feel that he is forcing away from himself those benevolent restraints upon his wickedness which constitute his only security, and the only rational foundation of his hopes of eternal life?

3. Profaneness, particularly that of the tongue, naturally introduces men to evil companions, and shuts them out from the enjoyment of those who are virtuous.

All men love, all men seek, companions of their own character. Sinners herd with sinners instinctively. Virtuous men seek the company of those who are virtuous. Men of learning consort with men of learning; philosophers with philosophers; merchants, farmers, mechanics, and seamen, seek the company of those of their own class; the mere incidental circumstances of pursuing the same kind of business alluring them regularly to the society of each other. Still more powerful are moral inducements. This is a fact so extensively observed, that mankind have proverbially remarked, that, 'A man is known by the company which he keeps.'

Profane persons are shut out from the company of virtuous men by a variety of considerations. They totally disrelish the character of virtuous men—their pursuits, their sentiments, their conversations—and usually shun their society on this account. They also dread their inspection, and fear to have them witnesses of their own character, language, and opinions. For this reason, whenever they are in their company, they feel obliged to guard themselves, to bridle their tongues, and to take care that their language and sentiments be not offensive to their companions, and dishonourable to themselves. This restraint, like all others, is painful;

and they are unwilling to subject themselves to it, whenever it can be avoided.

Virtue also is in its own nature awful to all sinners; and, proud as they are of themselves and their sins, they cannot fail, in the hour of sober consideration, to feel their inferiority, and accordingly to be humbled, mortified, and abashed. Christ informs us, that 'he who doeth evil, hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.' For the very same reason profane persons, and other sinners, hate the company of religious men; because their character and conduct are a direct contrast to their own, and hold them out in a strong light of unworthiness and debasement. This contrast few wicked men are willing to bear. Almost all of them shrink from it, as a wounded patient shrinks from the probe of the surgeon.

At the same time, virtuous persons loathe of course the company and conversation of all open and obstinate sinners. But profane persons are among the most open of all sinners. Their sin is ever on their lips, and continually proclaimed by their tongues. It is impossible, therefore, that their characters should not be known. Persons so directly opposed in feelings and pursuits, can never unite with that mutual agreement of heart or conversation, which is indispensable to the pleasantness, and even to the continuance, of familiar society. The virtuous man will, at the same time, find every thing lacking in such persons which he seeks for in company, whether it be pleasure or profit.

In addition to these things, his reputation becomes stained, and very deeply, if he consorts voluntarily with such companions. 'Why,' it will naturally be asked, 'does he frequent such company?'—'Certainly,' it will be answered, 'not for profit.' The necessary inference is therefore that he frequents it for the sake of pleasure. Of course, he must find pleasure in sin, and in this peculiarly odious sin. But to find pleasure in any sin is a direct contradiction of his religious profession, a direct denial of his Christian character. In this manner then he wounds himself, he wounds the church, he wounds the cause of God. What Christian can be supposed to make such a sacrifice, for the sake of any thing which he can gain from sinful companions?

But the dangers from evil companions are continual, extreme, and in a sense infinite. They are found every moment, and in every place; especially in the haunts customarily frequented by men of this character. Here all the means of sinning are gathered together. 'The companion of fools,' or wicked men, saith God, 'shall be destroyed.'

The advantages of virtuous company, on the contrary, are great and unspeakable. Their sentiments and conduct are such as their consciences approve, and such as God approves. Their sentiments are all conformed to the Scriptures. Their conduct is the natural fruit of their sentiments; not perfect indeed, but sincere, amiable, and excellent. In this character is presented a powerful check upon sin, and a powerful support to virtue. No person can give so alarming an exhibition of the evil, guilt, and danger of sin as they. No person can place virtue in so alluring a light. They have felt the evils of sin, the foretastes of immortality, and the pleasures of holiness. They therefore can enter with the heart into both subjects, and can speak of both with feelings unknown to other men, and incapable of being known until they have become virtuous. Hence good may be gained, and evil avoided, by means of their company, by means peculiar to them, which is often unattainable or unavoidable in any other manner.

By shutting himself out from this company, the profane person therefore voluntarily relinquishes one of the chief blessings of life, one of the great means of securing life eternal. Nothing, perhaps, beside the worship of God, and a religious education, contributes more frequently, or more certainly, to bring men into the strait and narrow way, to keep them in it after they have once entered, or to aid and quicken them in the journey towards heaven. Nothing, on the other hand, seems more readily or regularly to withdraw them from danger, guilt, and ruin. All this good the profane person voluntarily casts away. Other sinners, of more decent characters, often enjoy this blessing, and find it a blessing indeed. But the profane person carries with him the label of rejection; the mark of outlawry from virtuous society; a label voluntarily worn; a mark branded by himself.

At the same time he is consigned in the same voluntary manner to the company of wicked men. Here virtue and hope are blasted together. Here all the curses, opposed to the blessings above recited, multiply and thrive. Here his life is wasted, and his soul hazarded, assassinated, and destroyed for ever.

4. Profaneness exposes men to the terrible denunciation of the text.

The occasion on which this threatening was pronounced, the person by whom, and the manner and circumstances in which it was published to mankind, ought to render it peculiarly alarming to every man who is guilty of this sin. 'Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain,' said the Creator of all things, with an audible voice from Sinai, while the world was trembling beneath him; 'for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.' This is the declaration of him who is thus profaned, and thus mocked; of him who is an ear-witness of all this profaneness and mockery; of him by whom the wretch guilty of this fearful transgression will be judged and condemned at the final day. The threatening is denounced against a single transgression of this nature. What then must be the guilt and the danger of profane persons, deformed as they usually are with transgressions scarcely numerable by man? What a chain of profanation, of oaths and curses, will every such person drag after him to the throne of God! How will he tremble at the retrospect, shrink from the dread tribunal, before his cause is heard; and realize the sentence of condemnation before it is pronounced!

The threatening here declared is a sentence gone forth beforehand from the tribunal of eternal justice, against this particular transgression; a doom already pronounced, and hastening to its execution, by the hand of him from whom no sinner can escape. It is a sentence which cannot be misunderstood, against a crime which cannot be doubted. Many sins are of such a nature that the sinner may question the reality of his guilt. Here the crime is perfectly known, and the sentence absolutely decisive. The profane person therefore may consider himself as tried, judged and condemned already; judged and condemned from amidst the thunders and lightnings of the mount of God; and woe be to him, who does not 'believe and tremble.'

REMARKS.

1. These observations exhibit in a strong light the depravity of the human heart.

In the progress of these Discourses it has been clearly evinced, that profaneness is a sin perpetrated in an almost endless variety of forms; that it is a sin attended with enormous guilt, and exposing the perpetrator to immense danger. It has also been shown, that the inducements to it are very few, and very small; while the motives opposed to it are very many, and very great. Yet how evident is it that this very sin is, and ever has been, practised by incomprehensible multitudes of mankind! The Jews were profane; the Mohammedans are profane; the Christian nations are profane; and the heathen nations are, and ever were, profane to such gods as they acknowledged. Among all these nations, or, in other words, throughout the whole earth, and throughout the whole reign of time, innumerable individuals have ever been profane. Indeed, in one form or another, no man has been guiltless of that irreverence towards God in which the essence of profaneness consists. The evil therefore spreads over the world, and, in one form or another, attaches itself to every child of Adam.

How wonderful a specimen of human corruption is presented in the so general profanation of the name of God, exhibited in light-minded cursing and swearing! How perfectly at a loss is reason for a motive to originate and explain this conduct! Why should the name of the Creator be treated with irreverence! Why should not any thing else be uttered by man, if we consider him merely as a rational being, without recurring at all to his moral and accountable character, rather than language of this nature? Certainly it contributes not in the least degree to the advancement of any purpose cherished by the mind of the profane person, unless that purpose is mere profaneness. I know well that passion is often pleaded for the use of this language. But why should passion prompt to profaneness? Anger, one would suppose, would naturally vent itself in expressions of resentment against the person who had provoked us. But this person is always a fellow creature, a man like ourselves. In what way, or in what degree, is God concerned in this matter? What has the passion, what has the provocation, to do with him, his name, or his character? Why do we affront and injure him, because a creature, infinitely unlike him, has affronted and injured us? I know that custom also is pleaded, as an extenuation, and perhaps as an explanation, of this crime. But how came such a custom to exist? How came any rational being ever to think of profaning the name of God? How came any other rational being to follow him in this wickedness? Whence was it, that so many millions of those who ought to be rational beings have followed them both? What end can it have answered? What honour, gain, or pleasure, can it have furnished? What taste can it have gratified? What desire, what affection, can it have indulged? What end can the profane person have proposed to himself?

Can any explanation be given of this conduct, except that it springs from love to wickedness itself, from a heart fixedly opposed to its Maker, pleased with affronting him, loving to abuse his character, and to malign his glorious agency?—a heart in which sin is gratuitous; by which, in juster language, nothing is gained, much is plainly lost, and every thing is hazarded? What, beside the love of sinning, what, but the peculiar turpitude of the character, can be the source or the explanation of this conduct?

2. These observations teach us the goodness of God in alarming mankind concerning this sin in so solemn a manner.

The guilt of profaneness cannot be questioned; nor can there be any more question concerning the danger to which the perpetrator exposes himself. In such a situation, how kindly has the lawgiver of the universe warned mankind against the perpetration, by announcing to them, in this affecting manner, the evil to which it would expose them. He saw perfectly their tendency to this wickedness; and, with infinite mercy, has been pleased to provide those means for their safety which are best calculated to insure it.

If a child were advancing towards the brow of a precipice, how kindly would he and his parent regard a friend, who should announce to him his danger, direct him with sure guidance, and influence him with efficacious motives, to avoid it. The threatening contained in this command, and, together with it, all those which are found in the Scriptures, are calculated for this very purpose. They warn us of approaching guilt; they declare to us approaching danger. Thousands and millions of the human race have been actually saved by them from impending destruction. Terrible are they, indeed, to obstinate sinners, because they disturb them in their beloved course of sinning, and because they intend not to cease from sin. Still they are not the less mercifully given. They are the very means by which immense multitudes have been 'plucked as brands out of the burning.'

3. Let me warn all those who hear me to shun profaneness.

To this end, fix on your minds a solemn and controlling sense of the evil and danger of this sin. Make this sense habitual in such a manner, that it may be always ready to rise up in the mind, and present itself before your eyes. Feel that you will gain nothing here, and lose every thing hereafter.

Under the influence of these views, keep the evil always at a great distance. Mark the men who are profane; and avoid their company as you would avoid the plague. Shun the places where profaneness abounds, or where it may be expected to abound, as you would shun a quicksand. 'Avoid them, pass not by them, turn from them, pass away.' Remember that these places 'are the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death.'

Unceasingly say to yourselves, 'Thou God seest me.' Unceasingly say to yourselves, 'The Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.' Remember, that he is most mercifully disposed to be your Father and everlasting friend; that he cannot be your friend, unless you regard him 'with reverence and godly fear;' and that, if he be not your friend, you will throughout eternity be friendless, and helpless, and hopeless. What then will become of you?

Carefully avoid mentioning his great name on any except solemn occasions, and in any manner which is not strictly reverential. Never speak, never think of God, his Son, his Spirit, his name, his works, his word, or his institutions, without solemnity and awe. Never approach his house, or his word, without reverence.

Prepare yourselves by solemn consideration and humble prayer for his worship. Shun all that language which, though not directly profane, is merely a series of steps towards profaneness; and all those thoughts of sacred things which are tinctured with levity. At the same time, daily beseech him to preserve you, and let your unceasing prayer be, 'Set a watch, O Lord! before my mouth: keep the door of my lips.'

4. Let me solemnly admonish the profane persons in this assembly, of their guilt and danger.

You, unhappily for yourselves, are those who 'take the name of God in vain,' and of course are now, or soon will be, subjects of all the guilt and danger which I have specified. 'Now, therefore, thus saith the Lord, consider your ways.' Remember what you are doing; against whom your evil tongues are directed; who is the object of your contempt and mockery.

Ask yourselves what you gain—what you expect to gain—what you do not lose. Remember, that you lose your reputation, at least in the minds of all the wise and good; and all the blessings of their company and friendship; that you sacrifice your peace of mind; that you break down all those principles on which virtue may be grafted, and with them every rational hope of eternal life; that you are rapidly becoming more and more corrupted, day by day; and that, with this deplorable character, you are preparing to go to the judgment. Think what it will be to swear and curse, to mock God and insult your Redeemer through life; to carry your oaths and curses to a dying bed; to enter eternity with blasphemies in your mouths; and to stand before the final bar, when the last sound of profaneness has scarcely died upon your tongues.

If these considerations do not move you, if they do not make you tremble at the thought of what you are doing, if they do not force you to a solemn pause in the career of iniquity, if they do not compel you to retrace your downward steps, and return, while it is in your power, to reformation and safety, I can only say, that you are hurried by an evil spirit to destruction; that you are maniacs in sin, on whom neither reason nor religion has any influence; and that you will soon find yourselves in the eternal dungeon of darkness and despair.

SERMON CV.

THE LAW OF GOD.—THE DECALOGUE.—THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT. THE PERPETUITY OF THE SABBATH.

Remember the sabbath-day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: but the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God; in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man servant, nor thy maid servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath-day, and hallowed it.—EXOD. xx. 8—11.

THE command which is given us in this passage of Scripture requires no explanation. I shall, therefore, proceed immediately to the consideration of the great subject which it presents to our view, under the following heads:—

I. *The perpetual establishment of the sabbath,*

II. *The manner in which it is to be observed.*

I. *I shall endeavour to prove the perpetual establishment of the sabbath in the Scriptures.*

The subject I propose to consider at length; and in the course of my examination, shall attempt to offer direct proof of its perpetuity, and then to answer objections.

In direct proof of the perpetuity of this institution, I allege,

1. The text.

The text is one of the commands of the moral law. Now it is acknowledged, that the moral law is, in the most universal sense, binding on men of every age and every country. If, then, this command be a part of that law, mankind must be under immovable obligations to obey the injunction which it contains.

That it is a part of the moral law, I argue from the fact, that it is united with the other commands, which are acknowledged to be of this nature. It is twice placed in the midst of the decalogue; in the context, and in the fifth of Deuteronomy. This fact, you will remember, was the result of design, and not of accident; a design formed and executed by God himself, and not by Moses.

I argue it also from the fact, that this command, together with the remaining nine, was spoken with an awful and audible voice, from the midst of the thunders and lightnings which enveloped mount Sinai. The splendour and majesty of this scene were such, that 'all the people who were in the camp trembled. And when they saw the thunderings, and lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking, they removed, and stood afar off; and said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die.' Even Moses himself 'exceedingly feared and quaked.'

I argue this doctrine also from the fact, that this command was written by the finger of God, on one of the two tables of stone, originally prepared by himself, and destined to contain nothing but this and the other precepts of the decalogue. It was afterward written again by the same hand, after these tables were broken, on one of two similar tables, prepared by Moses. A table of stone, and a pillar of stone, were in ancient times direct symbols of the perpetuity of whatever was engraved on them. This very natural symbol God was pleased to adopt in the present case, to show the perpetual obligation of these commands. The remainder

of the law given by Moses was all written in a book; and was here intentionally and entirely distinguished, as to its importance, from the decalogue. The tables of stone on which these commands were written were fashioned by the hand of God himself. This, also, forms a peculiar article of distinction between the decalogue and the rest of the Jewish law. Nothing but the decalogue ever received such an honour as this. It was written on one of these tables by the finger of God. This, also, is a distinction peculiar to the decalogue.

When Moses, in his zeal to destroy the idolatry of the Israelites, had broken the two tables of stone, fashioned and written upon in this manner, God directed him to make two other tables of stone, like the first. On these he was pleased to write the same commands a second time. In this act he has taught us, that he was pleased to become a second time the recorder of these precepts with his own hand, rather than that the entire distinction between these precepts and others, should be obliterated.

Every part of this solemn transaction, it is to be remembered, was the result of contrivance and design; of contrivance and design on the part of God himself. Every part of it, therefore, speaks a language which is to be examined and interpreted by us. Now let me ask, whether this language is not perfectly intelligible, and perfectly unambiguous. Is it not clear, beyond every rational debate, that God designed to distinguish these precepts from every other part of the Mosaic law, both as to their superior importance, and their perpetuity? Is it not incredible, that God should mark, in so solemn a manner, this command, together with the remaining nine, unless he intended that all to whom these precepts should come, that is, all Jews and Christians, or all who should afterward read the Scriptures, should regard these commands as possessing that very importance which he thus significantly gave them; should consider them as being, in a peculiar sense, his law; and hold them as being perpetually and universally obligatory?

It is further to be remembered, that this command is delivered in the same absolute manner as the other nine. There is no limitation to the phraseology in which it is contained. 'Honour thy father and thy mother,' is obligatory on all children to whom this precept shall come. 'Thou shalt not steal,' is a precept prohibiting the stealing of every man who shall know it. Every Gentile, as well as every Jew, 'who sinneth, under the law, will' (according to the spirit of the apostle's declaration) 'be judged by the law.' Agreeably to this equitable construction, every person to whom this precept shall come, is bound to 'remember the sabbath day to keep it holy.'

But it is acknowledged, that 'all the remaining commands are indeed universally obligatory, being in their own nature moral, and having, therefore, a universal application to mankind. This, however, is plainly a command merely positive, and, therefore, destitute of this universality of application. It may, of course, be dispensed with; may be supposed to have been delivered to the Jews only, like their ceremonial and judicial law; may have been destined to continue so long as their national state continued; and thus may have been designed to be of neither universal nor perpetual obligation.'

To this objection, which I have stated at full length, that I might be sure of doing justice to it, I give the following answer:—

(1.) It appears to me evident, that, so far as my information extends, the distinction between moral and positive commands has been less clearly made by moral writers than most other distinctions. It will be impossible for any man clearly to see, and to limit exactly what they intend when they use these terms. To remove this difficulty, so far as my audience are concerned, and to enable them to know what I design while I am using these words, I will attempt to define them with some particularity.

A moral precept is one which regulates the moral conduct of intelligent creatures, and binds the will and the conscience. It is either limited, or universal. It is universal, or, in other words, is obligatory on the consciences of intelligent creatures at all times, and in all circumstances, when their situations and relations are universally such as to render the conduct required in these precepts, their duty invariably, and in the nature of things. Of this kind, the number of precepts is certainly very small. We are bound to love God, and our neighbour, invariably. But the fifth command, in its obvious sense, can have no application where the relations of parent and child do not exist; the sixth, where rational beings are immortal; the seventh, where the distinction of sex is not found. To these precepts, therefore, the criterion of universality, generally regarded as the principal mark of the moral nature of precepts, is plainly inapplicable; and it is altogether probable, that these precepts will have no existence in any world but this. Limited moral precepts are those which require the duties arising from such relations and circumstances as exist only for limited periods, or among certain classes or divisions of rational beings. Thus various moral precepts found in the judicial law of Moses, obligated to obedience none but the people of that nation, and strangers dwelling among them. Thus, also, he who has no parents is not required to perform the duties enjoined upon a child; he who has no wife, those required of a husband; and he who has no children, those demanded of a father.

Positive precepts are such as require conduct of moral beings which, antecedently to the promulgation of them, was not their duty; and, independently of them, would never have become their duty; but would have remained for ever a matter of indifference. It ought to be observed here, that some precepts are considered as merely positive, because the duties enjoined by them were unknown, and would have continued unknown, to those of whom they are required, independently of the publication of these precepts. These precepts however, are no less of a moral nature, than if the duties, which they enjoin, and the relations from which those duties spring, had always been perfectly known. A precept of a merely positive nature creates a duty which, but for the precept, would not exist; which does not depend for its existence on the nature of the relations sustained by the subject as a rational being; but is intended to promote some useful, incidental purpose, and is not due, nor demanded, from the subject in other cases, although sustaining exactly the same relations. Thus the precept requiring the building of booths at the passover, may be considered as a positive precept. Thus, also, many others, enjoining particular parts of the Jewish ritual.

(2.) The precept contained in the text is, according to these definitions, a moral, and not a positive precept. The sabbath was instituted for the following ends:

It was intended to give the laborious classes of mankind an opportunity of resting from toil.

It was intended to be a commemoration of the wisdom, power, and goodness of God, in the creation of the universe.

It was intended to furnish an opportunity of increasing holiness in man, while in a state of innocence.

It was intended to furnish an opportunity to fallen man of acquiring holiness, and of obtaining salvation.

In every one of these respects the sabbath is equally useful, important, and necessary to every child of Adam. It was no more necessary to a Jew to rest after the labour of six days was ended, than to any other man. It was no more necessary to a Jew to commemorate the perfections of God displayed in the work of creation; it was no more necessary to a Jew to gain holiness, or to increase it; it is no more necessary to a Jew to seek, or to obtain salvation. Whatever makes either of these things interesting to a Jew, in any degree, makes them, in the same degree, interesting to every other man. The nature of the command, therefore, teaches, as plainly as the nature of a command can teach, that it is of universal application to mankind. It has then this great criterion of a moral precept; viz. universality of application.

That it is the duty of all men to commemorate the perfections of God displayed in the work of creation, cannot be questioned. Every living man is bound to contemplate, understand, and adore these perfections. But we cannot know them in the abstract, or as they exist merely in him. We learn them only as displayed in his works, and in his word. We are bound, therefore, to learn them as thus displayed, and that in proportion to the clearness and glory of the display. The clearness and glory with which these perfections are manifested in the work of creation, are transcendently great, and demand, from all creatures, a contemplation proportionally attentive, and an adoration proportionally exalted. To commemorate this glorious work, therefore, is a plain and important duty of all men; this being the peculiar service demanded of them by his character, and his relation to them as their Creator. But this commemoration was the original and supreme object of the command. It cannot be denied that this is a moral service, nor that the precept requiring it is a moral precept.

To perform this service in the best manner is also as much a moral duty, as to perform it at all. If any duty be not performed in the best manner, it is only performed in part, the remainder being of course, omitted; but no words can be necessary to prove, that we are equally obliged to perform one part of a duty as another.

If we know not, and cannot know, the best manner, we are invariably bound to choose the best which we do know. If, however, the best manner be made known to us, we are invariably obliged to adopt it to the exclusion of all others.

The best manner in the present case is made known to us in this command. We are assured that it is the best manner, by the fact, that God has chosen it. No man can doubt whether God's manner is the best; nor whether it is his own duty to adopt it rather than any other. This manner is a commemoration of the perfections of God, thus disclosed, on one day in seven.

That a particular day, or set time, should be devoted to this important purpose, is indispensable. The duty is a social one, in which the rational creatures of God in this world are universally to unite. But, unless a particular day were set apart for this duty, the union intended would be impossible.

It is of the last importance, that the day should be appointed by God. Men would not agree on any particular day. If they should agree, it would always be doubtful whether the time chosen by them was the best; and the day appointed by men would have neither authority, sacredness, nor sanction. In a matter merely of human institution, all who pleased would dissent, and in such a world as ours, most or all would choose to dissent. The whole duty, therefore, would be left undone, and the glorious perfections of God, unfolded in the work of creation, would be wholly forgotten. This precept is also entirely of a moral nature, as to the whole end at which it aims, so far as man is concerned. This end is, the attainment and the increase of holiness. Of every man living and of every man alike, this is the highest interest, and the highest duty. To this end, as to the former, which is indeed inseparably united with this, the sabbath is indispensable.

The sabbath is eminently moral, also, as the indispensable means of preserving in the world a real and voluntary obedience of all the other commands in the decalogue. Wherever the sabbath is not, religion dies of course; and morality of every kind, except so far as convenience and selfishness may keep the forms of it alive, is forgotten. But all those means which are indispensable to the existence of morality, or in better language, religion, are themselves of a moral nature, and of universal obligation; since, without them, nothing moral could exist.

It makes no difference here, whether we could have known without information from God, that one day in seven would be the best time, and furnish the best manner of performing these things, or not. It is sufficient that we know it now.

Thus the fourth command is of a really moral nature, no less than the others, and as truly of incalculable importance, and indispensable obligation, to all the children of Adam. Its place in the decalogue, therefore, was given it with consummate propriety; and 'what God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.'

If it were intended to abolish a command given so plainly, and with circumstances of such amazing solemnity, the abrogation would, undoubtedly, have been communicated in a manner equally clear with that in which the command itself was originally given. But the Scriptures contain nothing which resembles an abrogation of it, communicated either clearly or obscurely. When Christ abolished the ceremonial and civil laws of the Jews, so far as they might be thought to extend to the Gentiles, and taught the true moral system of the Old Testament, and when the apostles afterward completed the evangelical account of this subject, it is, I think, incredible, that, if this precept were to be abolished at all, neither he nor they should give a single hint concerning the abolition. As both have left it just where they found it, without even intimating that it was at all to be annulled, we may reasonably conclude that its obligation has never been lessened.

In the mean time, it ought to be observed, that many other precepts comprised in the Mosaic law, which are universally acknowledged to be of a moral nature, were nevertheless not introduced into the decalogue, were not spoken by the voice of God, nor written with his finger, nor placed on the tables of stone fashioned by himself. Why was this supreme distinction made in favour of the precept now under discussion? This question I may perhaps answer more particularly hereafter. It is sufficient to observe at present, that it arose solely from the superior importance of the precept itself.

2. The perpetual establishment of the sabbath is evident from its original institution.

Of this we have the following account in Genesis ii. 1—3: 'Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it; because that in it he had rested from all his work, which God created and made.' The proofs which this passage affords for the perpetuity of the sabbath, respect the time and the end, of the institution.

The time of the institution was the seventh day after the creation was begun, and on the first day after it was ended. At this time none of the human race were in being, but our first parents. For them the sabbath was instituted; and clearly, therefore, for all their posterity also. If it was not instituted for all their posterity, it was not instituted for any of them; for, certainly, there can be no reason given why it was instituted for one more than another. The Jews, particularly, were no more nearly connected with Adam than we are; and no more interested in any thing commanded to him than are the Gentiles. Accordingly it is, so far as I know, universally conceded, that, if the sabbath was instituted at this time, it is obligatory on all men to the end of the world.

The resting of God on this day, alleged in the text as a primary and authoritative reason why the sabbath should be kept holy, is a reason extending to all men alike. In my own view it is incredible that God should rest on this day to furnish an example to the Jewish nation merely, of observing the sabbath; or that so solemn a transaction as this, in its own nature affecting the whole human race alike, should be intentionally confined in its influence to a ten thousandth part of mankind. The example of God, so far as it is imitable, is in its very nature authoritative and obligatory on every intelligent creature, and in the present case plainly on the whole human race. For man to limit it, where God himself has not been pleased to limit it, is evidently unwarrantable and indefensible.

The end of the institution plainly holds out the same universality of obligation. I have already observed, that this is twofold; viz. to commemorate the glory of God displayed in the creation; and to attain and increase holiness in the soul of man. I have also observed, that all men are alike interested in both these objects. Nor can there be a single pretence, that any nation, or any person, is more interested in either, than any other person, or nation. Every individual stands in exactly the same relations to God, is under exactly the same obligations, and is bound in this case to duties exactly the same.

3. The perpetuity of the sabbath is clearly taught in Isaiah, lvi. 6—8. 'Also the sons of the stranger, that join themselves to the Lord, to serve him, and to love the name of the Lord, to be his servants; every one that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of my covenant; even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt-offerings and their sacrifices shall be acceptable on my altar: for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all people. The Lord God, who gathereth the outcasts of Israel, saith, Yet will I gather others to him, beside those that are gathered unto him.'

From this passage it is evident, that when the house of God shall become a house of prayer for all people, and when the outcasts of Israel, and others beside them, shall be gathered unto him, that is, Christ; then the sabbath shall continue a divine institution; that it shall be a duty to keep it from polluting it; and that those who keep it, particularly the sons of the stranger, or the Gentile nations, shall be accepted and blessed in thus keeping it, and shall be made joyful in God's house of prayer.

But the house of God was never, in any sense, called 'a house of prayer for all people,' until after the dispensation of the gospel began; viz. until the house of God was found 'wherever two or three are met together in the name of Christ;' until the period when mankind were to 'worship God, neither in Jerusalem, nor in the mountain of Samaria, but wherever they worshipped in spirit and in truth.' Under this dispensation, therefore, the sabbath was still to continue a divine institution; was to be kept free from pollution; and the keeping of it was to be blessed, according to the declarations of the unerring Spirit of prophecy.

This prediction is a part of the unchangeable counsels of Jehovah. It could not have been written, unless it had been true. It could not have been true, unless fulfilled by this very observation of the sabbath. The sabbath could not have been thus observed, and men could not have been thus blessed in observing it, unless at the very time of this observance, it had still remained an institution of God. For God himself has declared, that mankind 'shall not add to his words, nor diminish aught from them;' and that, instead of blessing those who add to the words written in the Scriptures, he will 'add to them the plagues which are written in the Scriptures.' But to add to the institutions of God, is to add to his word, in the most arrogant and guilty manner. If the sabbath be not now a divine institution, he who observes it as such, adds to the institutions of God, and is grossly guilty of this arrogance. He may therefore certainly, as well as justly, expect to find a curse, and not a blessing; to be destroyed with a more terrible destruction than that which Nadab and Abihu experienced, for adding to the institutions of God one of their own, of a far less extraordinary and guilty nature.

But how different from all this has been the fact! How exactly, as well as gloriously, has this prediction been fulfilled! God has really 'gathered unto Christ others, beside the outcasts of Israel.' The Gentiles, the sons of the stranger, have, in immense multitudes, joined themselves to the Lord—they have served him—they have loved his name—they have kept the sabbath from polluting it—they have taken hold of his covenant—they have been made joyful in his house of prayer—and their sacrifices and their burnt-offerings

have been accepted upon his altar—and his house has been called a house of prayer for all people. Thus, as Isaiah predicted, there has actually been a sabbath under the dispensation of the gospel, remaining now for almost eighteen hundred years; and this sabbath has been attended with the peculiar blessings predicted by this evangelical prophet.

4. The perpetuity of the sabbath is fairly argued from Psalm cxviii. 19—26. 'Open to me the gates of righteousness; I will go into them; and I will praise the Lord. This gate of the Lord, into which the righteous shall enter. I will praise thee; for thou hast heard me, and art become my salvation. The stone which the builders refused, is become the head-stone of the corner. This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes. This is the day which the Lord hath made: we will rejoice, and be glad in it. Save now, I beseech thee, O Lord: O Lord, I beseech thee, send now prosperity! Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the Lord. We have blessed you out of the house of the Lord.'

This Psalm, particularly the prophecy contained in these words, is explained by St Peter, as referring to Christ; the true 'head-stone of the corner' rejected by the Jewish builders; and, of course, as referring to the times of the Christian dispensation. In these times, then, there was to be 'a day which the Lord had made;' not in the literal sense: for in this sense he had made all days; but in the spiritual sense; that is, a day which he had sanctified, consecrated to himself, devoted to his own worship; of a common and secular day, made into a holy and religious one. It was a day on which 'the gates of righteousness' were to be 'opened:' that is, the gates of the sanctuary, or house of God; and styled 'the gate (or gates) of the Lord.' It was a day on which 'the righteous,' as a body, were to 'enter into them.' It was the day on which 'the Lord became their salvation.' It was the day on which 'the stone rejected by the builders, became the head-stone of the corner.' It was a day on which prayers were to be offered up, and praises to be sung to God. Finally, it was a day in which the righteous were to receive blessings from the house of the Lord.

All my audience must have anticipated the conclusion, as flowing irresistibly even from this slight examination of the passage; that this was a day devoted to religious employments, and particularly to the public worship of God. It is equally evident, that it is the day on which Christ arose from the dead, or, in other words, 'became the head-stone of the corner.' It is, therefore, the sabbath; the only day ever devoted to purposes of this nature by the authority of inspiration. It is a sabbath also existing under the gospel, or, after the resurrection of Christ. Of course, it is to continue to the end of the world; for all the institutions which exist under the gospel are perpetual.

5. The perpetual establishment of the sabbath is evident from Revelation i. 10; 'I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day.'

The book of Revelation was probably written about the year 96, and of course many years after the resurrection of Christ. At this time, there was a day generally known to Christians by the name of the Lord's day. It was also entitled the Lord's day, by the pen of St John, under the immediate influence of inspiration. It was therefore so called with the approbation of the Spirit of truth. But this could not have been, unless it had been originally instituted by God himself. That the apostle, in this manner of mentioning it, accords intentionally with this denomination, as being the proper one, will I presume not be disputed; because the contrary supposition would make him lend his own sanction to a false as well as an unauthorized denomination of this day, and to the false doctrine involved in it; viz. that there was a day consecrated with propriety to the Lord; or, in other words, consecrated by divine appointment; since no other consecration of it would have any propriety. If this doctrine were false, as according to the supposition it must be, it could not fail to prove in a high degree dangerous; as it would naturally lead all who read this book to hold a religious institution as established by God, which he had not in fact appointed; and thus, by 'worshipping him according to the commandments of men,' to worship him 'in vain.' The guilt and the mischiefs of this doctrine, thus received and obeyed, would be incomprehensible. The Spirit of truth, who directed the pen of St John, cannot have sanctioned this doctrine, unless it were true; nor have given this denomination to the day spoken of, unless it were given by the will of God.

There was therefore at the period specified, and under the gospel, a day holden by the apostle, by Christians generally, and by God himself, as the Lord's day; or a day peculiarly consecrated to Christ, the Lord mentioned by St John in this passage. There is now, there has always been, but one such day; and but one manner in which a day can be the Lord's. This day is the sabbath; a holy, heavenly rest from every sinful and every secular concern. It is his, by being authoritatively appropriated to his use by himself; and by his requiring mankind, whenever it returns, to consecrate their time, their talents, and themselves, to his immediate service and religious worship. As then there was such a day, a day consecrated to the Lord, a sabbath, at the time when the Revelation of St John was written, so this day is perpetually established. For every institution under the gospel, the last dispensation of God to mankind, will remain in full force to the end of the world.

SERMON CVI.

THE LAW OF GOD.—THE DECALOGUE.—THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT.—THE CHANGE OF THE SABBATH.

Remember the sabbath-day, to keep it holy, &c.—Exod. xx. 8—11.

In the preceding Discourse, from these words I proposed to consider,

I. *The perpetual establishment of the sabbath; and*
II. *The manner in which it is to be observed.*

The first of these propositions I examined at some length in that Discourse; and shall now go on to offer some additional observations concerning the same subject. If I have proved, as I flatter myself I have, that the sabbath is an institution designed to last to the end of the world, it will naturally occur to my audience, as a question of prime importance in the consideration of this subject, 'Why is it, that you and other Christians, instead of observing the sabbath originally instituted, keep another day as the sabbath; a day, of which no mention was made in the institution, and for the religious observation of which we find no express command either in the Old or New Testament?'

This question is certainly asked with unobjectionable propriety; and certainly demands a candid and satisfactory answer. Such an answer I will now endeavour to give.

It is unquestionably true, that the institution, whatever it is, is to be taken as we find it in the Scriptures; and that men are in no respect to change it. He who made it, is the only being in the universe who has the right to abrogate or to alter that which he has made. As we find it then in the Scriptures, we are bound to take it, whether agreeable to our own ideas of wisdom and propriety, or not.

In order to explain my own views of this subject it will be useful to observe, that this institution obviously consists of two parts; the sabbath, or holy rest; and the day, on which it is holden. These are plainly alluded to, as distinct from each other, in the text; where it is said, 'The Lord rested on the seventh day, and blessed the sabbath-day, and hallowed it.' This language is chosen of design; and, as I apprehend, with a propriety, intentionally instructive to us. God did not bless the seventh day, nor hallow it as the seventh day; but only as being the day on which the sabbath, or the holy rest, was to be kept. Were the sabbath then warrantably to be kept, at different periods, on each of the days of the week, the blessing would follow it, on whatever day it was holden.

It is plain, then, that the sabbath, being a thing entirely distinct from the day on which it is kept, may be a perpetual institution, and yet be kept, if God should so order it, on any, or successively on all, the days of the week. If then the day on which the sabbath was to be holden, should by divine appointment be a different one from that which was originally established, the sabbath itself, the substance of the institution, might still remain the same. All that would be changed, would plainly be a given day of the week; a thing perfectly circumstantial; and of no other importance than that which circumstances gave it.

The day, I say, might be altered without altering at all the substance of the institution. Still it could be altered only by divine appointment. The same authority which instituted the sabbath, appointed also the day on which it was to be holden: and no other authority is competent to change either in any degree. If then we cannot find in the Scriptures plain and ample proofs of an abrogation of the original day, or the substitution of a new one, the day undoubtedly remains in full force and obligation, and is now religiously to be celebrated by all the race of Adam. It shall be the business of this Discourse to collect to a point the light which the Scriptures afford us concerning this important subject.

1. The nature of the subject furnishes room to suppose, that the day on which the sabbath was to be celebrated under the Christian dispensation, might be a different one from that which was originally appointed.

The end of the institution mentioned in the text, is the commemoration of the glory of God in the creation of the world. The reason why God chose that the manifestation of himself in that wonderful work should be commemorated, rather than that which was made in the deluge, or the deliverance of the Israelites from the bondage of Egypt, was, it is presumed, the peculiar greatness of the work itself, and of the display which it furnished of his perfections. If this be admitted, as it probably will be by every sober man, it must also be admitted, that we ought, according to this scheme, to expect any other work of God, of still greater importance, and more glorious to the divine character than the creation itself, to be commemorated with equal or greater solemnity. But the work of redemption, or as it is sometimes styled in the Scriptures, the new creation, is a more glorious work than that of creating the heavens and the earth. This doctrine may be elucidated by the following considerations:—

(1.) The agent in both these works is the same. St Paul expressly declares, That Christ 'in the beginning laid the foundations of the earth; that the heavens are the work of his hands;' Heb. i. 10; and that 'all things visible and invisible were created by him, and for him,' Col. i. 16. St John also teaches us, that 'all things were made by him; and that without him there was not one thing made which has existed,' John i. 3. The same person, therefore, is honoured in a commemoration of both these wonderful works.

(2.) The end of a work, that is, the reason for which it is done, is of more importance than the work itself. This truth will be admitted on all hands. No intelligent being, who claims the character of wisdom, ever undertakes a work, without an end sufficiently important to justify the means adopted for its accomplishment. Much less will this be supposed of God. But the end of creation is providence; and, of all the works of providence, the work of redemption, or the new creation, is incalculably the most important; the hinge on which all the rest turn; the work, towards the completion of which all the rest are directed; in a word, the end of them all. Accordingly, St Paul says, 'Who created all things by Jesus Christ, to the intent, that now unto principalities and powers, in heavenly places, might be known, by the church, the manifold wisdom of God.' The display of the wisdom of God, by the church, in the work of redemption, was therefore the intent, or end, for which all things were created by Jesus Christ. Without the work of redemption, then, the purpose of God in creating all things, and the real use of the things themselves, would have been prevented.

(3.) The superior importance of the new creation is evident in this fact; that the old creation, by its unceasing changes, continually decays and degenerates, while the new creation becomes by its own changes, unceasingly brighter and better.

(4.) The old creation is a transitory work, made for consumption by fire; whereas the new is intended for eternal duration.

Thus from the nature of the case there is ample room to suppose, that the work of redemption might, by divine appointment, be commemorated preferably in the work of creation.

2. It is expressly foretold by the prophet Isaiah, that the work of redemption shall be commemorated in preference to the work of creation.

Isaiah lxv. 17, 18. 'For behold,' saith God, 'I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered, neither shall it come into mind. But be ye glad, and rejoice for ever, in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and my people a joy.' In this passage of Scripture we are informed, that God designed to create what in the first of these verses is called, 'new heavens and a new earth.' This, in the second verse, is explained in simple language, and is said to be 'creating the people of God a joy and a rejoicing.' In other words, it is no other than redeeming and sanctifying the souls of men; by means of which, they become a rejoicing to God, and to each other.

In this declaration of the prophet there are two things particularly claiming our attention. The first is, that the new creation, or the work of redemption, is of far greater importance in the eye of God than the former creation. The second is an express prediction, that the former creation shall not be remembered by the church, nor come into mind; or, in other words, shall not be commemorated. This I understand, as almost all similar Jewish phrases are to be understood, in a comparative sense; and suppose the prophet to intend, that it shall be far less remembered and commemorated, as being of far less importance.

That this passage refers to the times of the evangelical dispensation is certain from the prediction itself; since the new creation is the very subject of it, and the commencement of that dispensation. It is equally evident also from the whole strain of the chapter.

This passage appears to me to place the fact in the clearest light, that a particular, superior, and extraordinary commemoration of the work of redemption by the Christian church, in all its various ages, was a part of the good pleasure of God, and was designed by him to be accomplished in the course of his providence. But there neither is, nor ever was, any public, solemn commemoration of this work by the Christian church, except that which is holden on the first day of the week; or the day in which Christ completed this great work by his resurrection from the dead. This prophecy has, therefore, been unfulfilled, so far as I see, unless it has been fulfilled in this very manner. But if it has been fulfilled in this manner, then this manner of fulfilling it has been agreeable to the true intention of the prophecy, and to the good pleasure of God expressed in it; and is, therefore, that very part of the system of his providence which is here unfolded to mankind.

At the same time, it is to be remembered, that the former institution is still substantially preserved. The sabbath still returns upon one day in seven. The great facts, that 'in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day,' are still presented to the mind in their full force. The work of creating the heavens and the earth is therefore regularly commemorated, according to the original institution of God; while the new creation, as its importance demands, and as this prophecy directly foretells, takes its own superior place in the commemoration. Thus the institution, instead of being abrogated in every respect, is only changed in such a manner as to enlarge its usefulness and importance to mankind, and to become a solemn memorial of two wonderful works of God, instead of one. The sabbath itself is unchanged. It still returns at the end of seven days. It is still a memorial of the creation. But the institution is enlarged in such a manner, as to commemorate also the work of redemption.

With this prophecy facts have corresponded in a wonderful manner. All Christians commemorate the work of creation in their prayers and praises, their religious meditations and discourses, from sabbath to sabbath. But every Christian perfectly well knows, that the work of redemption holds a far higher place in every private, and in every public religious service; and that, according to the declaration of God in this passage, 'the former is,' comparatively, 'not remembered, neither does it come into mind.' At the same time, the work of redemption is not merely the chief, but the only means of originating holiness in the soul, and altogether the principal means of advancing it towards perfection. In every respect, therefore, the Christian sabbath is now better suited to the great ends of the institution, than the original day. Until the time of Christ's resurrection, the seventh day commemorated the most glorious work which God had ever accomplished, and the most wonderful display of the divine perfections. But by the resurrection of Christ, a new and far more glorious work was finished. While the sabbath, therefore, was by divine appointment kept on the seventh day, it was exactly suited to the purpose of commemorating the most glorious work of God which had ever taken place. But, after the resurrection of Christ, the first day of the week was plainly better fitted than any other day to become a religious memorial of both these wonderful works, by being the day on which Christ arose from the dead, and by returning regularly at the end of every six days. Whatever other opinions we adopt concerning this subject, it must, I think, be readily acknowledged, that no other day could possibly combine all these advantages.

This important consideration seems to be plainly intimated in the text. 'Remember the sabbath-day, to keep it holy. The seventh day is the sabbath. In six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is; wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath-day, and hallowed it.' It cannot escape the notice of every reader of this passage, that the duty of remembering the sabbath, to keep it holy, enjoined at the beginning, and the blessing and consecration mentioned at the end, are applied to the sabbath, and not to the day; and that the seventh day is declared to be 'the sabbath-day,' or the day on which the sabbath is to be holden. The meaning of this is, obviously, that the seventh day is, or was at that time, the existing day of the sabbath; without determining how long it should continue to possess this character. God established it indefinitely; and, unless he should be pleased to change it, perpetually, as the day of the sabbath. But on whatever day he should think fit to establish the sabbath, it was to be remembered, and kept holy. The blessing also, and the sanctification, were annexed to the sabbath-day, and not to the seventh. In this manner the Christian church became informed of their duty, whenever the day should be changed; and, if they performed it faithfully, were assured of this peculiar blessing. Thus, also, they were preserved from the fears, which might otherwise arise, of losing the bless-

ing annexed to the sabbath, whenever the day on which it should be holden should be changed. Had the blessing, in this command, been annexed to the seventh day, it would probably have occasioned an immovable perplexity to the Christian church, had they found the present account of the sabbath contained in the New Testament.

3. The hundred and eighteenth Psalm is a direct prediction, that the day of Christ's resurrection was to be the day on which the sabbath should be holden under the gospel.

In the 14th verse of this Psalm the divine writer declares, that 'the Lord is his strength, and his song; and is become his salvation.' This fact we know was accomplished, when Christ rose from the dead. In consequence of this great event, he hears 'the voice of rejoicing, and of salvation, in the tabernacles of the righteous,' or in the house of God. In the 19th verse he says, 'Open to me the gates of righteousness. I will praise thee; for thou hast heard me, and art become my salvation.' This event he again describes in a new, and under a very different image: 'The stone which the builders refused is become the head-stone of the corner.' He then subjoins. 'This is the day which the Lord hath made; that is, the day which Christ consecrated, or made into a holy day, when he became 'the head-stone of the corner:' that is, when he arose from the dead. He then adds, 'we will rejoice and be glad in it:' that is, we, the righteous, the church of God; for in their name he speaks throughout all the latter part of this psalm, whether speaking in the singular, or plural. In their name he says, in the following verse, 'Save now, I beseech thee, O Lord! O Lord! I beseech thee, send now prosperity. Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.' The words of the two last mentioned verses are applied directly to Christ, by the multitudes who accompanied him in his triumphal entry into Jerusalem. 'The multitudes,' saith St Matthew, 'cried, saying, Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!' The words of the last verse are also applied by Christ to himself, Matt. xxiv. 39, 'For I say unto you, ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.' The comment of the multitudes is reasonably supposed to be that of the Jewish church in general. That of Christ, and that of St Peter, mentioned in the preceding discourse, are the decisive law of interpretation to the Christian church. We are, therefore, warranted to conclude, that the psalmist here declares, not only the joy and gladness of the Christian church in the resurrection of Christ, but in the day on which he arose: for he says, 'This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it.' This day he also declares to be a day of public worship; a day on which the gates of righteousness were to be opened, and 'the righteous,' or the church, as a body, were to enter them, and on which the ministers of the gospel were to 'bless' them (in the Jewish language, or language of the temple service) 'out of the house of the Lord;' or, in language adapted to the Christian manner of worship, in the house of the Lord. The substance of this comment is beautifully given by Dr Watts, in the two following stanzas:

'The work, O Lord, is thine,
And wondrous in our eyes;
This day declares it all divine,
This day did Jesus rise.

'This is the glorious day
That our Redeemer made;
Let us rejoice, and sing, and pray,
Let all the church be glad.'

4. Christ has indicated, that the seventh day should cease to be the sabbath after his resurrection.

In Matt. ix. 14, we are informed, that the disciples of John came to him, and inquired of him why his disciples did not fast, as well as themselves, and the Pharisees. Christ replied, 'Can the children of the bridechamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast.' Christ was crucified and buried on Friday. At the close, then, of this day he was taken from the children of the bridechamber; that is, from his disciples. Throughout Saturday he lay in the grave. On the first day of the week, the Christian sabbath, he was restored to them again. This then became to them the proper season of fasting, according to his own declaration. But the sabbath was a festival from the beginning. Such it continues to be unto the end. That it was to be such to the Christian church is amply proved by the passage formerly quoted from Isa. lvi. 6, 7, and from the express declarations just now quoted from Psalm cxviii. Fasting on this day can, therefore, never accord with its original and universal design. But on the seventh day, the day during which he lay in the grave, as he informs us, it was proper that they should fast. In this declaration it is indicated, not obscurely, that the seventh day would soon cease to be a season fitted for the observance of the sabbath.

It must be obvious to the least reflection, that this season of Christ's extreme humiliation is the most improper period conceivable for commemorating with joy and gladness the wonderful work of redemption. Every thing in this season must appear to a Christian to demand humiliation and mourning, rather than exultation. During this period the enemies of Christ prevailed against him; and 'the serpent,' according to the first prophecy ever given concerning him to this world, 'bruised his heel.' To rejoice on this day, would be to lay hold on the time of our Saviour's greatest sufferings and deepest humiliation as the proper season for our greatest exultation. This, certainly, was not the conduct of the apostles. They mourned in the most melancholy and distressing manner. Nor do they appear ever to have regarded the seventh day afterward as the holy, joyful rest of God. On the contrary, they transferred this festival to another day.

5. The apostles, by their example, have decisively taught us, that the day of Christ's resurrection was to be the Christian sabbath.

On the first day of the week, the day of his resurrection, Christ met his disciples assembled together. On the first day of the week following, he met them, again assembled together. On the first day of the week, at the feast called Pentecost, the Spirit descended in a miraculous and glorious manner upon the apostles. On the first day of the week, the disciples assembled together customarily, 'to break bread,' and to make charitable contributions for their suffering brethren. From the three first of these facts it is plain, that Christ thought fit to honour this day with peculiar tokens of his appro-

bation; from the last, that the apostles thought themselves warranted to devote it to religious purposes.

I have already shown above, and sufficiently, that God has absolutely prohibited all men, under severe denunciations, and with terrible expressions of his anger, either to form religious institutions, or to substitute their own institutions for his. It is clearly impossible, that the apostles, who have taught us this very doctrine, should, under the influence of inspiration, disobey him in this interesting particular, by forming so remarkable a religious institution; abolishing that of God, and substituting their own in its place. Nothing is more evident to me, than that this example has all the weight which can be attached to any precept whatever. This will especially appear, if we remember that Peter with the eleven apostles celebrated the first day of the week, and that Paul and his followers did the same. Paul received his gospel immediately from Christ; and informs us, in Gal. ii. 6, that the apostles at Jerusalem 'added nothing to him.' For three years he never saw one of them; and had not the remotest correspondence with them. All the doctrines, therefore, which Paul acknowledged, he received directly from Christ, and was indebted for none of them to his companions in the apostleship. Yet Peter and his followers observed the first day of the week as the religious day, and Paul and his followers observed the same. This is evident from his direction to the churches at Galatia and Corinth, to 'lay by them somewhat on the first day of the week,' for the poor saints at Jerusalem. The reason why the first day of the week is pitched upon for this purpose is obviously this; that they assembled customarily on the first day of the week for religious purposes. Accordingly, in Acts xx. 7, we are informed, that the disciples in Troas came together on the first day of the week to break bread, and that Paul preached unto them, continuing his speech unto midnight. But whence did these persons, thus separated, derive this agreement in their observance of the first day of the week. The only answer which can be given to this question is, From the inspiration which guided them both. Had they been uninspired, their agreement in a case of this nature, where they acted independently of each other, would have proved, that they derived the doctrine, and the practice grounded on it, from a common source. Their character as inspired men, and apostles, proves beyond debate, that the common source, from which they thus harmoniously derived a religious institution, was God.

6. The same doctrine is proved from the already cited passage, Rev. i. 10, 'I was in the spirit on the Lord's day.'

From this declaration it is evident, that in or about the year 96, when the Apocalypse was written and published, there was a day known and observed by Christians generally, as the Lord's day. This appellation was, I presume, derived from the passage before quoted from Psal. cxviii.; in which it is said concerning the day of Christ's resurrection, 'This is the day which the Lord hath made:' that is, hath made of a common into a holy day; or, in other words, consecrated to himself. But the day pointed out in this passage is the day on which Christ rose from the dead.

That this was in fact the day styled by St John, 'the Lord's day,' is unanswerably evident from the history of the church; and it is equally evident, that the sabbath, or holy rest, together with all the religious services pertaining to it, were celebrated by the church on this day. Every one who has read with attention the New Testament, must have observed that there is no hint, as well as no precept, directing Christians to celebrate the seventh day as holy time. The ancient Christians, particularly the Jewish Christians, when they had occasion to preach to the Jews, or to assemble with them, entered into their synagogue on the seventh day, and undoubtedly worshipped with them in their manner; but there is not the least reason to believe, either from the Acts, or from the Epistles, that they ever assembled of their own accord on that day, for religious services in a regular or customary manner.

Ignatius, a companion of the apostles, says, in so many words, 'Let us no more sabbatize;' that is, keep the Jewish sabbath, 'but let us keep the Lord's day, on which our Life arose,'

Justin Martyr, who lived at the close of the first, and the beginning of the second, century, says, 'On the day, called Sunday, is an assembly of all who live in the city or country; and the memoirs of the apostles, and the writings of the prophets,' that is, the Old and New Testaments, 'are read.' For this he assigns the reasons of the Christians; viz. 'That it was the day on which the creation of the world began, and on which Christ arose from the dead.'

Irenæus, a disciple of Polycarp, the disciple of St John himself, who lived in the second century, says, 'On the Lord's day every one of us Christians keeps the sabbath; meditating in the law,' or Scriptures, 'and rejoicing in the works of God.'

Dionysius, bishop of Corinth, who lived in the time of Irenæus, that is, in the second century, says, in his letter to the church at Rome, 'To day we celebrate the Lord's day, when we read your epistle to us.'

Tertullian, who also lived in the second century, speaks of the Lord's day as a Christian solemnity.

Petavius declares, that 'but one Lord's day was observed in the earliest times of the church.'

It is indeed true, that in that miserable forgery, which professes itself to have been written by the apostles, and is styled, The Apostolical Constitutions; but which was plainly the work of some impostor, living in the latter end of the fourth, or the beginning of the fifth century, certainly not earlier, it is directed, that Christians should keep both the Jewish sabbath and the Lord's day as religious festivals; and that every sabbath but one in the year, and every Lord's day, should be observed in this manner. It is also true, that in the fifth century both these days were kept in this manner by Christians generally, except the churches of Rome and Alexandria; who did not observe the Jewish sabbath as a religious day. This appears by the testimony of both Socrates and Sozomen. Concerning this subject Petavius declares, that 'the most holy fathers agreed, that the apostles never ordained any thing of this nature.' He also remarks, that the council of Laodicea, which probably sat about the year 363, forbade, in their 29th canon, that Christians should rest from labour on the sabbath, or seventh day. For they say, 'Christians ought not to Judaize, nor to rest on the sabbath, that is, the seventh day; but preferring the Lord's day to rest, if indeed it should be in their power, as Christians.'*

* Lardner.

From these observations it is plain, that although in the fifth century many Christians had reverted to the observation of the Jewish sabbath, while yet they universally celebrated the Lord's day; yet the practice, even in this period of miserable declension, was by no means universal. The churches of Rome and Alexandria never adopted it at all; and others plainly adopted it, as they did a great multitude of other corruptions at the same time, merely from their own construction of the Scriptures. We cannot wonder that those, especially when we find among them celebrated ministers of religion, who admitted the protection and invocation of saints and martyrs, should admit any other corruption; and that they should construe those passages of Scripture which speak of the sabbath as erroneously as they construed others.

7. The same truth appears in this great fact, that God has perpetually and gloriously annexed his blessing to the Christian sabbath.

If this day be not divinely instituted, then God has suffered his church to disuse and annihilate his own institution, and substitute one of mere human device in its stead. Will this be believed? But this is not all; he has annexed the blessing which he originally united to the sabbath instituted by himself, to that which was the means of destroying it, and which was established by human authority merely. After requiring that men should add nothing to his words, and forbidding them to diminish aught from them; after threatening the plagues denounced in the Scriptures to him who should add unto the words which they contain, and declaring that he would take away out of the book of life the part of him who should take away from the words written in the Scriptures; can any man believe, that he would forsake, that he has forsaken, his own institution; an institution of this magnitude; an institution, on which have depended, in all lands and ages, the observation, influence, and existence, of his holy law? Can any man believe, that he who so dreadfully punished Nadab and Abihu for forsaking his own institution, in a case of far inferior magnitude, and setting up one of their own in its stead, would not only not punish, but abundantly and unceasingly bless the Christian church, while perpetrating and persisting in iniquity of exactly the same nature, and far greater in degree? The Christian, who can believe this, must be prepared to believe any thing.

Had men known nothing concerning the institution of God, the charity of their fellow men might be naturally enough extended to them, while employed in religiously commemorating Christ's resurrection. The appearance of piety in such a commemoration, and their freedom from the impiety of intruding upon a divine institution, might induce others to think favourably of their conduct. But in the case in hand, the institution was begun by the apostles, men inspired, chosen followers of Christ, and the erectors of his kingdom in the world. If they sinned, they sinned wilfully, and in defiance of their inspiration. With them, however, the blessing began to be annexed to this day in a most wonderful and glorious manner. From them it has been uninterruptedly continued to the present time. To this day, under God, as a primary mean, mankind are indebted for all the religion which has been in the world from the days of the apostles. If then the Christian sabbath is not a divine institution, God has made a device of man a more powerful support to his spiritual kingdom, a more efficacious instrument of diffusing truth and righteousness, than most, perhaps than all, others: while, at the same time, he has, so far as I am able to discern, wholly neglected and forgotten a most solemn institution of his own. Thus a human device has been a peculiar, if not a singular, means of accomplishing the greatest glory to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and men, it would seem, will in the end 'have whereof to glory before God.'

This blessing has been too evident, too uniform, and too long continued, to admit of a doubt; too great and too wonderful to be passed over in silence. On this day, the perfections of God, manifested in the amazing works of creation and redemption, have, more than on all others, been solemnly, gratefully, and joyfully remembered and celebrated. On this day, millions of the human race have been born unto God. On this day, Christians have ever found their prime blessings. From the word and ordinances of God, from the influences of the Holy Spirit, from the presence of Christ in his church, Christians have derived on this day, more than on all others, the most delightful views of the divine character, clear apprehensions of their own duty, lively devotion to the service of God, strength to overcome temptations, and glorious anticipations of immortality. Take this day from the calendar of the Christian, and all that remains will be clouded and cheerless. Religion will instantly decay. Ignorance, error, and vice will immediately triumph, the sense of duty vanish, morals fade away, the acknowledgment, and even the remembrance of God be far removed from mankind, the glad tidings of salvation cease to sound, and the communication between earth and heaven be cut off for ever.

SERMON CVII.

THE LAW OF GOD.—THE DECALOGUE.—THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT.—OBJECTIONS ANSWERED.

There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God.—Heb. iv. 9.

In the two preceding Discourses I have, according to the scheme originally proposed, endeavoured to prove the perpetual establishment of the sabbath as a divine institution; and to show, that the day on which it is by

divine appointment to be holden by the Christian church, is the day of Christ's resurrection.

In the following Discourse I shall proceed to consider the objections which have been made to this doctrine. As all the important objections within my knowledge are adduced by the late archdeacon Paley, it is my design to reply to this respectable writer in form; such a reply being, in my own apprehension, all that is necessary with respect to the subject at large.

The text I consider as a direct assertion, that there is a sabbath in the Christian church, explained by the verse following to be founded on the fact, that Christ rested from his labours in the work of redemption; as the seventh day sabbath was founded on the fact, that God rested on that day from his labours in the work of creation. 'For he hath entered into his rest, even he hath rested from his works, as God did from his own.' The word, translated *rest*, in the text, is σαββατισμος. Ainsworth, a man eminently qualified to judge of this subject, translates Exod. xvi. 23, thus: 'This is that which Jehovah hath spoken: To-morrow is the sabbatism, the sabbath of holiness to Jehovah.' In the same manner he translates Exod. xxxi. 15, Lev. xxiii. 3, and xxv. 4. In commenting on Exod. xvi. 23, he says, 'Sabbatism, rest: that is, rest, or cessation. But as the Hebrew, *shabbath*, is retained by the Holy Ghost in the Greek σαββατον, so the Hebrew *shabbathon*, here used, is by the apostle, σαββατισμος, in Heb. iv. 9.' The verse ought therefore to be rendered, 'There remaineth therefore a *sabbatism* (or holy sabbath) to the people of God:' and this day the following verse proves to be the day on which Christ rose from the dead.

The reason why I have not adduced this passage of Scripture, together with those immediately connected with it, in proof of the doctrine under debate, is, that a comment on a paragraph so obscurely written, and demanding so particular an explanation, must be very long; and would probably be very tedious to many of my audience.

I. The first and great objection of Dr Paley to the perpetuity of the sabbath is, that *the account of its original institution is found in the following passage*; Exod. xvi. 22—30: 'And it came to pass, that on the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for one man: and all the rulers of the congregation came and told Moses. And he said unto them, This is that which the Lord hath said, To-morrow is the rest of the holy sabbath unto the Lord: Bake that which ye will bake to-day, and seethe that ye will seethe; and that which remaineth over, lay up for you, to be kept until the morning. And they laid it up till the morning, as Moses bade. And Moses said, Eat that to-day; for to-day is a sabbath unto the Lord: to-day ye shall not find it in the field. Six days ye shall gather it; but on the seventh day, which is the sabbath, in it there shall be none. And it came to pass, that there went out some of the people on the seventh day for to gather, and they found none. And the Lord said unto Moses, How long refuse ye to keep my statutes and my laws? See, for that the Lord hath given you the sabbath, therefore he giveth you on the sixth day the bread of two days: abide ye every man in his place; let no man go out of his place on the seventh day. So the people rested on the seventh day.'

The argument here, is wholly derived from this phraseology: 'To-morrow is the rest of the holy sabbath unto the Lord.' 'To-day is a sabbath unto the Lord;' and the 'Lord hath given you the sabbath.' In these expressions, Dr Paley thinks he finds the first institution of the sabbath. In my view, however, after examining long and often, the arguments of this respectable writer, they appear to lead to the contrary conclusion. It is to be observed, that the whole argument depends on the first of these passages; because, that being once introduced, the rest would, in the case supposed, follow it of course; and because they refer directly to it, and are grounded upon it.

As a preface to the answer which I intend to make to this argument, I remark, that the words of Moses are addressed to 'the elders of Israel,' who had complained to him of the improper conduct of their countrymen, for gathering twice as much bread on the sixth day as they customarily gathered on other days. As Moses had forbidden them to leave of it till morning, and undoubtedly by divine inspiration, the elders supposed their countrymen to have trespassed in collecting this double quantity upon the sixth day. Upon this part of the story I observe,

1. That the division of time into weeks was perfectly known to the Israelites. This is proved by the phrases, 'the sixth day,' and the 'seventh day;' obviously referring to the days of the week, and not to the days of the month. Now I ask, Whence had these people this scheme in dividing time, unless from the history of the creation, traditionally conveyed down to them? This tradition, it will be observed, could come to them from Adam through six persons; Methuselah, Shem, Abraham, Isaac, Joseph, and Amram.

2. Although in the 5th verse God informed Moses, that the congregation should gather twice as much on the sixth day; it seems highly probable, if not absolutely certain, that Moses did not inform them: for we find that the elders, who would, I think, certainly have received this information first, were plainly ignorant of it. The people, therefore, seem to have supposed the ensuing day to be the sabbath, of their own accord; and for this reason to have ventured to gather a double quantity of manna, from an apprehension that the labour would be improper and unlawful on that day. Some of them, indeed, went out from a spirit of rebellion and unbelief, and probably under the influence of an idle curiosity, to learn whether the manna would descend on that day, contrary to the prediction of Moses, or not. But this fact affects not the argument in hand.

Let me now ask, whether the first of these declarations of Moses, 'This is that which the Lord hath said, To-morrow is the rest of the holy sabbath unto the Lord,' is the language of a man speaking of a thing altogether new and unheard of; of a thing totally different from all other things hitherto known in the world; or the language of a man referring to something already known, and speaking to persons, who, although acquainted with the institution itself, had an imperfect knowledge of the proper day on which it was to be holden; and were therefore uncertain with respect to this point? Were two of us to appoint a future day of the month (say the second of December) for the transaction of certain business, a third, who was present would naturally observe, if such were the fact, that the second of December will be the sabbath. Or were we

conversing upon the same subject on the first of December, the same person would naturally say, 'To-morrow is the sabbath.' These, you will observe, are the very words of Moses. Here we are unmindful, and through forgetfulness, ignorant that the sabbath is to take place on that day. Yet we are perfectly acquainted with the institution generally; and that we are acquainted with it, this phraseology is direct proof, because it springs from these very circumstances, and would, in the case stated, be used by all men.

But, if the institution were wholly unknown, would not the reply be made in terms equivalent to the following: 'We cannot meet on the morrow, or the second of December, for this business; because the legislature has by law forbidden all the inhabitants to do business on that day; and has required them to assemble for the worship of God, and to abstain from every secular pursuit.' To this answer would naturally succeed inquiries concerning the fact, the time, and the end of passing the law; the motives which led to it; the terms in which it was couched; its requisitions, and its penalties. No instance, it is presumed, can be found, in which the conversation concerning a new subject of this nature would be such as here recorded by Moses, or in which it would not be substantially such as I have recited. On the contrary, the conversation in the case which I have supposed to be that of the Israelites, is always exactly that of Moses.

In this opinion I am established by the remarkable fact, that the Israelites make no inquiry concerning this supposed novel institution; although so eminently important, and so plain an object of rational curiosity. The elders themselves, notwithstanding their zeal against the supposed transgression of the people, ask no questions, and make no reply. If the institution were new, and now first made known to them, this conduct is unaccountable. But if they were acquainted with the institution, and doubtful concerning the day, it was perfectly natural.

The reckoning of time at this, as well as many preceding and succeeding periods, it is well known, was extremely lame and confused. The Israelites, with respect to this subject, laboured under peculiar disadvantages. They had been long in a state of servitude; and were of course ignorant, distressed, and naturally inattentive to this and other subjects of a similar nature. A reckoning would, indeed, be kept among them, however ignorant. But it must almost necessarily be imperfect, doubtful, and disputed. Different opinions concerning the time would of course prevail.

Should it be said, that the causes which I have specified would make them forget the institution itself; I answer, that other nations, as will be seen hereafter, did not forget it, but consecrated the seventh day to religious worship; although many, perhaps all, became ignorant of the day itself. We ourselves often forget the day of the month and week; while yet we are possessed of the most exact reckoning of time, and a perfect calendar; and are reminded of our time by so many books, papers, and other means.

Dr Paley lays much stress on the words contained in the third declaration of Moses, which I have specified; 'The Lord hath given you the sabbath.' In the 23d verse, when the elders had reported to him the supposed transgression of their countrymen, in gathering a double portion of manna on the sixth day of the week, he answers, 'This is that which the Lord hath said; To-morrow is the rest of the holy sabbath unto the Lord;' that is, God declares to you, that the holy rest unto himself is to be holden on the morrow. 'Bake that which ye will bake to-day; and seethe that which ye will seethe, and that which remaineth over lay up for you, to be kept until the morning.' The next day he renewed the same monition; and informed them farther, that there would be no manna on that day; nor on the seventh day at any future period. They were therefore to gather it on six days of the week only, and on every sixth day to provide the necessary supply for the seventh.

Some of the people, however, went out to gather manna on that very day, but found none. Upon this, God says to Moses, 'How long refuse ye to keep my commandments? See, for that the Lord hath given you the sabbath, therefore he giveth you on the sixth day the bread of two days.' The words, 'The Lord hath given you the sabbath,' are perfectly explained by the original declaration of Moses on this subject, made the preceding day: 'To-morrow is the rest of the holy sabbath unto the Lord.' This is the giving of the sabbath here referred to; and this, I flatter myself, has been shown to be something widely different from originally instituting the sabbath.

The obvious explanation of these words here given, equally explains a passage in Ezekiel xx. 12, and another in Nehemiah ix. 14, quoted by Dr Paley for the same purpose. The former of these is, 'Moreover, also, I gave them my sabbaths:' the latter, 'Thou madest known unto them thy holy sabbath.' If the passage in Ezekiel refers to the sabbath at all, which may be doubted, it is merely a repetition of the words of Moses. If it refers to the various fasts and feasts of the Jews, frequently denominated sabbaths, it has no connexion with the subject. The latter of these passages accords more naturally and obviously with the account which has been here given, than with that of Dr Paley. Neither of them, it is perfectly plain, furnishes the least additional support to his opinion.

Another argument for the same purpose is derived by this respectable writer from the following declaration, Exod. xxxi. 16, 17. 'It,' that is, the sabbath, 'is a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever.' The same thing is also mentioned by Ezekiel, in nearly the same terms. Upon this Dr Paley observes. 'Now it does not seem easy to understand how the sabbath could be a sign between God and the people of Israel, unless the observance of it was peculiar to that people, and designed to be so.'

The only question of importance here is, whether the fact, that the sabbath is made a sign between God and Israel, made it cease to be a memorial of the display of the divine perfections accomplished in the creation. If not, then the sabbath still remained at that time, and remains now, such a memorial. But I presume neither Dr Paley himself, nor any other man, would say, that God in making the sabbath a sign between him and Israel, intended to release them from commemorating on that day his perfections, thus displayed in the work of creation, and his own solemn commemoration of them, when he rested at the close of this work upon the seventh day. But if the Israelites were not released from this commemoration by the passage in question, the rest of mankind could be affected by it in no manner whatever.

The truth is that the ordinance which made the sabbath a sign to the Israelites, was subsequent to the promulgation of the decalogue, and cannot affect that law, even remotely; as I shall soon demonstrate. In the same manner the sabbath was made a memorial of the deliverance of the Israelites from the bondage of Egypt, and a type of the promised rest in Canaan. These were all merely additional uses of the sabbath, to which it was happily applied, because they perfectly harmonized with its original design.

In Deuteronomy vi. 8, Moses, after reciting the decalogue, and the summary of it contained in the two great commands of the moral law, says to Israel, 'Thou shalt bind them, for a sign, upon thine hand.' A sign which the Israelites, by the command of God, were to bind upon their hands, was a sign between God and them, in the same manner as was the sabbath. Now I ask, whether it would be proper to say, that 'it does not seem easy to understand how the decalogue, and the two great commands in which it is summed up, could be a sign between God and the people of Israel, unless the observance of them was peculiar to that people, and designed to be so.'

What was intended by making the sabbath a sign between God and Israel, is declared by God himself in Ezekiel xx. 12: 'I gave them my sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them; that they may know that I am Jehovah, who sanctify them.' It will not be denied, that the whole human race are equally interested with the Israelites in this knowledge. All that was peculiar to them was this; they alone, for many ages, had, and it was foreseen by God that they would have, the knowledge in question; and would be the only medium of communicating it to other nations. The sabbath, therefore, was so far peculiarly a sign to them; but it is obviously in its nature, and necessarily, a sign also, in a general sense, of the same knowledge to every nation afterward acquainted with the sabbath. From this very declaration in Ezekiel, in which the object of rendering the sabbath a sign to the Israelites is pointed out, it is clear that 'the observance of it was not designed to be peculiar to that people,' unless this knowledge of Jehovah was also to be perpetually confined to them.

Dr Paley farther observes, 'if the sabbath be binding upon Christians, it must be binding as to the day, the duties, and the penalty; in none of which it is received.'

It will be remembered, that the sabbath and that day on which it is kept, are separate parts of the institution; so separate, that the sabbath itself may be perpetual, and yet the day be changed successively, through every part of the week. The institution of the day I have already acknowledged to be no less obligatory than that of the sabbath itself; unless it can be fairly shown to have been changed by the same authority. Whether this has, in fact, been shown in the preceding Discourse, must be left for those who heard it to determine.

With regard to the duties of the sabbath, I shall only observe, that this point will be examined in a future Discourse.

As to the penalty, it will be remembered, that it is not contained in the decalogue, but is merely a part of the civil law and internal police of the Jewish nation. Still it may be useful to try this reasoning with other commands of the decalogue. In the two first precepts it is acknowledged that we, as well as the Israelites, are forbidden to worship idols, or other gods, beside Jehovah. Now it is well known that the Israelites who disobeyed these commands, were by the law of Moses to be put to death. It is presumed, that Dr Paley would not believe this penalty to be binding upon us; and that he would still acknowledge the commands themselves to be no less obligatory upon us than upon them. It is presumed, also, that he would acknowledge the fifth command to be equally binding upon all men. In Deut. xxi. 18—21, and in Prov. xxx. 17, it is required, that children disobeying this command shall be put to death. Would Dr Paley acknowledge this penalty to be binding upon us? Or would he deny our obligation to obey the command?

II. It is asserted by this writer, that *Genesis* ii. 1—3. *does not contain an account of the original institution of the sabbath.*

This assertion he supports by the following reasons: 'That the observation of the sabbath is not mentioned in the history of the world before the call of Abraham; that it is not mentioned in the history of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; which, he says, is in many parts sufficiently circumstantial and domestic; that in Exodus xvi. no intimation is given that the sabbath then appointed was only the revival of an ancient institution, which had been neglected or forgotten; that no such neglect is imputed to the inhabitants of the old world, or to any part of the family of Noah; and that there is no record of any permission to dispense with the institution during the Egyptian bondage, or on any other public emergency.'

With regard to the last of these reasons, I answer only, that there is no record of any neglect of the institution, either during the Egyptian bondage, or during any other public emergency. During the Babylonish captivity, we have no record of any such permission, nor of any observance of the sabbath. Yet, as Nehemiah and his companions, plainly observed it after their return from that captivity, it is presumed Dr Paley will not deny that it was observed by the Jewish nation during that whole period.

That no negligence of the sabbath should be charged to the antediluvians, to Noah, or to any others, in cases where the sabbath is not even mentioned, can occasion no surprise; and, it is presumed, can furnish no argument relative to this or any other question. It deserves, however, to be remarked, as an answer to every observation which can be made of this nature, that the first censure for any impropriety in the observation of the sabbath, uttered concerning the Israelites in the Scriptures, is found in the prophet Isaiah; about seven hundred and sixty years before Christ, and seven hundred and thirty-one years after the events recorded in Exodus xvi. The second is found in Ezekiel; written about five hundred and ninety-three years before Christ, and eight hundred and ninety-seven years after these events. Can it, then, be surprising, when we know, from these very passages, that the Israelites merited not a little censure for their profanation of the sabbath, and when we yet find these to be the first censures cast upon them in the Scriptures, that Noah, his family, and the antediluvians, should not be censured?

The third of these reasons cannot, after what has been said in the former part of this Discourse, need any answer. I shall, therefore, direct the following observations to the two remaining reasons; perhaps with

more propriety considered as one; viz. the silence of the Scriptures concerning the observation of the sabbath by those who lived before the call of Abraham, and by the three first patriarchs. Concerning this subject, I observe,

1. If all these persons did in fact neglect or forget the institution, it would not alter the case at all. The institution of booths is declared, in Nehemiah viii. 17, to have been neglected and forgotten, from the time of Joshua, the son of Nun, until after Nehemiah and his companions returned from the captivity; a period of nine hundred and eighty years. Neither Samuel, David, Solomon, Hezekiah, nor Josiah observed it; and let it be remembered, that no censure is cast upon them for their neglect, nor any hint given, that they were guilty of such neglect until the close of this long period, nor even then was any other notice taken of this subject, but what is contained in this declaration of Nehemiah. Yet Nehemiah revived this solemnity: and has declared it to be obligatory upon that generation, and upon those of succeeding ages, in the same manner as if it had never been disused.

2. There is no reason to suppose, that this fact would have been mentioned, if the sabbath had been exactly observed by the patriarchs, and by all who preceded them. If sabbaths, in the plural, be supposed to denote the sabbath, then the first mention of this subject made after the time of Moses, occurs in 1 Chron. xxiii. 31, in the instructions of David to Solomon concerning building the temple, at the distance of near five hundred years. The same word occurs thrice in the same book; viz. in the eighth and thirty-first chapters; in the two former of these instances as a repetition of, or allusion to, the words of David, and both in the history of Solomon. The latter instance is in the history of Hezekiah, seven hundred and sixty-five years after the period above mentioned. The same word occurs in Isaiah, about seven hundred and thirty years from that period. The word sabbath is mentioned five times in the history of the Jewish church before the captivity. The first of them is a mere note concerning the business of the Kohathites; which was 'to prepare the shew-bread every sabbath.' The time when it was written was that of David, near five hundred years after this period; see 1 Chron. ix. 32. The second is the speech of the Shunamite's husband; 'It is neither new moon, nor sabbath;' not referring, in my opinion, to the sabbath at all; almost six hundred years from the above period. The third is in 2 Kings xi.; a part of the speech of Jehoiada to the rulers of Judah: 'A third part of you that enter in on the sabbath, shall even be keepers of the king's house; and two parts of all you that go forth on the sabbath, even they shall be keepers of the watch of the house of the Lord.' Immediately after this speech it is also subjoined, that 'the rulers took every man his men that were to come in on the sabbath, with them that should go out on the sabbath, and they came to Jehoiada the priest.' These, it will be remembered, constitute but a single instance of mentioning the sabbath, an instance occurring at the distance of more than six hundred years. Another instance occurs in the history of Ahaz, and is the following; 'The covert for the sabbath turned he from the house of the Lord, for the king of Assyria:' seven hundred and fifty-two years. The word is also mentioned in Isaiah lvi. lviii. and lxv. about seven hundred and eighty years. These are all the instances, in which the word occurs either in prophecy or history, from the time of Moses till after the return of the captivity; a period of one thousand years.

Of this account it is to be observed,

(1.) That the word sabbaths, in the plural, is mentioned four times in the history of the Jewish church and twice in the prophecy of Isaiah, within a period of seven hundred and eighty years. The first, second, and third occurring incidentally in the mention of the duty of the priests in the orders of David; the second, a repetition of them by Solomon; the third, in an account of their execution. These together really constitute but one instance. The fourth occurs incidentally also, in a sentence, giving, in almost the same words, an account of the same duty of the priests in the time of Hezekiah. The fifth is a censure of the Jews for the pollution of the new moons and sabbaths, uttered by the prophet Isaiah. The three first of these instances occur at the distance of about five hundred years, the others between seven and eight hundred from the time of the supposed institution. In but one of these, and that the last, is there any thing like an account of the manner in which the sabbath was kept, or neglected. All the rest are merely incidental, and teach us nothing more than that sabbaths were in existence, and were involved in the Jewish ritual.

(2.) As the sabbath appears to be regularly distinguished from sabbaths; and as sabbaths are regularly joined with the new moons, and other holidays of the Jews, which the sabbath never is; it is clear to me, that the sabbath is not alluded to in any of these instances.

(3.) The phrase, the sabbath, occurs in three instances, (calling those in the account of Jehoiada one,) in the history of the Jewish church before the captivity; all of them, however, entirely incidental, and containing no account of the sabbath as an institution, nor of the observance of it, nor of the neglect. This is all which is said of it before the return from the Babylonish captivity, except what is said by the prophet Isaiah; and there is but a single passage in this prophet, in which this phrase is used with reference to the times of the Jewish dispensation.

We are thus come to this conclusion, that there are but five passages, in which the sabbath is mentioned in the Jewish writings, from the time of Moses to the return of the captivity—one thousand years. Two of them are found in prophecy, and three of them in their history. The first of these is mentioned about five hundred years; the second, six hundred; and the third, seven hundred and fifty-two; and the two remaining ones, which are found in prophecy, near eight hundred; from the time of the supposed institution.

Now let me ask, can any person wonder that in an account so summary as the history of the first three Jewish Patriarchs, there should be no mention of the sabbath; when also, during a period of about five hundred years, containing the histories of Joshua, of the Judges, particularly Samuel, and of Saul, it is not once mentioned? The question certainly cannot need an answer. The only wonder is, that so sensible a writer should have thought this an argument.

3. God himself has, I apprehend, declared, that the sabbath was instituted at this time.

For, in the first place, this is the true and only rational interpretation of the declarations in the second

of Genesis. Dr Paley supposes that the words of the historian, 'And God rested on the seventh day from all the work which he had made; and God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it; because that in it he had rested from all his work, which God created and made;' declare only the reasons for which God blessed and sanctified the sabbath, and not the time at which this was done; and that it was mentioned at this time, only on account of its connexion with the subject, and not because the blessing and sanctification took place at this period. To this I answer, Moses has written this story exactly in the manner in which he has written the whole history of the creation, the paradisiacal state, and the apostasy; nay, almost the whole of the history contained in the book of Genesis. There is as much reason to believe that the sabbath was blessed and sanctified at this time, from the manner in which the story is written, as there is to believe that our first parents were turned out of paradise before the birth of Cain and Abel. The order of time is, I apprehend, exactly observed in the history, except where the historian has taken up again a particular part of the history, for the purpose of detailing it, and has for this end interrupted the general course of his narrative. Of the justice of this observation, the bare reading of the story will, I think, convince any person who has not a pre-conceived opinion to support.

What is thus sufficiently evident from the narrative, God appears to me to have decided in the following words of the text: 'For in six days the Lord made heaven, and earth, the sea, and all that in them is; and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath-day, and hallowed (or sanctified) it.' Here God, repeating the very words of the narrative, declares, that he had already blessed and sanctified the sabbath, at some time preceding that at which this command was promulgated. The sabbath, therefore, was blessed and sanctified before this command was given. That this was not done at the time when Dr Paley supposes the sabbath to have been instituted, nor at any period between the first sabbath, and the giving of the law, seems to me clear from this, that there is not a single hint given of the subject, either at the time of the supposed institution, or in any other part of the Mosaic dispensation, except that in the second of Genesis. That the blessing was then given must I think be concluded, because God himself, relating this great transaction, adopts the same language, and says, 'Wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath-day and hallowed it.' That the blessing of the sabbath was a past transaction, is unquestionable. There is no hint concerning the existence of it, but in these two instances: and in both these it is immediately connected with God's finishing the creation and resting on the seventh day.

4. That it was instituted at the beginning is evident from the fact, that other nations, who could not have derived it from Moses, regarded the seventh day as holy.

Hesiod says, Εβδομον ιερον ημαρ:—'The seventh day is holy.'

Homer and Callimachus give it the same title.

Theophilus of Antioch says, concerning the seventh day, 'The day which all mankind celebrate.'

Porphyry says, 'The Phœnicians consecrated one day in seven as holy.'

Linus says, 'A seventh day is observed among saints, or holy people.'

Lucian says, 'The seventh day is given to schoolboys as a holiday.'

Eusebius says, 'Almost all the philosophers, and poets, acknowledge the seventh day as holy.'

Clemens Alexandrinus says, 'The Greeks, as well as the Hebrews, observe the seventh day as holy.'

Josephus says, 'No city of Greeks, or barbarians, can be found, which does not acknowledge a seventh-day's rest from labour.'

Philo says, 'The seventh day is a festival to every nation.'

Tibullus says, 'The seventh day, which is kept holy by the Jews, is also a festival of the Roman women.'

The several nations here referred to, cannot, it is plain, have fallen upon this practice by chance. It is certain, they did not derive it from the Jews. It follows, therefore, that they received it by tradition from a common source; and that source must have been Noah and his family.

III. To the argument from the insertion of this command in the decalogue, Dr Paley answers, that *the distinction between positive and moral precepts, or,* in his language, *between positive and natural duties, was unknown to the simplicity of ancient language:* meaning, I suppose, that it was unknown to the ancients, and, among others, to Moses: otherwise I cannot see how the observation is applicable to the question.

I confess myself surprised at this answer. Did not God understand this distinction, when he wrote the decalogue? Did he not know, that this distinction would afterward be made and understood, in all its influence? Was not the decalogue written for all who should read the Scriptures? Was it not so written, as to be adapted to the use of all for whom it was written? Did not God discern, that this distinction was founded in the nature of things; and did he not foresee that, although the Israelites should not perceive it during any period of their national existence, yet it still would be perceived by innumerable others of mankind? Did he not provide effectually for this fact, whenever it should happen; and for all the difficulties and doubts which might arise from the want of such a distinction?

From this observation, and several others, Dr Paley appears to consider the decalogue as written by Moses in the same manner as the other parts of the Pentateuch, and as having no more authority than the civil and ceremonial law of the Israelites, unless where this authority is discernible in the nature of the commands themselves. As this opinion appears not only erroneous, but dangerous, I shall oppose it with the following reasons:—

(1.) The law of the Israelites, both civil and ceremonial, is distinguished from the decalogue in this great particular: that it was written by Moses in a book: this was first spoken by the voice of God, and then twice written by his finger on tables of stone, amid all the awful splendours of mount Sinai.

(2.) Moses, after reciting the decalogue in Deut. v., immediately subjoins these words: 'The Lord spake unto all your assembly in the mount, out of the midst of the fire, of the cloud, and the thick darkness, with a great voice; and he added no more. And he wrote them on two tables of stone, and delivered them unto me. And it came to pass, when ye heard the voice out of the midst of the darkness (for the mountain did burn with fire), that ye came near unto me, even all the heads of

your tribes, and your elders; and ye said, Behold, the Lord our God hath showed us his glory, and his greatness, and we have heard his voice out of the midst of the fire. We have seen this day that God doth talk with man, and he liveth. Now, therefore, why should we die; for this great fire will consume us? If we hear the voice of the Lord our God any more, we shall die. For who is there of all flesh, that hath heard the voice of the living God, speaking out of the midst of the fire, and hath lived?'

To this petition God consented, and promised to deliver his remaining precepts to Moses, and through him to Israel. Why was this distinction made? Why was the decalogue spoken by the voice, and written by the finger of God? and why, in the emphatical language of Moses, did he 'add no more'? The only reason which can be alleged, is the transcendent dignity and importance of these commands. The view which Moses himself had of the total distinction between the decalogue, and the rest of the law written by him, is evident from this fact, that he commanded the Israelites to write them plainly, after they had passed over Jordan, upon great stones plastered with plaster, and set up by the congregation near the altar which they were directed to build.* Why were they thus distinguished here?

(3.) Christ has distinguished them in a similar manner. When the young ruler came to Christ, and asked 'what good thing he should do, that he might have eternal life;' Christ said to him, 'Thou knowest the commandments.' The young man asked 'which.' Christ in reply, repeated five of the commandments in the second table, and the summary which contains them all. This shows beyond a doubt, that 'the commandments' was a name appropriated to the decalogue, and denoted the same superiority to all other commands, as the name, the Bible, or the Book, denotes with respect to all other books.

Again: Christ, in answer to the scribe, who asked him, 'Which is the first and great commandment?' recites the two great commands which Moses had made the sum of the decalogue; and adds, 'On these two commands hang all the law and the prophets:' in other words, 'On these two commands is suspended the whole volume of the Old Testament.' What can be a stronger testimony of the superiority of the decalogue to every other part of that volume?

(4.) St Paul, Rom. xiii. 9, says, 'For this, thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying; namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.' Here the apostle, after reciting five of the commands contained in the second table of the decalogue, adds, 'If there be any other commandment.' Is not this direct proof, that he regarded the decalogue as containing all those which were, by way of eminence, 'the commandments of God,' and as separated by a broad line of distinction from every other precept?

Fifthly: It is well known, that the Jews always considered the decalogue as entirely separated from every other part of the Old Testament. The prophets who succeeded Moses did nothing, as moral teachers, but explain and enforce it. Christ declared, that 'sooner shall heaven and earth pass away, than one jot or one tittle of this law shall pass, until all be fulfilled.' The apostles have enforced no other precepts as obligatory upon Christians. The Jews have at this day these commands written out in large letters, and hung up in their synagogues, as solemn monitors to all who enter them of their duty. In a manner correspondent with this have they ever been regarded by Christians. They are at this day proverbially known by the name of the Ten Commandments, and the Moral Law.

St Paul in a passage which ought not to be omitted on this occasion, Eph. vi. 1—3, reciting the fifth command, says, 'This is the first commandment with promise.' But God had given to Noah, to Abraham, to Jacob, to Moses, and to the Israelites, many commands, and annexed to them many promises, before the law was delivered from mount Sinai. In what sense, then, was the fifth command the first to which a promise was annexed? Plainly, in this sense only, that it is the first in the decalogue which has this mark of distinction. In the eye of St Paul, therefore, the decalogue contained all those which he thought proper to call the commandments; and was, in his view, of a character totally distinct, and totally superior, to every other part of the Old Testament.

As the apostle recites this command to the Ephesians, who were Gentiles, as obligatory on them no less than on the Jews; it is clear that the whole decalogue, unless some part of it has been plainly disannulled, is entirely obligatory on Christians. Had there been any distinction in this respect between the different precepts of this law, St Paul must, it would seem, have made it on this occasion. He would, at least, have made it somewhere; and not have left so important a subject without a single note of illustration.

IV. Dr Paley says, that "*St Paul evidently appears to consider the sabbath as a part of the Jewish ritual, and not binding upon Christians, as such:* 'Let no man, therefore, judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of a holy day, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath-days; which are a shadow of things to come, but the body is of Christ,' Col. ii. 16, 17."

To this observation I answer, first, that this passage refers not in any sense to the sabbath, but merely to the ordinary holidays of the Jews. The burden of proving the contrary lies upon the disciples of Dr Paley.

Secondly; If this be denied, I assert that it refers to the seventh day only, and not at all to the Christian sabbath. Until the contrary is proved, I shall consider this answer as sufficient; especially as the Christian sabbath is not in the Scriptures, and was not by the primitive church called the sabbath; but 'the first day of the week,' and 'the Lord's day.'

V. The same writer says, that *the observation of the sabbath was not one of the articles enjoined by the apostles, in Acts. xv. upon the Christian Gentiles.*

I answer, Neither was abstinence from theft, murder, lying, coveting, profaneness, or idolatry.

VI. Dr Paley asserts, that *the observation of the sabbath is not expressly enjoined in the New Testament.*

To this I answer, first, that the text is in my own view an explicit injunction of this duty. But as this opinion has been contested; as the paragraph in which it is contained is confessedly obscure; as it would require

* See Kennicott's Dissertations.

one whole discourse of this nature to consider it sufficiently; and as the text was written many years after the Christian sabbath was effectually established; I observe,

Secondly; That the Christian sabbath was originally introduced into the church much more succesfully and happily than it could have been done by an express injunction.

In order to judge of this subject, it is necessary to bring up to our view the situation of those to whom the gospel was first preached. These were all Jews; intensely bigoted to every part of their religion, and peculiarly to their sabbath. The day had been appointed by God himself; and was acknowledged to be divinely appointed by Christ and his apostles. The experiment of interfering with the feelings of the Jews concerning the sabbath, even in the most lawful manner, had been sufficiently tried by Christ to discourage the apostles from every unnecessary attempt of this nature. Accordingly, the apostles pursued a peaceful and unobjectionable method. They celebrated at times, and probably always, the Jewish sabbath when they were among the Jews. The Jews at the same time, without any objection, yielded to their example and authority in celebrating the Christian worship on the day of Christ's resurrection. They were circumcised; but they were also willingly baptized. They celebrated the passover; but willingly added to it the Lord's Supper. They prayed in the temple; but they willingly united, also, in the prayers and praises of Christian assemblies holden in private houses, or in the fields. While the Jewish service was neither attacked nor neglected, they made not the least objection to that in the Christian church. In this manner, all these ordinances grew into use, veneration, and habit; and, in the end, gained such a possession of the mind, and such a strength of authority, as could neither be overthrown nor weakened.

When the apostles came to declare in form, that the Jewish worship was to cease, the minds of the church were so well prepared to receive this declaration, that it was carried into a general execution. Difficulties and divisions arose, indeed, about this subject in several churches, particularly about circumcision, and produced a course of serious contention. What would have been the case, had this part of the system been begun at an earlier period?

About the Christian sabbath, no dispute appears to have existed during the three first centuries. All the churches appear to have adopted it, and to have neglected the Jewish sabbath without difficulty. Was not this method of introducing so important a change dictated by true wisdom, and a better method than any other?

The example of the apostles is an example to all Christians. Were we then to give up the point contested in the objection, we have still such a law in this example; and so efficacious, that probably no doctrine has been more generally received than that of the Christian sabbath, and no duty more generally performed than the observation of it down to the present time.

The absolute necessity of establishing the doctrines and duties of Christianity among the Jews, in the infancy of the church, has been shown in a former Discourse. I shall only add, that it seems impossible to have introduced among that people the Christian sabbath in any other manner than that which was adopted by the apostles, unless their whole character had been miraculously changed.

SERMON CVIII.

THE LAW OF GOD.—THE DECALOGUE.—THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT. THE MANNER IN WHICH THE SABBATH IS TO BE OBSERVED.

If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day, and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable, and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words; then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.—ISA. lviii. 13, 14.

IN the first of the Discourses which I have delivered concerning the fourth command, I proposed,

I. *To consider the perpetual establishment of the sabbath; and,*

II. *The manner in which it is to be observed.*

The former of these doctrines, together with the objections against it, has been made the subject of the three preceding Sermons. The latter shall be the theme of the present Discourse.

The text is the most minute and perfect summary of the duties incumbent on mankind with respect to this holy day, which is contained in the Scriptures. It is a prediction to the Jews, announcing that if they will perform these duties, God will greatly prosper them with spiritual and temporal blessings, in the land of their fathers. In my own opinion, it especially respects a period yet to come. In examining this subject, I shall endeavour,

I. *To point out the nature and extent of these duties.*

II. *To show that they are binding on us.*

I. *I shall endeavour to point out the nature and extent of these duties.*

In examining this subject, I shall adopt the scheme of the text; and mention,

1. The things from which we are to abstain.
2. The things which we are to perform.

(1.) We are bound to abstain from sin, in thought, conversation, and conduct.

All who read the gospel know, or may know, perfectly, that sin may be as easily and as extensively committed in thought, as in word or action; and that the real seat of sin is in the heart. With the reformation of our hearts, then, we are always to begin our duty. We may as easily and grossly profane the sabbath, so far as ourselves only are concerned, by thoughts which are unsuited to its nature, as we can by any actions whatever. If our minds are intent on our business, or our pleasures, if our affections wander after them, if we are cold or lukewarm with respect to our religious duties, if we are negligent of a serious and cordial attention to them, if we regard with impatience the interruption occasioned to our secular concerns, if we wish the institution had not been appointed, or the time in which it is to be kept lessened; then, plainly, we do not esteem 'the sabbath a delight,' nor abstain from 'finding our own pleasure.' So long as this is the state of our thoughts, all our outward conformity to the precept (for such is really the nature of the text) will be merely hypocritical. Every oblation from such a mind will be vain; and all its 'incense an abomination.'—'The sabbaths, and the calling of assemblies,' among persons who act in this manner, will be such as God 'cannot away with;' and their 'solemn meeting will be iniquity.'

The heart gives birth to all the movements of the tongue. We profane the sabbath, whenever we employ the time in worldly conversation. Such conversation is in the text denoted by the phrase, 'speaking thine own words:'—'thine own' being supplied by the translators. I think this supplement rational; since, in the two preceding clauses, we find 'doing thine own way,' and 'finding thine own pleasure.' Bishop Lowth, from similar phraseology in the ninth verse, supposes it should be 'vain words.' The meaning, however, will differ immaterially.

Such conversation is, like our thoughts, directed indifferently to subjects of business, and of pleasure; and in both cases the sabbath is subverted, and, so far as this conversation extends, is changed from a holy into a secular day. God is robbed of his rights, and of his service; and we are prevented from attaining, and from a disposition to attain, the holiness which is indispensable to salvation.

There is no way in which the sabbath is more easily, more insensibly, more frequently, and more fatally violated than this. Temptations to it are always at hand. The transgression always seems a small one, usually a dubious one at the worst, and often no transgression at all. Multitudes of persons, of sober and well-meaning dispositions, nay, multitudes, as there is but too much reason to fear, of professing Christians, beginning with religious subjects, slide imperceptibly towards those which are considered as moral in such a degree, as scarcely to differ from religious ones; thence to secular themes, bordering upon these: and thence to mere matters of business or amusement. Such persons, before they are aware, find themselves occupied in conversing about the affairs of the neighbourhood—the strangers who are at church—the new dresses—fashions—business—diversions—news—and politics. To these they are led by mere worldly conversation concerning the prayers, the psalmody, or the sermon; as having been well or ill devised, written, spoken, or performed; by a history merely secular, of the sickness and deaths in the neighbourhood, or elsewhere; or of the dangerous or fatal accidents which have lately happened; the state of the weather—the season—the crops—the prospects—the affairs of the family—and by innumerable other things of a similar nature. The next step is, ordinarily, an habitual employment of this holy day in open, cool, and self-satisfied conversation about business, schemes of worldly pursuits, bargains, gains, and losses. It is not to be understood, that Christians go all these lengths. It is my real belief, however, that they go much farther than they can justify; and fail, in this manner, of their duty, their improvement in the Christian life, their proper exemplariness of character, the evidence of their piety which would spring from these sources, the hope which it would inspire, the peace which would accompany them, and the joy in which they would delightfully terminate. Many sober men, however, who, but for this very conduct, might probably become Christians, go all these lengths; and thus lose insensibly their tenderness of conscience, their soberness of mind, and their desire, as well as their hope, of eternal life. Men less well-principled start originally at the end of this career, and thus annihilate the sabbath at once; bidding, without anxiety, a final adieu to the sabbath itself, and to its rich, exalted, and immortal blessings.

The profanation of the sabbath by actions is seen and acknowledged by all decent men, who acknowledge it is a day consecrated by God to himself. Actions are so open to the view of mankind, are so definite a proof of the disposition, and, when violations of a known rule of duty, constitute so gross a proof of impiety, that all doubts concerning the true construction to be given of them vanish whenever they appear. The common and favourite modes of profaning the sabbath in this way are spending our time in dress, in ministering to a luxurious appetite, in walking or riding for amusement, in writing letters of friendship, in visiting, and in reading books which are not of a religious, but merely of a decent character, and ultimately those which are formed to be the means of amusement and sport. The end of this progress, generally esteemed more gross, though perhaps in many instances not more, and in others less sinful, is the devotion of this sacred day to downright business. Persons who go this length occupy the time in writing letters of business, posting their accounts, visiting post-offices, making bargains, transmitting money to their correspondents, going or sending to markets, making journeys, at first with, and afterward without, pretences of necessity; and, ultimately, labouring openly in the ordinary employments of life. This is what is called in the text 'doing our own ways.' A man's way, in scriptural language, is the customary course of his life.

All these things, whether existing in thought, word, or action, are called our own, in contradistinction to those which are God's: that is, to those which are required of us by God; and every one of them is prohibited in the text.

(2.) We are required to abstain from idleness.

Although the sabbath is never to be spent in secular business, or amusement, it is still to be, invariably, a

day of industrious exertion. There are some persons who feel too much regard to the dictates of their consciences, to public opinion, to the commands of God, or to all of them, to consume the sabbath in business or amusement; still, having no relish for the duties of the day, they spend it in idleness, satisfied with abstaining from those which they esteem the grosser and more direct violations of this divine institution. Accordingly, they lounge about their houses, gardens, or farms, and waste the season of salvation in sloth, sleep, or such a course of existence as resembles that of the oyster; a state bordering upon the line which separates animated beings from those which are inanimate. This course of conduct is an annihilation of the sabbath, the death of the day, and a frustration of all the designs and blessings of God connected with this heavenly institution. The sabbath was intended to be the means of honouring God, and of saving the souls of men. But idleness is always dishonourable to God, and hostile to the salvation of the soul. Both of these great objects are accomplished by him only who is 'not slothful in business, but fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.'

(3.) We are bound to abstain, with peculiar caution, from acknowledged sins upon this holy day.

The abstinence which I have hitherto specified regards business and amusement, ordinarily lawful on other days. From that conduct, and those thoughts which are universally sinful, we are bound to abstain, with peculiar care, upon the sabbath: because then they are peculiarly heinous. The sacred nature of this day, and the solemn consecration of it by God to himself, together with all the advantages which we enjoy for religious instruction, and for all the duties of piety, furnish such a body of motives to our abstinence from sin, as cannot be resisted without peculiar guilt. Every sin committed upon this day is aggravated by the fact, that we have resisted these motives. At the same time, we are, by its very nature, so withdrawn from the world, so secured against temptation, and so much at leisure for solemn meditation, and for the establishment of firm resolutions of obedience in our minds, that, if we sin upon this day, we sin with fewer inducements to the iniquity than upon other occasions. He who indulges his wickedness on the sabbath, will be in danger of rioting in it on the other days of the week.

It hardly needs to be remarked, that sinful ways are peculiarly our own, and eminently opposed to those which are required by God.

In all the above-recited particulars, those who are guilty of them, openly violate the law of God, squander the accepted time, waste and abuse the means of grace, and lessen, sabbath by sabbath, their hopes of eternal life.

The duties which we are to perform, are, generally, all the various offices of religion. Good men in ancient times entered on the sabbath-day into the house of the Lord with praise and prayer. The law, the psalms, and the prophets were 'read in the synagogues every sabbath-day.' They 'feared God in the assembly of his saints; they praised him for his mighty acts; uttered abundantly the memory of his great goodness; and sang of his righteousness. They went on from strength to strength; every one of them in Zion appeared before God.' They esteemed 'a day in his courts as better than a thousand. Their souls longed, yea, even fainted, for the courts of the Lord; their heart and their flesh cried out for the living God.' Accordingly, 'the Lord God was to them a sun, and a shield. He gave them grace and glory; and withheld from them no good thing.' In the same manner the early Christians 'esteemed the sabbath a delight, and the holy of the Lord, honourable.' In the times of the apostles, 'they continued in fellowship, in prayer, and in breaking of bread.' They sang 'psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs.' They prophesied, taught the doctrines of the Scriptures, uttered and interpreted revelation, and collected alms for such saints as were in peculiar circumstances of distress. All these examples abundantly show us, that good men during the ages of inspiration steadily accorded, and thought it their duty to accord, with the requisitions contained in the text. What was their duty is ours. All these solemn services therefore, and others connected with them, it is incumbent on us to perform 'in spirit and in truth.' We are to 'join ourselves to the Lord, to serve him,' according to the prediction of Isaiah concerning us and the other Gentiles; 'to love the name of the Lord; to keep the sabbath from polluting it; and to take hold of his covenant.' Particularly,

(1.) We are to perform all the duties of public worship.

The sabbath, as has been observed, was originally appointed for the commemoration of the divine glory, manifested in creating the world; and for the attainment and improvement of holiness in man. The manner in which we should commemorate the glory of God in the work of creation, on this day, is sufficiently taught us by the manner in which the first sabbath was celebrated. Then, we are informed, 'the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy.' In the same manner was the work of the new creation, and the divine glory displayed in it, celebrated by the same illustrious beings, according to the prophetical account given in the sixty-eighth psalm of this wonderful event, an account expressly applied to it by the apostle Paul in the third chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians. 'The chariots of God are twenty thousand; even thousands of angels. The Lord is among them, as in Sinai; as in the holy place.' The very hymn which they sang seems to be transmitted to us in the following words, 'Thou hast ascended on high; thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also; that the Lord God might dwell among them.'

The manner in which holiness and salvation are to be obtained is everywhere taught in the gospel. The truth of God in the hands of the Divine Spirit, is the great instrument by which we are 'made free from the bondage of corruption.' 'Faith,' we know, 'cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.' This word is therefore to be faithfully explained and enforced by the preacher, and faithfully received by those who hear him. The prayers and the praises of every religious assembly are to spring from the heart, and are to ascend up before the throne of infinite mercy with dependence, with confidence, with love, with reverence, with gratitude, with hope, and with joy. Our prayers and our praises are also to be presented in the name of Christ, as the great and glorious 'propitiation for the sins of men,' and the 'true and living way of access to God.' They are to be presented with faith in his

name; that faith which occupies the whole heart, and alone interests us in the blessings of redemption.

Christians, at the same time, are to unite in the administration and celebration of the evangelical ordinances, baptism and the Lord's supper; and are thus in a peculiar and most affecting manner to commemorate the glory of Christ, manifested in the wonderful work of the new creation.

All these things are to be done 'decently, and in order.' At the same time, they are to be performed with plainness, simplicity, and no unnecessary rites. The Jewish worship was intended by its ceremonious magnificence to strike the imagination, during the early and ignorant periods of society. To this end it was perfectly fitted. All its services were calculated to affect the senses in the deepest manner, and to find through them access to the heart. The gospel, on the contrary, is addressed directly to the understanding; and makes its way to the heart by means of the power of conscience. Unnecessary rites are here both useless and noxious; since they allure the thoughts away from the doctrines and precepts which are inculcated, to the ceremonies by which they are surrounded. In this manner, the spiritual worship of the gospel is ever in danger of becoming a mere 'bodily exercise,' unprofitable in itself, and destructive of piety. The ceremonies of the Romish church exterminated its devotion, and became extensively the cause as well as the effect of that corruption, which by men of real religion has been justly regarded as a prodigy.

(2.) On this holy day, also, we are bound to perform the various private duties of religion.

The worship of the family, and that of the closet, are the duty of all families, and of all individuals, every day they live. Equally is it the duty of all men to spend a part of every day in self-examination, in religious meditation, and in contemplation on the perfections and works of God, on the character of Christ, and the wonders of redemption. The Scriptures especially, and other religious books generally, are to be read, pondered, and cordially received. The amendment of the soul, and victory over sin and temptation, are to be planned, resolved on, and achieved. We are to humble ourselves before God, to devote ourselves anew to his service, to cherish the duties of religion, and universally to cultivate the Christian character.

At the same time, children and servants are to be carefully instructed in the great and plain doctrines and duties of religion, to be restrained, in the same manner as ourselves, from all worldly pursuits, and to be presented by us with such persuasive examples of piety, as may engage them to reverence and embrace the gospel.

Universally, our time, our thoughts, our conversation, and our actions are all to be devoted to God. This, indeed, is in a sense true of every day. But on other days it is our duty to labour in our worldly business; and, while our thoughts are engaged by pursuits of this nature, it is impossible that they should be also engaged by religious subjects, with sufficient intenseness and constancy to fulfill all the demands, either of our interest, or of our duty. On the sabbath we are withdrawn from all worldly pursuits. A solemn pause is made in the business of life. A happy season of leisure is furnished to us for obtaining our salvation. Then no worldly business is to intrude, no worldly pleasure to solicit, no worldly thought to interfere. The holy nature of the day, and the peculiarly solemn nature of its services, conspire with eminent felicity to render all the duties which have been specified easy, undisturbed, solemn, impressive, and profitable. This then is to be carefully seized, and anxiously husbanded, as a golden opportunity for performing them all.

(3.) The sabbath is to be employed, so far as circumstances demand, in performing works of necessity and mercy.

Our authority for this assertion is complete in the declaration of God, 'I will have mercy and not sacrifice.' In the illustrations of this precept by our Saviour, and in his example, it is equally complete. What these works are, beyond the direct import of this example, we are to judge as carefully and conscientiously as we can. Generally, it is to be observed, that as little of our time as the nature of the case demands is to be employed in these works, and the remainder to be devoted to those duties of religion, which were the original objects of the sabbath. Whenever the time required is so great as to be disproportioned to the value of the necessity in question, it is to be given up. That necessary work which requires but a moment, may be lawful, when it would become unlawful, if it required an hour. All works, both of necessity and mercy, are to be regarded as duties which we are bound to perform, and never as indulgences, which we are permitted to take.

The time at which the peculiar duties of the sabbath are to commence, is, in my opinion, the time when darkness commences on the evening of Saturday. For this opinion the following reasons may be alleged:—

First, The natural day commenced with darkness. After God had created the chaos, darkness rested upon it for a certain period. This darkness, and the light which succeeded it, are declared to have constituted 'the first day.' In the same manner are reckoned five succeeding days of the creation.

Secondly, The sabbath, at its original institution, was a natural day. This is clear, because we are told, that God rested the seventh day; and, from the manner in which the six preceding days were reckoned, we have the fullest proof, that he who by his own choice reckoned them in this manner, reckoned the seventh day in the same manner.

Thirdly, When the sabbath was renewedly enjoined upon the Israelites, it was required to be kept as a natural day. This we know, because no alteration of the original institution is specified in the fourth command; and because, in Lev. xxiii. 32, God says to that people concerning the great day of atonement, 'From even unto even shall ye celebrate your sabbath.'

Fourthly, The Jewish sabbath commenced with the darkness; or with the time which we denote by the word candle-lighting. This is evident from Neh. xiii. 19; 'And it came to pass, that when the gates of Jerusalem began to be dark before the sabbath,' &c. It is here evident, that the sabbath had commenced on Friday evening, when the gates of Jerusalem 'began to be dark;' or, in our customary language, when the dusk of the evening commenced in that city. The sabbath also, as a natural day, began originally at the same time; the first day of the creation having commenced with absolute darkness. The time of darkness to us is the time when we can no longer see so as to transact business by the light of the sun.

Fifthly, The Christian sabbath is the first day of the week, and a natural day; because there is no hint given us, in the New Testament, of any alteration made, or to be made, in this respect. Dr Macknight informs us, that the ancient Christians began their sabbath on the evening of Saturday. Some Christians have supposed, that the time when our Lord arose from the dead, is that at which the present sabbath ought to be begun. This is evidently an error, because that time is not declared in the New Testament, and therefore cannot be known by us. Accordingly, these Christians begin the sabbath at midnight; a time of human appointment merely. This seems to me unwarrantable.

II. *I shall now attempt to show, that the duties of the sabbath are all binding on us.*

On this subject I observe,

1. That the example of God, in resting from his work of creation, and of Christ, in resting from the work of redemption, is authoritatively binding upon us; and requires us to rest from our own lawful labours in a similar manner.

2. The fourth command, which has, I trust, been shown to be equally obligatory on all men, requires the same rest from us, which it required from the Israelites.

3. The original institution, the examples of God the Father, and the Son, and the injunctions of the fourth command, require in substance all these duties. The duties which they expressly require cannot be performed to any valuable purpose, unless all the duties specified in this Discourse are also performed. The true meaning and real extent of these examples and injunctions, as they respected the Jews, are explained in the comments of the prophets, particularly of the prophet Isaiah, concerning this subject. The text is the most copious and definite exhibition of this nature contained in the Scriptures. In chapter lvi. of the same prophet, is found also a comprehensive account of the same duties; and we have several other, less particular and less impressive explanations in other passages of the Scriptures. These injunctions and examples then demanded, in the view of the Spirit of inspiration, all these duties of the Israelites. Of course, this was the true tenor of these examples and injunctions. But, if I mistake not, I have proved both to be no less obligatory on Christians, than on the Israelites. The same examples and injunctions have therefore the same tenor with respect to us, and bind us to exactly the same duties.

4. The New Testament has nowhere dispensed with any part of these duties.

It has been often thought, that Christ has released his followers from some part of the duties of the sabbath, and in some degree from that strictness in observing it, which were originally required of the Jews. Observations to this amount I have not unfrequently seen and heard; but, exclusively of the things observed by Dr Paley, and mentioned in the last Discourse, I have never been informed of the particulars from which Christians are thus supposed to have been released; nor do I know in what passages of the New Testament they are supposed to be contained. Dr Paley believes that the sabbath was never at all obligatory on Christians. According to this scheme, therefore, it was impossible for Christ to release them from these duties, because they were never incumbent on them. Where those who make this supposition find their warrant for it, in the discourses of Christ, or of his apostles, I confess myself unable to determine. The observations which our Saviour makes, as an exposition of several parts of the decalogue, in his sermon on the mount, he prefaces with these remarkable declarations; 'Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill: for verily, I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass; one jot or one tittle shall in nowise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.' After these declarations, it is impossible that Christ should be rationally believed to have altered at all the duties of the sabbath, much less to have annihilated it, unless he has done it somewhere in plain, unequivocal language. But no such language on this subject can be found in the New Testament. Until something of this nature shall be definitely pointed out, the duties of the sabbath must be acknowledged to have been left by Christ and his apostles exactly as they found them; and all declarations to the contrary must be regarded as merely gratuitous and presumptive.

5. As the religious privileges of Christians are declared to be superior to those of the Jews, they cannot be supposed to be lessened with respect to the sabbath, unless this fact is directly asserted.

If the duties of Christians on the sabbath are lessened, either in number or degree, then their religious privileges are rendered just so far inferior to those of the Jews. The duties of the sabbath are all privileges of a high and glorious nature, and cannot fail to be accounted such by every good man. I speak not here of the regulations of the civil laws of the Jews; these have nothing to do with the subject of the present discussion. I speak of the sabbath, as instituted on the seventh day; as instituted immediately after the creation was finished; as enjoined anew in the fourth command of the decalogue; and as explained and enforced by the prophets, particularly by Isaiah. It was a high religious privilege to a Jew to have one whole day in seven divinely consecrated to the duties of religion; to be required to 'esteem the sabbath a delight, and the holy of the Lord, honourable; and to turn away his foot from finding his own pleasure' on that sacred day. It was a combination of glorious privileges to a Jew, 'to keep the sabbath from polluting it—to join himself on that day to the Lord; to be his servant—to take hold of his covenant—to be brought to the holy mountain of God—to be made joyful in his house of prayer—to delight himself in the Lord,' and to find his various solemn services asserted by his Creator. But if these duties, or any of them, be lessened in number or degree, just so far are the privileges of a Christian inferior to those of a Jew. Which of these privileges would a Christian be willing to give up? Which of them does the gospel require him to relinquish?

I shall conclude this Discourse with a summary enumeration of several motives, which strongly solicit our exact observance of the sabbath.

1. Such an observance of the sabbath is required by the command of God.

2. It is enforced by the divine example.

God rested on the seventh day, the day after the creation was ended. Christ rested on the first day, the day after the new creation was finished. This twofold example of Jehovah is of infinite authority; and enjoins, in the most expressive language, the faithful imitation of all mankind.

3. The nature of the duties enjoined upon the sabbath, demands of us such an observance.

The duties of the sabbath are all of a religious and holy nature. Such duties can never be successfully or profitably performed, when mingled with secular business or amusements. These will both distract the attention of the mind, and withdraw it from that clear, strong, affecting sense of spiritual and divine objects in which the peculiar benefit of the sabbath is found. The soul, in this case, will be divided between God and mammon, between the love of the world and the love of God. The consequence cannot but be foreseen. The world will predominate; God will be forgotten; and dishonoured, if not forgotten; the soul will cease from a heavenly character, debase its pure, and exalted affections, lose those refined and noble views of celestial objects, which are fitted both to inspire and to cherish devotion, cease to stretch its wings towards heaven, and fall down to earth, loaded with a burden of gross cares, and dragged to the ground by an encumbering mass of sensual gratification.

At the same time, it is far easier to observe the sabbath wholly, than to observe it in part. He who intends to divide it between earthly and spiritual pursuits, will never know where to draw the line of division. Perpetually will he find himself wandering, now towards religion, and now towards the world; while his conscience will be unceasingly embarrassed by fears that he has neglected his duty, and by doubts concerning what it is. There is no such thing as a half-way performance of our duty. If such a performance had in fact been required, or allowed, we should have been distressed by unceasing perplexity. Happy is it for us, that an ordinance of this nature cannot be found in the Scriptures.

4. The blessing of the sabbath is promised to such an observance.

The text is an illustrious proof of this. 'If thou do all the things,' says God, required in the first verse; 'then shalt thou delight thyself in Jehovah; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth.' Not if thou do a part of these things. There is no promise to a divided service; there is no blessing connected with it. He, therefore, who wishes for the blessing of God upon his religious labours, must look for it only in the strict and faithful observance of the duties which he has required.

5. It is demanded by our own highest interest.

The sabbath is eminently 'the day of salvation.' 'On Zion the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore.' On that holy day, and in the holy place, this incomprehensible blessing is still to be found. Where that day is not observed, and that place is not frequented, this blessing ceases to descend. If we love ourselves, then; if we love our families; if we love our country; if we love mankind; we shall exert ourselves to the utmost to uphold the sabbath in its purity, in our hearts, in our conversation, and in our conduct. We shall 'keep the sabbath from polluting it;' shall observe it with the most faithful exactness; and, by precept and example, solemnly recommend it to the exact observance of others.

SERMON CIX.

THE LAW OF GOD.—THE DECALOGUE.—THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT. REFLECTIONS ON THE SABBATH.

Wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath-day.—Exod. xx. 11.

In the four preceding Discourses I have considered the perpetual establishment of the sabbath, and the manner in which it is to be observed; and have endeavoured to answer such objections as occurred to me, against the doctrines which I have felt myself bound to maintain concerning these subjects. I shall now close my observations on the sabbath, with some of those reflections which this very solemn and interesting subject naturally suggests to a serious mind.

The first consideration which strikes such a mind when contemplating the sabbath, is the pre-eminent wisdom of this divine institution.

Wisdom, as applied to conduct, denotes the choice of desirable ends, and the selection of happy means for their accomplishment. The ends aimed at in the institution of the sabbath are numerous, and all of them eminently desirable. The means by which they are accomplished are, at the same time, eminently happy. The sabbath, and the things immediately connected with it, are the amount of them all.

Among these ends let me remark, since God himself has been pleased to mention it, and to mention it in the fourth command of the decalogue; the provision which this holy day furnishes of a season of rest to labouring animals.

'A righteous man regards the life of his beast,' says the wisest of all men, Prov. x. 12. In this fact we behold a strong resemblance of a righteous man to his Creator. The goodness of this glorious Being is forcibly displayed in the provision which he has made for the rest and comfort of labouring animals in the moral law. In the hands even of prudent and humane masters, it is clearly seen, that such animals are sufficiently employed when they labour six days of the week, and are released to rest and refreshment on the seventh. God, who perfectly knew what their strength was able to bear, and who perfectly foresaw how greatly they would be oppressed by avarice and cruelty, was pleased, in this solemn manner, and at this early period, to provide for their relief, by securing to them the quiet and restoration of one day in seven. In this merciful provision the divine tenderness is displayed in a most ami-

able and edifying manner. The humble character of even these beings did not place them below the compassionate care of God. Elsewhere he has commanded us to supply them with food: here he has commanded us to furnish them with rest. In both cases he has taught us, that 'the Lord is good' and kind 'to all;' and that 'his tender mercies are over all the works of his hands.' This indulgence to animals is enjoined with infinite authority; and secured by the same sanction which enforces justice and beneficence towards mankind. By bringing up this subject also in form, thus solemnly, regularly, and often, he has formed our regard towards these creatures into a habit; and prevented us from the possibility of being inattentive to this duty.

In the same manner are rest and refreshment secured to mankind. Children and servants particularly are by this institution preserved from the oppression of severe masters, and the unfeeling demands of unnatural parents. Every industrious man will tell you, from his own experience, that the season of labour is sufficiently long, and this return of rest absolutely necessary for the preservation of health, and strength, and life; that greater toil would fatigue the bodily powers into decay; and that the weekly cessation from business is not more frequent than our worldly interests clearly demand. Hence, unless when under the dominion of avarice, he will consider the sabbath as a benevolent provision for his true worldly interest. What will thus be approved by the man who labours voluntarily and for himself, cannot fail to be cordially welcomed by him who is compelled, through indigence, to toil for others; the servant drudging for a hard master, and the child trembling under the rod of an unfeeling parent.

Nor is the usefulness of the sabbath less visible in the promotion of neatness and cleanliness, especially among the inferior classes of mankind. No person is willing to appear in a religious assembly, unless cleanly and decently dressed; so true is this, that probably in all countries where the sabbath is observed, every one, not prevented by absolute poverty, has what is proverbially called a Sunday suit of clothes. The spirit of cleanliness and decency awakened by the return of this holy day is always thus awakened. Excited every week, it is of course excited through the week, becomes an immovable habit, extends its influence through all the concerns of human life, and in the end constitutes the standing character. Individuals are thus prevented from becoming brutes in their appearance; and a nation is fashioned into an entire and delightful contrast to the native dirt and slovenliness of man, always exhibited in so humiliating a manner by savages. The influence of this single fact on the comfort of human life cannot be calculated.

Inseparably connected with this article, is the softness and civility of manners to which the sabbath, more than any thing else, allures mankind. Every thing pertaining to the sabbath generates, of course, this desirable conduct. The neatness of dress, and the decency of appearance, just mentioned, strongly persuade to it. A person better dressed than in the ordinary manner, will regularly behave with more than ordinary decency, unless habitually thus dressed. The association in our thoughts between the dress and the manners (both of which are intended to make us appear with advantage) is instinctive, and inseparable. Every thing connected with the sabbath also inspires such views and affections as contribute to the manners in question. We are, of course, united to a respectable assembly; on a sacred day, in a sacred place, upon a most affecting occasion, and for ends the most solemn and important in the universe. We are immediately before God, and are employed in his worship; in confessing our sins, in seeking the forgiveness of them, and in labouring to feel our needy, frail, guilty, dependent character; to see how little and insignificant we are; how unbecoming are pride, unkindness, and insolence; how becoming humility, modesty, condescension, and gentleness; how amiable, in the sight of God, is 'the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit;' and how necessary, for every purpose for which we have assembled, the establishment of these things in our hearts. From these considerations must spring, of course, in every man who is not void of all propensity to that which is good, both gentleness of mind, and sweetness of manners.

I have already glanced at the tendency of the sabbath to abase our pride, and to remove our native ruggedness of disposition. This part of the subject deserves a farther consideration. One of the chief deformities of character in the rich, the learned, and the great, is that haughtiness of mind which, on account of their peculiar advantages, they are ever ready to feel; and one of the chief causes of suffering to the poor, the ignorant, and the powerless, is that insolence of behaviour, which, from this haughtiness, they are compelled to endure. But when the superior classes of mankind assemble in the house of God, they sink at once, even in their own eyes, if they open them, down to the same level with their fellow worms. In the presence of him, 'before whom all nations are as nothing,' the glare of splendour, the pride of wealth, the self-sufficiency of learning, and the loftiness of power, are annihilated in a moment. Those who a little while before felt themselves to be rich, and wise, and great, find that they are poor, ignorant, little, guilty, odious to God, exposed to his wrath, and hopeless, except in the mere character of suppliants for mercy.

When a great man in the sanctuary looks around him on a mixed assembly of his equals and inferiors, he will be compelled often to feel, and secretly to confess, that his poor neighbour, whom perhaps he would have 'disdained,' on other occasions, 'to set with the dogs of his flock,' is, in all probability, more excellent, more wise, more lovely, and in every sense greater, 'in the sight of the Highest,' than himself. Nothing can humble pride more than the elevation above itself of those whom it despises. This elevation of the humble, this useful depression of the haughty, is nowhere more perfect than in the house of God.

Here, as will be realized from what has been already said, the poor and lowly rise, of course, above their usual level. 'The rich and the poor,' says Solomon, 'meet together; the Lord is the maker of them all.' In the house of God they 'meet together,' in a manner wholly peculiar, are placed exactly on the same level, and are more strongly than anywhere else reminded that 'the Lord is the maker of them all.' Here they assemble as creatures of the same God merely. Here all their earthly distinctions vanish; and a new distinction, formed only of sin and holiness, commences; which, unless terminated in the present world, will en-

dure and widen for ever. Here then the poor man rises to his proper independence and distinction; forgets the depression of his circumstances; and, without the aid of pride, assumes an elevation of character not less necessary to him for the faithful discharge of his duty, than the humility of the gospel to the lofty-minded. Thus the sabbath, like its author, 'putteth down the mighty from their seats,' and 'exalteth them of low degree.' How perfect in this important particular is an institution, which produces these opposite and indispensable benefits in those whose situation so plainly and loudly demands them!

Another immense benefit of the sabbath is the instruction which it furnishes in morals and religion.

The value of knowledge is admitted by all civilized men. It will usually, and ought ever to be admitted also, that moral and religious knowledge is of far more value than any other. It is more necessary, more practical, more useful, more enlarging to the mind, more refined, and more exalted. The least acquaintance with the subject will place this assertion beyond a doubt.

As the knowledge itself is more valuable, so the sabbath furnishes means for obtaining it, which are far cheaper, and far more efficacious, than were ever furnished by any other institution. Here, on a day devoted to no employment but the gaining of this knowledge, and the performance of those religious duties which unite with it in perfect harmony; in a place convenient and sacred; on an occasion infinitely important; and with the strong power of sympathy to add and impress; a thousand persons are taught the best of all knowledge; the most useful to themselves, and the most beneficial to mankind; for a less sum than must be expended by a twentieth part of their number, in order to obtain the same instruction in any other science. No device of the heathen philosophers, or of modern infidels, greatly as they have boasted of their wisdom, can be compared, as to its usefulness, with this. The sabbath particularly is the only means ever devised of communicating important instruction to the great mass of mankind.

Here all may assemble, all may learn, from the prince to the beggar, from the man of grey hairs to the infant of days. Had the sabbath been a device of man, men would be able to boast of immensely greater ingenuity and wisdom than they have hitherto displayed; and would be justly pronounced to have formed a more successful and more patriotic institution for the benefit of mankind, than any which is found on the page of history. Here a real and glorious equality of privileges is established, not only without confusion and discord, but with strong enforcements of peace and good order. In these great blessings all are here alike interested, and all partake alike.

To the blessings of peace and good order universally, the sabbath contributes also in a pre-eminent degree. Moral and religious knowledge is the knowledge of our duty, and of the rewards which God will give to such as perform it. To this knowledge, the sabbath adds the highest motives to the performance which are found in the universe. All good, internal and external, in time and eternity, allures to it, as a direct and certain reward. All evil compels to it as a threatening, and deters from the omission as a punishment inevitable and endless. This knowledge, and these motives, the sabbath furnishes, with a solemnity and force altogether unrivalled. From the house of God they are carried with us into every concern of life, where duty is to be performed; and duty is to be performed in every concern. With the influence of the sabbath on his mind, man everywhere feels himself accountable to his Maker; and, in darkness and solitude, in the secrecy of thought, as well as in the conduct inspected by the public eye, realizes that the all-searching God is a constant witness of whatever he thinks, speaks, or does. From this consideration, more than from the dread of the dungeon and the halter, most men are inclined to restrain their hands from injustice and violence, from tumult and confusion. In the mean time, the peace and good order of religious assemblies on the sabbath furnish the highest specimen of this happy conduct, that was ever seen in the present world. Fifty-two sabbaths every year is this conduct repeated. Hence, it becomes a powerful, as well as desirable, habit; and clings to him who steadily visits the house of God, through the remainder of every week. In this manner, it is diffused through the life; and influences the thoughts, words, and actions, towards men of every class and character. The magistrate and the subject, the parent and the child, the master and the servant, the friend and the neighbour, are benefited by it alike. All of them acquire more peaceful dispositions, exhibit a more amiable deportment, pursue a more orderly conduct, and fill their respective stations with greater propriety than either would do under the influence of every other cause except the immediate agency of God.

It will not be denied, that each of the things which I have specified, is an important benefit to mankind, nor that all of them united are of advantage inestimable. But the sabbath has blessings to give of a still higher nature. Among them this is one of supreme moment; that the sabbath is the great mean of preserving in the world the knowledge and the worship of the one living and true God. Wherever the sabbath is not, there is no worship, no religion. Man forgets God, and God forsakes man. The moral world becomes a desert, where life never springs, and beauty never smiles. The beams of the Sun of righteousness never dawn upon the miserable waste; the rains of heaven never descend. Putrid with sin, and shrunk with ignorance, the soul of man loses its rational character; and prostrates itself before devils, men, beasts, and reptiles, insects, stocks, and stones. To these man offers his prayers, his praises, and his victims; to these he sacrifices his children, and to these he immolates the purity and honour of his wife. A brutal worshipper of a brutal god, he hopes for protection and blessing from the assumption of every folly, and the perpetration of every crime.

If his mind becomes enlightened by science, and these absurdities, as they sometimes may, become too gross and too naked to be received by him, he becomes an infidel, a sceptic, an atheist. The absurdity here is not indeed less, but greater. The only material difference, is, that it is less palpable, less exposed to vulgar eyes, less susceptible of ridicule. The former is the madness of a blockhead, the latter, of a man of learning: that the folly of the clown, this of the man of fashion. In this case, the votary wanders through all the labyrinths of subtle disquisition; proves right to be wrong, and wrong to be right; and demonstrates that there is nothing either right or wrong. Freed from

these encumbrances, men of this character cast their eyes towards the enjoyments of this world, and 'covet their neighbour's house, and their neighbour's wife, his man-servant, and his maid-servant; his ox, and his ass; and every thing that is their neighbour's.' Nothing, now, intervenes between themselves, and the objects coveted, but the apprehension of resistance, and the dread of punishment. Elevate them to power, and the sabbath is changed into the decade, and the house of God into a stable; the Bible is paraded through the streets on an ass, and consumed upon a bonfire; immortal existence is blotted out of the divine kingdom; the Redeemer is postponed to a murderer; and the Creator to a prostitute, styled the goddess of Reason. The end of this progress might be easily foreseen. Legalized plunder, legislative butchery, the prostitution of a kingdom, fields drenched in human blood, and cities burnt by inhuman incendiaries, fill up the tremendous measure of iniquity, bewilder the gazing world with astonishment, awaken the shouts of fiends, and cover heaven itself with a robe of sackcloth.

But for the sabbath, this assembly had now been prostrate before the stock of a tree, or sitting round the circle of a pawwaw; or, frantic with rage or frenzy, had been roaming the mountains in honour of Bacchus; or drowning with shouts and screams the cries of a human victim, offered up to appease the wrath of an imaginary deity.

But 'thanks be to God for this unspeakable gift!' The sabbath, 'according to his abundant mercy,' returns at the close of every week to shine upon us with its peaceful and benevolent beams. At the close of every week, with 'a still, small voice,' it summons us to the house of God. Here we meet, and find, and know, and serve, our glorious and blessed Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier. Here, on the mercy-seat, he sits enthroned, to hear our complaints and petitions, to receive our praises, to accept our repentance, and to forgive our sins, for the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ. Here he makes known his pleasure and our duty. Here he promises to those who obey, divine and eternal rewards; and threatens those who disobey with terrible and never-ending punishments. Seen every week in these awful and amiable characters, God cannot be unknown or forgotten. Accordingly, throughout the ages of Christianity, his presence and agency are understood everywhere, and by every person who frequents the house of God. The little child is as familiarly acquainted with them, as the man of grey hairs; the peasant, as the monarch. 'All,' in this sense, 'know God from the least to the greatest;' and there is 'no occasion for a man to say to his neighbour, Know the Lord.'

Intimately connected with this vast and interesting subject, and in an important sense the effect of the sabbath only, is the attainment of holiness and salvation.

Man, an apostate, guilty and condemned, infinitely needs a renovation of his character, a reversal of his sentence, an escape from his punishment, and a reinstatement in the glorious privileges from which he has fallen. To accomplish these inestimable and benevolent ends, God, according to the language of the text, has hallowed and blessed the sabbath. Through every age, and through every land, where the sabbath has been kept holy unto the Lord, this blessing has regularly and uninterruptedly descended. There the glad tidings of salvation have been published and received. There men have sought and found Jehovah, their God, repented of their sins, believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, renewed their allegiance to their rightful Sovereign, obtained the pardon of their sins and the justification of their souls, triumphed over death and the grave, ascended to heaven, and begun the possession of everlasting joy. 'Wherever even two or three have met together in the name of Christ, there he has been in the midst of them, and blessed them,' with his peculiar blessing. This holy, heavenly season, has regularly opened the correspondence between this miserable world, and the world of life and glory, and preserved the connexion between God and men. To it earth owes its chief blessings, and heaven no small part of its inhabitants, and of its unfading joys.

But where mankind have 'forsaken the assembling of themselves together, as the manner of some is,' all these blessings have ceased. 'The fruitful land has been converted into marshes, and miry places, which could not be healed, and were, therefore, given to salt.' In such places the world, and sin, and Satan, take entire possession of the heart, and leave no room for God. All the thoughts and desires are the offspring of 'the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.' Like Ahab, men 'sell themselves to work wickedness:' like Jeroboam, they sin, and make all around them to sin. There no prayers ascend to heaven, no voice of mercy is heard from that happy world, inviting sinners to faith and repentance in the Lord Jesus Christ. God is neither sought nor found. None ask for mercy, and none receive it. None knock at the door of life, and to none is it opened. All enter 'into the broad and crooked road,' and 'go down to the chambers of death;' while God with an awful voice proclaims concerning them, 'Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone.'

Pause now for a moment, and recollect the number, the greatness, the glory, of these ends; and tell me if the institution which unites and accomplishes them all in perfect harmony, is not supremely wise, and worthy of God. How easily does it accomplish them, how perfectly, how wonderfully! How happy is the frequent, convenient, necessary return of this holy day! After how desirable intervals, with what useful regularity, with what sweet serenity! How necessary is it to the sinner, to call him off from the world, from stupidity, from sottishness! How necessary to awaken his attention to God, to holiness, and to heaven; to engage his thoughts on spiritual and divine objects, to begin his repentance, faith, and love, and to place his feet in the path which leads to immortal life! How necessary to the saint, to rouse him from sloth, to recall him from sin; to remind him of his duty, to increase his faith and holiness, and to help him forward in his journey towards heaven! How necessary to Adam in his innocence; how infinitely necessary to all his ruined offspring. In a word, how plainly has the sabbath been blessed, as well as hallowed! Blessed from the beginning to the present time, blessed in a multitude of particulars, blessed in every land where it has been known, with the immediate and peculiar favour of God, with the nearest resemblance to the blessings of immortality!

2. The mind of a good man cannot fail also to be deeply affected with the solemnity of this institution.

When God had ended the glorious work of creation,

'he rested the seventh day from all the work which he had made.' The creation was now fresh from the forming hand of Jehovah. The great Architect had 'builded his stories in the heaven; had numbered the stars, and called them all by their names; had appointed the moon for seasons, and caused the sun to know his going down.' He had filled the world with beauty and fragrance, with glory and grandeur, with life and immortality. In the full view of this transporting, this amazing scene, in the strong apprehension of the infinite perfections which it unfolded, 'the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy:' while the Author of all things beheld the works which his hands had made, and pronounced them 'very good.' The praise begun by angels, our first parents reiterated on the first morning of their existence, and made their delightful residence vocal with hymns to their Creator. The first employment of Paradise, the first work done by man, was the worship of God. Thus the dawn of human existence was opened by the same divine employment, which will unceasingly occupy the everlasting day of heaven.

When the command to 'remember' this day was given, there were 'in the morning thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud,' upon mount Sinai, and 'the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud, so that all the people who were in the camp trembled. And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke; because the Lord descended upon it in fire, and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace; and the whole mount quaked greatly.' In the midst of this amazing grandeur, in the midst of these awful terrors, God with his own voice spoke this command, and wrote it with his own finger. With this example and with these solemnities was one day in seven consecrated to Jehovah.

When the new creation was finished, the creation of holiness in the soul of man, the creation of a church, comprising immense multitudes of immortal minds, as a holy and eternal kingdom unto God, Christ arose from the dead to endless life and glory, 'became the first-fruits of them that slept,' and their forerunner into the heavens. On this divine occasion, the same exalted beings, who sang together when the heavens and the earth were made, and proclaimed 'glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, good-will towards men,' when the Saviour of the world was born, now renewed their songs, and entered with Christ into the highest heavens, with all the pomp and splendour, which invested Sinai at the promulgation of the law.

On this day the Spirit of grace and truth descended upon the apostles of our Lord and Saviour; baptized them with fire, endued them with inspiration, the gift of tongues, and the spirit of prophecy, gave them to understand the gospel in its glorious mysteries, and enabled them, with wonderful miracles, to prove its divine origin, and thus to erect the spiritual kingdom of God in the world.

All these examples, the most august, the most amazing which the universe ever beheld, leave their whole weight, their infinite authority, upon this institution. Every Christian, therefore, while he keeps the sabbath holy unto God, ought, in order to quicken himself in his duty, to remember that on this sacred day God rested; that his Redeemer rested; that the Spirit of grace descended; and that angels repeatedly united together in enraptured praise. Nor ought he, in any wise, to forget that no institution can plead so many and so great things done to solemnize and consecrate it as holy unto God, and as indispensably binding upon man.

3. We learn from the observations already made with what emotions the sabbath ought to be regarded by us.

We assemble in the house of God, to glorify him in the religious worship which he has appointed, to seek the everlasting life of our own souls, to obtain and increase holiness in our hearts, to remember, admire, and celebrate the wonderful works of the old and new creations, and the glorious perfections of the Creator and Redeemer. What emotions ought we to feel while engaged in this divine employment? Such unquestionably as angels experienced, when these works were done, and these perfections were displayed.

Particularly, the sabbath demands of all men profound reverence and solemn awe. All the things, which have been mentioned, are supremely great, sublime, and wonderful. The most awful of all beings is brought near to our hearts, and presents himself before our eyes, in manifestations of a most majestic and astonishing nature. Had we been present at the work of creation, and heard the awful command, which brought into being the immense mass of original elements; had we seen the light, at the bidding of the great workman, disclose and involve the formless confusion; the sea and the dry land separate; the grass, the herbs, and the trees instantaneously arise, and clothe the earth in one universal robe of life and beauty; the sun, the moon, and the stars lighted up in the heavens; the various animals filling the world with living beings; and man, the lord, the crown, and the glory of the whole, formed a rational and immortal being, to understand, enjoy, and celebrate the divine work; could we have failed to experience the most profound awe, amid this complication of infinite wonders, and to glorify the great Author of them with that 'fear of the Lord' which is 'the beginning of wisdom?'

Had we again been present at the crucifixion of our divine Redeemer, and beheld the earth tremble, the rocks rend, the veil of the temple part asunder, the graves open, the saints arise, and the sun hide his face in darkness; had we accompanied his body to the tomb, and watched the descent of the angel, the convulsions of the second earthquake, the lightnings which streamed from his countenance, and the swooning of the guards who kept the sepulchre; had we seen our Lord resume his life, come forth from the grave to his doubting, trembling disciples; had we seen him rise from the earth, enter the bosom of the cloud of glory, and with a solemn and magnificent progress, ascend to the heavens; must not the same awful emotions have been instinctively renewed?

But all these things, this sacred day, this divine festival, places before our eyes. If, at the same time, we farther remember, that we are in the house of God; that hither he comes to meet us on designs of infinite love, to forgive our sins, to renew, receive, and save our souls; that we stand before him as sinners, as apostates, condemned, ruined, helpless, and in ourselves hopeless also; that we are suppliants for mere mercy, dependent on the obedience of another, and without any righteousness of our own; must we not feel our littleness and our guilt? Must we not, instinctively, 'lay our hands

on our mouths, and our mouths in the dust, and cry, Unclean?' Can we fail to fear 'that glorious and fearful name, Jehovah, our God?'

This emotion every thing in the Scriptures conspires to improve and strengthen. The law of God, with all its commands, promises, and threatenings, its divine rewards and amazing penalties; the gospel with its solemn establishments of the law, its remedies for the imperfections of the law, as the means of life for sinners, its glorious invitations, supreme allurements, and heavenly promises; conspire with infinite force to persuade us to 'fear the Lord our God,' and to 'tremble at his word.' He who is thoughtless and irreverent here, ought to have considered how he would have felt amid the thunders, the lightnings, the earthquake, the sound of the trumpet, and the flame of devouring fire, from which the Creator said, 'Remember the sabbath-day, to keep it holy.' To this man, more than to almost any other sinner, is addressed that humbling rebuke, 'The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know; my people doth not consider.'

At the same time, the sabbath is to be regarded with peculiar joy.

All things relating to the sabbath are not only solemn, but joyful things. At the creation, a new universe started up into being, and life, reason, virtue, and immortality were given to an endless multitude of creatures. At the new creation an endless multitude of perishing sinners, destined to eternal sin and eternal woe, were recalled from the melancholy regions of death and depravity, to immortal holiness, life, and glory. On these stupendous occasions 'all the sons of God shouted for joy.' We are still more interested in the last of them than they could be; for we are the miserable beings who are redeemed and saved. On the sabbath, the great body of the church has been brought into the kingdom of grace, and prepared for the kingdom of glory. On the first sabbath, upon which began the great work of erecting the kingdom of Christ in the world by the apostles, three thousand souls were added unto the Lord. On the first sabbath, the apostles were 'baptized with the Holy Ghost, and with fire,' and divinely empowered to spread salvation through the world. On the sabbath, the souls of men have ever since been flocking into the kingdom of Christ, and taking possession of immortality. The sabbath has been the great means of preserving that kingdom. To the sabbath it is owing, that the glad tidings of salvation are now heard in this desolate world. To the sabbath it is owing, that in this land, where, ever since the deluge, nothing was heard but the howlings of wild beasts, the war-screams of savages, or the groans of torture and death, now through a thousand churches is weekly resounded the music of heaven, and the proclamation of life eternal to mankind. The sabbath is appropriately 'the accepted time;' it is eminently 'the day of salvation.' To the sabbath will our salvation be owed, if we attain salvation. On the sabbath, all Christian assemblies meet to offer up their humble prayers; to send up their hymns of praise to their 'Father who is in heaven;' to teach, and receive, 'the words of eternal life;' 'to be baptized into the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost;' and to receive the body and blood of their crucified Redeemer. On the sabbath, the Christian world bears, in this manner, no unhappy resemblance of heaven; and a little part of the melancholy hours of time become a fair image of the pure and never-ending sabbath beyond the grave.

With these delightful things in view, can we fail to unite with 'the church of the first-born,' and 'the innumerable company of angels,' and repeat and respond their divine exultation? Shall not our songs bear an humble unison with theirs? Shall not the joy which they feel on the great business of the day, the repentance and return of sinners, find a welcome admission to our hearts? Shall we not 'rejoice in him that made us?' Shall not 'the children of Zion be joyful in their king?'

God on this day rejoiced over the creation which his hands had made. Angels rejoiced in the wonders of the work, and in the divine workman. Christ rejoiced over the church, which he redeemed with his own blood. Heaven has rejoiced at every return of this delightful season, and renewed its transports over all the sons of Adam, whom this day has with divine efficacy raised from death to life. 'The Lord God is' now our 'sun and our shield.' Now 'he gives grace and glory.' This day 'he withholds no good thing from them that walk uprightly.' Let mortals behold these things with wonder and gratulation, and anticipate the pure and permanent transports of the everlasting sabbath in the heavens.

Nor is this holy day to be less regarded with gratitude.

All the benevolent things which God has done for us, this day brings before our eyes. Our being, our daily blessings, our redemption, our salvation, the resumed character of holiness, the title to endless life, the final escape from sin and misery, this heavenly season proclaims with an unceasing voice. At this season, God comes down to dwell among men, divested, with respect to all who are willing to receive him, of the awful frowns of an offended judge, clothed with the smiles of an eternal benefactor, and adorned with the endearing titles of the Father, the Redeemer, and the Sanctifier of man. Here the calls to gratitude are all united. The blessings of earth and heaven, of time and eternity, here invite us to love and praise the author of all our mercies. Can we fail to 'render to him according to his benefits?' Can we fail this day to ascribe 'blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, to him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb, for ever and ever?'

4. How ought the Christian church to bless God for this institution!

To this institution we owe far the greater part of the spiritual blessings which we enjoy, and, in a high sense, we owe them all. But for this day, we should neither have sought nor secured eternal life; for where no sabbath is, there is no religion. But for this day, earthly things would have engrossed all our thoughts. Honour, wealth, and pleasure, are the real syrens, which charm mankind to shipwreck and death. To their songs the ear of man is by nature attuned, and the heart beats in regular response. But for this day, the world, as a canker, would rust, corrupt, and consume all the disposition to piety, and all the hopes of heaven. The soul would be benumbed. Religion would die. God would be forgotten. The death of Christ would be vain. Mankind would cease to be saved; and heaven would fail of her destined inhabitants. How desolate the prospect! How strongly would this world resemble the regions of

final despair; where no sabbath dawns, where no prayers nor praises ascend, no sermons proclaim pardon and peace to sinners, the voice of mercy never sounds, and the smiles of forgiving, redeeming, and sanctifying love never illumine the dreary valley of the shadow of death!

All things pertaining to salvation are social things; things of general participation and powerful sympathy. They exist chiefly in multitudes. Without the sabbath, there is no reason to believe that they could exist at all. Not where one is employed in religious worship merely, nor principally; but where 'two or three are met together in the name of Christ,' is his presence promised. Not in the closet, the recess, or the solitude, but 'on Zion, whither the tribes go up, has the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore.'

5. What an illustrious type is the sabbath of the everlasting rest enjoyed by the children of God!

The sabbath is a rest from sin, business, and pleasure; a day in which God is worshipped, divine knowledge improved, and holiness attained and increased; a day in which saints delightfully commune, and joyfully celebrate the wonders of creation, and the sublimer wonders of redemption. On the sabbath God is peculiarly present, reconciled, forgiving, and sanctifying; and the Spirit of truth eminently communicates comfortable evidence of divine love, whispers peace, and inspires joy. The sabbath is, therefore, the day of hope and consolation, of enjoyment and triumph; the foretaste of heaven; the entrance to the glorious assembly of the blessed.

The future rest of the children of God is divinely formed of these delightful ingredients. Here eternal peace begins its undisturbed reign over all the great kingdom of Jehovah. Here immortal minds are consummated in that holiness, which is the image of the heavenly Adam. Here those minds, in the exercise of that holiness, with exalted friendship and pure unbosomed intercourse, commence their everlasting joy. Here 'God is all in all.' Here he unveils his face, and discloses the smiles of infinite love to the assembly of the first-born. And here, 'the Lamb, the glory of God,' and 'the light' of heaven, illumines all their thoughts, quickens all their affections, 'feeds them with living bread, leads them to fountains of living waters,' and awakens into transport their hymns of never-ending praise.

SERMON CX.

THE LAW OF GOD.—THE DECALOGUE.—THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT.—DUTY OF CHILDREN.

Honour thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.—Exod. xx. 12.

The four first commands of the decalogue enjoin those which are called the duties of piety. These were written on the first table, and were summed up by Moses and by Christ in this general one; 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind, and with all thy strength.' We are now entering upon the consideration of the six last; directing what are commonly called the duties of morality, or our duties towards mankind. These were written upon the second table, and are summed up by Moses, by Christ, and by St Paul, in 'the second great command,' styled by St James the royal law, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.' The first of these commands is the text. As a general preface to the observations which I propose to make, successively, on these commands, it will be proper to remark, that they are universally to be extended according to the interpretation given by our Saviour of the sixth and seventh, in his sermon on the mount. In commenting on the former of these, Christ teaches us, that to be 'angry with our brother without a cause,' to 'say unto him, Raca, or thou fool,' is to be guilty of a breach of this command. In commenting on the seventh, he declares, that 'whosoever looketh on a woman, to lust after her, the same hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.' Generally, all these precepts are to be considered as directing our duty in all respects which, by inference or analogy, can be fairly arranged under them. Accordingly (to give an example,) I shall consider this command as regulating the duties reciprocally owed by parents and children, magistrates and subjects, and by other classes of mankind in their several relations. That I am warranted in this mode of explaining these precepts, is, I think, evident from the conduct of our Saviour. I shall only add, that in this manner they have been generally understood by divines, and extensively declared in catechisms: For example, in that of the Westminster Assembly, that of Dr Novell, and that of King Edward. In the examination of the subjects involved in this command, I shall begin with that which is directly expressed—the duty of children to their parents.

The word 'honour,' by which this duty is here enjoined, is chosen with supreme felicity; as being sufficiently comprehensive, and sufficiently definite, to express, with as much exactness as can easily be compassed, all the several branches of duty which parents can equitably demand of their children. Particularly, it is explained by Christ, commenting, Matt. xv. 3, on the vile fetch by which the Pharisees released their disciples from obedience to this precept, to involve the obligation of children to support their parents in their indigence and old age. It is also explained by St Paul, as enjoining the universal obedience of children. In its own

primary sense, also, it denotes all the affection and veneration which children owe to their parents, and which constitute so extensive and important a part of filial piety.

Filial duties are so numerous, that many volumes might be written on this subject only, without particularizing them all. Within the limits prescribed to these Discourses, it is obvious nothing more can be done, than to exhibit briefly the prominent things included in this and the following precepts. Nothing more, therefore, will be attempted. According to this plan filial duty may be advantageously comprised under the following heads:

I. *Children are bound to regard their parents with respect and reverence at all times.*

Particularly, these exercises of filial piety are,

1. To exist in the thoughts.

'Keep thy heart,' said David to Solomon, 'with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.' All good proceeds from this source, as well as all evil. In vain will children labour to perform their duty in any other manner, if they neglect it in this. Here the whole course of filial piety begins; and if not commenced here, will never be pursued with any success. Thoughts are the soul, the living principle, of all duty. Every thing else is a lifeless body without a soul, a shadow without a substance.

Every child is bound to entertain the most respectful and reverential thoughts concerning his parents, and concerning the parental character. He is to remember and regard his parents, as standing in the most venerable and the most endearing of all earthly relations to him; as those to whom under God, he owes his being, and the great mass of his blessings. He is to regard them as the persons to whose kindness, care, and government he has been committed by God himself. He is to consider them as the best of all friends; the most affectionate, the most faithful, the most confidential, the most persevering, the most watchful, the most unwearied.

His affections towards them ought ever to be reverential, grateful, warm, and full of kindness. Whatever his plans or purposes are, he ought invariably to feel, that they will be most safely, and, in every case of any importance, should be regularly intrusted to them for advice and direction. Parents, unless when under the immediate influence of some strong passion or prejudice, very rarely oppose of design the real interests of their children. Almost all the counsels, injunctions, and reproofs which they give, and which the children at times consider as unkind, are given, intentionally at least, for their good, and ought to be regarded only in this manner. Children are bound to fix in their minds an habitual sense of the superior station and wisdom of their parents, and of their own inferiority in all these respects. Their thoughts and affections towards them ought, universally, to spring from this sense of their superiority; a superiority originated by the creating hand of God, and consummated by his most holy law. To this sense ought all their views to be conformed. The beginnings of irreverence, the first tendencies towards disadvantageous, light, disrespectful apprehensions concerning them, they are bound to crush in the bud, and to cultivate with watchful care every affectionate and respectful emotion.

By the providence of God it is frequently brought to pass, that parents are, in humble life, uneducated, ignorant, little regarded by the world, irreligious, not unfrequently openly vicious, and sometimes plainly scandalous. Here filial piety, it must be acknowledged, becomes a harder task; and, especially in the last-mentioned cases, is attended with serious difficulty in its various duties. Children are, however, to remember that God has given even the children of such parents no dispensation with respect to their filial duties. The command in the text is addressed to them no less absolutely than to other children. As their case is more difficult, they are required to make more careful and vigorous exertions; to forget the personal character, and to remember only the parental. The children may be better educated, may know more, may have better dispositions, and may sustain better characters. Let them remember, that to God in the first place, and ordinarily to these very parents in the second, they owe these blessings; and let them show their gratitude, their superior understanding, to the eye of him from whom they derive their all, by cultivating the sentiments which I have urged, and by resisting effectually those which I have condemned. He who gave them parents, he who made them children, he who said to them, 'Honour thy father and thy mother,' has an indisputable right to require this conduct at their hands. If the duty is difficult, it is proportionally excellent, honourable, and lovely.

2. The same exercises of filial piety are to be manifested in the words of children.

The words uttered by children which respect their parents in any manner, are to correspond with the thoughts which have been here recommended, and, if effectual care is taken to make the thoughts right, the words will be right of course.

When children speak to their parents, they are required ever to speak modestly, submissively, and respectfully. Whatever opinions children may entertain, which may differ from those of their parents in any case, it is their duty to propose with humility, meekness, and respect. They are to address them, not as disputants, not as equals; but as children, as modest inferiors. Both their words, and their manner of uttering them, should bear unequivocal evidence that they are conscious of this character.

When children speak of their parents to others, they are bound to speak with the most exact caution, and with similar respect, and never to say any thing concerning them which they would be unwilling to say to them when present. It is their duty invariably to endeavour, so far as truth and propriety will admit, to render the character of their parents respectable in the eyes of others. The faults of their parents it is their duty to conceal, their excellencies always readily to admit, and to experience and manifest their satisfaction when others admit them. They are not, indeed, to boast of the good qualities of their parents, as they are not to boast of any thing else; but with modesty and propriety to welcome them, when mentioned by others; and, when they have a becoming occasion, to speak of them themselves.

Sometimes children are compelled to the mortification of hearing their parents ill spoken of by others. Their duty then requires them, whenever they can do it with success, to repel the ungenerous attack, and to defend the character of their parents. If this is not in

their power, they are bound to manifest their indignation and disgust by such declarations as the nature of the case demands: and at least to prevent themselves from the pain and mischief produced by such conversation, by withdrawing finally from persons of this unreasonable and abusive character.

3. The same spirit ought to appear in all the deportment of children.

The deportment of children, when their parents are present, ought to exhibit every mark of respect. The 'honour' required in the text ought, in the literal sense, to be here invariably rendered without qualification, without reserve, without reluctance. However humble the station, the circumstances, the education, or the manners of parents may be, the child, instead of discovering that he is ashamed of them, or of assuming to himself airs of importance, is bound cheerfully to acknowledge their proper superiority, to exhibit towards them a respectful deference, and always to prevent even a remote suspicion that he is reluctant to give them their proper place.

II. *Children are bound to obey the commands of their parents.*

That it is the province of parents to govern, and that of children to obey, will not be questioned. Nor will it be doubted, that children are equally bound to abstain from things prohibited by their parents, as to perform those which they enjoin. Of this obedience it may be observed,

1. That it ought to be uniform and faithful.

'Children,' says St Paul, 'obey your parents in all things; for this is right and well-pleasing to the Lord.' To the universality of this precept there is but one exception; and that is, when the injunction is contrary to the law of God. The obedience of little children ought undoubtedly to be implicit. They are plainly incapable of directing their own conduct, and parents are appointed by God himself to direct it. While it is the duty of the parent to instruct his child in the nature of moral conduct, and the reasonableness and rectitude of his own commands, as fast as the understanding of the child will permit, and to give no commands which are not agreeable to the will of God, it is undoubtedly the duty of the child to obey every parental precept, except such as are of this nature. To this rule I know of no exception.

Filial obedience is commonly rendered without much difficulty, when parents are present. Every child should remember that his obligations to obedience are not lessened by their absence; that God is then present; that he has required them not to obey with eye-service; and that he records all their conduct in the book of his remembrance.

They are also ever to keep in mind, that they are required to obey difficult commands, as well as those which are easy; those which require much self-denial, labour, and trouble, as well as those which are attended only with pleasure; those in which their disobedience will never be detected, as well as those in which it will certainly be known. No other obedience deserves the name of faithful.

2. Filial obedience ought to be ready and cheerful.

This is the only obedience which commends itself to the common sense of mankind, or which is of any value in the sight of God. In this obedience the heart is concerned, and the child active. Every thing else which goes under this name is constrained, hypocritical, a cheat, a sin. No other is regarded in the Scriptures. To sustain this character, the obedience of children should be rendered without opposition, and without delay. A great part of the value of filial obedience arises from the manner in which it is rendered. God himself 'loves the cheerful giver.' Mankind have exactly the same views of this subject, and universally consider that which is done grudgingly, as little better, and often worse, than if it had not been done at all.

III. *Children are bound to do whatever will reasonably contribute to the happiness of their parents, whether commanded or not.*

The modes in which this part of filial duty is to be rendered are so numerous, that it is impossible to recite them. It will be sufficient to observe at the present time, that no filial piety is more lovely, or more accordant with the text, than that which attentively prevents the wants, the commands, and the wishes of parents; which adds to their comforts, and lessens their troubles, in a thousand indescribable ways, readily offering themselves to the mind of a dutiful child.

One of the happiest modes of obeying the text is found in the discreet, amiable, and virtuous behaviour of children. Parents are delightfully honoured when their children exhibit excellent conduct before mankind, and thus acquire the approbation and good-will of those around them. In this case they render a very pleasing and very honourable tribute to the parental wisdom, care, and faithfulness employed in their education; and show in the strongest manner, that the precepts by which they have been trained up have been received by them with such reverence and piety, as to have a commanding influence upon their lives. In this manner children become 'the glory of their parents, and the crown of grey hairs.'

The duties of children obviously change with the change of age and circumstances. When they are very young, their obedience, as I remarked, must be implicit. They are to obey without investigation, inquiry, or doubt; for this plain reason, that they are incapable altogether of judging for themselves. But they are to be taught to judge, as early as their years and understanding will permit. This is indispensable; because by learning habitually the reasons on which their parents' commands are founded, they will soon learn to think that they are all reasonable; and obey them with more readiness and exactness on this account; and because many cases will occur, in which their parents cannot be present, and in which therefore they must judge for themselves. This, it is plain, they cannot do, unless they are taught. As they advance in years and understanding, the nature of their obedience will vary; chiefly from this circumstance, that they understand their duty, and the reasons on which it is founded; and are therefore required to perform it from a due regard to its nature and importance, to the law of God which established it, and to the character and kindness of their parents which demand it from their reverence and their gratitude. In other respects, their obedience is founded on the same principle, during the whole period of their non-age.

Nor do the same rules apply to them in a very different manner after they have arrived at adult years, so long as they continue in their father's house, and are members of his family. In this situation however, the

circumstances of both parents and children vary so much, that the relations and duties of both are usually modified by some plan or compact between them, sufficiently understood to serve as a rule by which the conduct of the child is to be directed. I shall therefore think it necessary only to observe, that when children have faithfully performed their duty to this period, they rarely fail of performing it afterward.

When children have left their father's house, their circumstances become more materially changed, and with them, in several respects, their duties. They then have separate interests, and business of their own, and usually families also. When God instituted marriage, he authorized children to leave the house and government of their parents. 'For this cause,' said the Creator, 'shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife,' Matt. xix. 4, 5. In this situation, then, children become parents, heads of families, invested with all the authority, possessed of all the rights, and subjected to all the duties, pertaining to their own parents. It is impossible, that in these circumstances they should fulfill their former duties as children under the government of their parents, unless they neglect those which are indispensable in their present situation. From many of these duties therefore they are released.

Still, as they are more indebted to their parents than to any other human beings, and incomparably more indebted, at least in ordinary cases, their remaining duties to their parents are numerous and important. In this situation, more frequently than any other, they are required to contribute to the maintenance of their parents. This is made by our Saviour to be so important a branch of the command in our text, that he declares the Pharisees, who by a fraudulent comment on this precept had released men from the duty in question, to have 'made this command of God of none effect by their tradition.' In this period also they are bound, as much as may be, to nurse and soothe their parents in pain and sickness, to bear patiently and kindly their infirmities of body and mind, to alleviate their distresses, to give them the cheering influence of their company and conversation, and in these and various other ways to serene and brighten the evening, but too frequently a melancholy one, of old age.

The children of sinful parents have always a difficult task to perform. To a pious child, a parent visibly going down in the broad and crooked road that leads to destruction, is a sight beyond measure distressing. That a child thus situated is bound in every discreet and efficacious manner to prevent, as far as may be, the awful catastrophe, will not be questioned, unless by an atheist. What is to be done in so dreadful a case, it will be impossible to prescribe here, unless in very general terms. Every child will know indeed, without information, that his prayers are to be offered up for his parent, and his own pious example presented to him, without ceasing. Every child also knows that all his own measures, whatever they may be in other respects, are to be obedient, modest, and reverential. No other measures can, in these circumstances, be hopefully followed by any good consequences. Still they may be sufficiently plain and unequivocal as to their meaning.

Among the efforts made by such a child, in addition to his own discreet personal conduct and conversation, few seem better fitted to answer the end in view, than inducing persons possessed of known wisdom and piety, especially those of an engaging deportment, frequently to visit the parent, and persuading him also often to visit them; placing books of a religious nature, written in a pleasing and interesting manner, within his reach; alluring him regularly to the house of God, and to private religious assemblies; and introducing, without any apparent design, religious topics, especially those which are peculiarly interesting, as often as may be with propriety. In my own view, the child is also bound modestly, submissively, and discreetly, to remonstrate against the visible wickedness of the parent. I can see no reason which will justify a child in the omission of this duty, although I am not unaware of the peculiar difficulties which attend it, nor unapprized of the peculiar delicacy and prudence which it demands. Reproof, even from equals or superiors, requires more skill and care in order to render it successful, than fall to the lot of most men. In a child to a parent it must be singularly embarrassing.

A less delicate task, yet still attended with many difficulties, lies in avoiding the influence naturally presented, and often but too efficaciously, by the sentiments, precepts, and examples, of evil parents. The parental character is so venerable, so authoritative, so endearing, and so persuasive, that the child who escapes its malignant influence when employed to encourage sin, may well be considered as eminently the object of the divine favour. Still it is possible, and has existed in multiplied instances. Abijah escaped even in the house of Jeroboam, Hezekiah in that of Ahaz, and Josiah in that of Amon. Thus also has the fact often been in all succeeding ages of time. Children, therefore, instead of despairing, should gird themselves with watchfulness and resolution suited to their circumstances; should continually and fervently beseech God to guard them by his good Spirit from the dangers in which they stand; should watch their own conduct with peculiar anxiety; should seek for wisdom and direction from religious books, especially from the Scriptures; and should ask advice, countenance, and assistance from those among their friends who are persons of piety. The company of such persons counteracts, in a manner invaluable, the influence of evil example. 'He that walketh with wise men,' says God, 'shall be wise.'

Having thus given a summary account of the duties of children, I shall now proceed to mention several reasons to enforce them.

1. Every considerate child will feel his filial duty strongly urged by the excellence of this conduct, and the odiousness of filial impiety.

This is one of the few moral subjects concerning which all men are agreed. The writers, of all ages and of all countries, have taught us with a single voice, that to the common eye of mankind no object is more amiable, or more delightful than a dutiful and virtuous child. This charming object commends itself at first view to the natural feelings, the judgment, and the conscience of all men. It commends itself at once, without deliberation, and without doubt. It has commended itself to persons of every character, in every age, and in every country. It is esteemed, it is loved. The affection which it excites, and the reputation which it produces, are sincere, solid, and permanent. Nothing more certainly generates esteem, nothing more uniformly creates friends. It is a kind of glory surrounding the child

wherever he goes; seen, felt, and acknowledged by all men, and conferring a distinction otherwise unattainable. All persons presage well of such a child; and he is expected of course to fill every station to which his talents are suited with propriety and honour.

An undutiful child, on the contrary, brands his own character with odiousness and infamy. No person sees him, or thinks of him, without pain and disgust. No parent is willing that his own children should become his companions. The vilest persons regard him with contempt and abhorrence, the best, with pity and indignation. A parent on his death-bed hardly knows how to ask a blessing for him; and those who survive are still more unable to believe it will descend upon his head.

2. Considerate children will find another powerful reason for filial duty in the pleasure which it gives their parents.

Nothing which takes place in human life creates a higher, more genuine, or more unmingled pleasure, in the minds of parents, than the pious and dutiful conduct of their children. It is indeed impossible that a child should form adequate conceptions of the delight which such conduct awakens in the parental heart. Experience only can completely teach the nature of this emotion. Still, children cannot but know that their parents in this manner find exquisite enjoyment; nor can they be ignorant, that to produce it is one of their own chief blessings, as well as one of their indispensable duties. Filial piety is a continual feast; an ample reward for every parental care, toil, watching, anxiety, and prayer. It sweetens all the bitterness of human life; and adds an exquisite relish to every comfort. The burdens of life it makes light and easy, and is the most supporting stay on this side of heaven to the weary steps of declining age.

An undutiful child, on the other hand, is 'a broken reed, on which if a man lean, it shall thrust through his hand, and pierce him.' 'A foolish son is a heaviness' alike 'to his' father and 'his mother;' a spot on their character, a trial on their patience, a blast upon their hopes, a nuisance to their family, and a thorn in their hearts.

3. The demands of gratitude present a combination of such reasons, to every such child, for the same conduct.

Parental love is unrivalled by any affection of the human breast in its strength, its tenderness, its patience, its permanency, and its cheerful self-denial. The labours which it undergoes, and the willingness with which it undergoes them, are unexampled in the concerns of man. No other affection toils with the same readiness and patience, or voluntarily encounters the same watchings, cares, pains, and anxieties. None prompts so many prayers, none awakens so many tears. Most of human life, after we arrive at adult age, is spent in providing for the wants, alleviating the sufferings, removing the diseases, furnishing the education, guarding the conduct, securing the safety, accomplishing the settlement, and promoting the salvation, of children. More is done by parents, and daily done, than children can ever realize, until they are called to do the same things for their own offspring. All at the same time are efforts of tenderness merely. These efforts are almost without number, this tenderness almost without degree. What child, who remembers that he is indebted to his parents for his being, and under God for almost every blessing which he enjoys, for almost all that he is, and almost all that he has, can fail to feel, and to acknowledge, that the utmost which he can do in the proper course of filial piety, is an imperfect requital for such affections and such blessings as these? That there are such beings I am reluctantly compelled to confess. Children they ought not to be called. They are unworthy of the name. They are monstrous productions, out of the course of nature; and, like all such productions, fill the mind only with loathing and horror. Let such children remember, that they are objects of still more abhorrence to God, than to men. Let them remember, that this great and awful Being, who has styled himself the Father of mankind, and who has imaged his own tenderness for his creatures by that of a Father to his children, will, at the final day, vindicate the parental rights in a terrible manner, by inflicting the severest punishment on undutiful children.

4. The great advantages of filial piety present strong reasons for the practice of it to children of every character.

Of the text St Paul observes, when enjoining the duties of it upon the children of the Ephesian Christians, that 'it is the first commandment with promise.' Accordingly, he urges their obedience to it upon the very ground of this promise, that 'their days also might be long upon the land, which the Lord their God had given them.' This promise, therefore, to such an extent, that an apostle thought proper to urge it upon the Ephesian Christians, extends to the Gentiles. The promises to the Jews, in most instances, announced temporal blessings only. Those which are made to Christians chiefly convey spiritual blessings. But that which is contained in the text conveys temporal blessings also. In conversing with the plain people of this country, distinguished for their good sense, and careful observation of facts, I have found them, to a great extent, firmly persuaded of the verification of this promise in our own days; and ready to produce a variety of proofs from cases in which they have seen the blessing realized. Their opinion on this subject is mine; and with their experience my own has coincided.

Indeed, no small measure of prosperity seems ordinarily interwoven with a course of filial piety. The comfort which it insures to parents, the harmony which it produces in the family, the peace which it yields to the conscience, are all essential ingredients of happiness. To these it adds the approbation of every beholder, the possession of a fair and lasting reputation, the confidence and good-will of every worthy man, and, of consequence, an opportunity of easily gaining those useful employments which worthy men have to give. Beyond this, it naturally associates with itself that temperance, moderation, and sobriety, which furnish a solid foundation for health and long life. In my own apprehension, however, these are not all its blessings. I do not believe that miracles are wrought for its reward; neither will I say that purer gales breathe to preserve its health; nor that softer suns arise, or more timely rains descend to mature its harvests; nor that more propitious winds blow, to waft its ships home in safety. But I will say, that on the tide of providence multiplied blessings are borne into its possession, at seasons when they are unexpected, in ways unforeseen, and by means unprovided by its own forecast, which are often of high importance; which altogether constitute a rich proportion of

prosperity, and which usually are not found by persons of the contrary character.

At the same time, those who act well as children, almost, of course, act well as men and women; and thus have taken, without design, the scion of happiness from the parental stock, and grafted it upon other stems, which bear fruit abundantly to themselves. Here, in the language of Dr Watts,

'It revives, and bears
A train of blessings for their heirs.'

It is also never to be forgotten, that filial piety, if derived from an evangelical source, is entitled to the peculiar favour of God in the present world, and to the everlasting blessings of the world to come.

5. The declarations of God concerning this important subject, furnish reasons at once alluring and awful, for the exercise of filial piety.

The text is an illustrious example of this nature, of the most persuasive kind. Deut. xxi. 18, gives us a terrible one concerning the stubborn and rebellious son. 'The eye,' says Agur, 'that mocketh at his father, and refuseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it.'

One of the most interesting accounts of this subject to be found in the Scriptures, as it has struck my mind, is exhibited in the thirty-fifth chapter of Jeremiah. Jonadab, the son of Rechab, commanded his children, and their posterity, 'neither to drink wine, nor to build houses, nor to sow seed, nor to plant vineyards, but to dwell in tents from generation to generation.' The Rechabites obeyed his voice; and, at the time of Jeremiah, had for three hundred years lived in the manner which their ancestor enjoined. As a reward of their filial obedience, the prophet Jeremiah was sent unto the Rechabites with this remarkable message: 'Thus saith Jehovah of Hosts, the God of Israel, Because ye have obeyed the commandment of Jonadab, your father, and kept all his precepts, and done according to all that he hath commanded you; therefore thus saith Jehovah of Hosts, the God of Israel, Jonadab, the son of Rechab, shall not want a man to stand before me for ever.'

6. The example of Christ is a reason of the highest import to compel the exercise of filial piety.

This wonderful person, notwithstanding his great and glorious character, and sublime destination, was the fairest specimen of obedience to parents ever seen in the present world. Let children remember, that, 'if they have not the spirit of Christ, they are none of his.' He was subject to his parents, as a child of their family, until he was thirty years of age; and forgot not, when he hung on the cross, to provide an effectual support and protection for his mother. Let all children remember, when they are weary of labouring for their parents, that Christ laboured for his; when they are impatient of their commands, that Christ cheerfully obeyed; when they are reluctant to provide for their parents, that Christ forgot himself, and provided for his mother, amid the agonies of crucifixion. The affectionate language of this divine example to every child is, 'Go thou, and do likewise.'

SERMON CXI.

THE LAW OF GOD—THE DECALOGUE—THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT—DUTY OF PARENTS.

Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it.—Prov. xxii. 6.

In the preceding Discourse I gave a brief account of the duties of Children. I shall now proceed to consider the duties of parents. This also I must consider in a very summary manner, notwithstanding the copiousness and importance of the subject.

In this passage of Scripture, parents are directed to 'train up their children in the way in which they should go;' and, to encourage them to this duty, a promise is given, that their children, if trained in this way, 'will not depart from it.' The word *train* originally denotes to draw along by a regular and steady course of exertions; and is, hence, very naturally used to signify drawing from one action to another, by persuasions, promises, and other efforts, continually repeated. In a loose and general sense, therefore, it may easily include all the duties of parents to their children.

The way in which a child should go, is undoubtedly the way in which it is best for him to go, with respect both to his temporal and eternal well-being.

These duties are customarily, and justly, distributed under three heads:

The maintenance;

The education;

The settlement of children.

The maintenance of children must unquestionably be such as the circumstances of the parents will admit, consistently with the dictates of prudence, and such as will secure comfort to their children. Their food and raiment, their employments and gratifications, ought to be all such as to promote their health. They are carefully to be nursed in sickness, and guarded from danger. Their enjoyments of every kind ought invariably to be innocent; reasonable in their number and degree; evident testimonies of parental wisdom, as well as of parental affection; such as shall prevent them from suffering unnecessary mortification; and such as shall not flatter pride, foster avarice, or encourage sloth or sensuality. They ought also to be such as to place them upon the same level with the children of other discreet parents in similar circumstances.

The education of children involves their instruction and government.

The instruction of children includes the things which they are to be taught, and the manner of teaching them.

The things which children are to be taught, may be distributed under the two heads of natural knowledge, and moral knowledge.

Natural knowledge includes,

1. Their learning.

By this I intend every thing which they are to gain from books; whether it be learning, appropriately so called, or the knowledge of arts and sciences. Of this subject I observe generally, that, like the maintenance of children, it must comport with the circumstances of the parents. It ought also to be suited to the character, talents, and destination of the child. But an acquaintance with reading, writing, and arithmetic is indispensably necessary to every child. It is indispensable, that every child should read the Scriptures; highly important, that he should read other religious books; and very useful, that he should enlarge his mind by such diversified knowledge, as may render him beneficial to himself and to mankind.

2. Natural knowledge includes also an acquaintance with at least some one kind of useful business.

Ordinarily, this acquaintance can be gained only in the practical manner; that is, by placing the child, at an early period of life, in the business which is to be learned. After he has been instructed in reading, writing, and arithmetic, which are indispensable to the advantageous prosecution of every kind of business, he should be required to do the very business in which he is to be educated.

There is no greater mistake on the part of rich parents, than their neglect of educating their children in the thorough knowledge of some useful business. It is often observed, and generally felt, that such an education is unnecessary, because their children are to inherit fortunes. The children also feel, and are taught by their parents to feel, that such an education is utterly unnecessary for themselves. Both at the same time are but too apt to consider active employments, and even the knowledge necessary to direct them, as humiliating and disgraceful to the children. These are very great mistakes; the dictates of pride and vanity, and not of good sense. Were nothing but the present prosperity of children to be regarded, they ought invariably to be educated in the knowledge of useful business. Almost all the wealth in this country is in the hands of those who have acquired it by their own industry; and almost all those who inherit fortunes, dissipate them in early life, and spend their remaining days in poverty and humiliation. Ignorance of business, and its consequences, idleness and profusion, will easily, and in a short time scatter any estate. A fortune is a pond, the waters of which will soon run out; well directed industry is a spring, whose streams are perennial.

Besides, the man who pursues no useful business, is without significance, and without reputation. The sound common sense of mankind will never annex character to useless life. He who merely hangs as a burden on the shoulders of his fellow men, who adds nothing to the common stock of comfort, and merely spends his time in devouring it, will invariably, as well as justly, be accounted a public nuisance.

Beyond all this, every parent is bound by his duty to God and his children, to educate them to useful business, in order to enable them to perform their own duty: to become blessings both to themselves and mankind; and to possess the rational enjoyments furnished by a life of industrious activity; in their very nature incomprehensibly superior to sloth and profusion.

Moral knowledge is all included, as well as enjoined, in the Scriptures. It is also in its own nature, either directly, or indirectly, all practical.

Knowledge of this kind is naturally distributed under the following heads:

1. Piety.

To this head belongs reverence to God. Every child should be taught from the beginning to fear that great and glorious Being, to whom he owes his existence, his blessings, and his hopes. This knowledge is indispensable to all rectitude of character. As I have considered the general nature of this subject in a former Discourse, I shall only observe here, that nothing will, in an equal degree, secure a child from sin, strengthen him against the force of temptation, or fix his feet immovably in the path of righteousness.

Inseparably connected with this subject is a sense of accountableness. Every child should know, as soon as he is capable of knowing, that he is a moral being in a state of probation for his conduct, in which he will be hereafter judged and rewarded; that God is an eye-witness to all his secret and open conduct alike; and that every thing which he speaks, thinks, or does, will be the foundation of his final reward. Proper impressions of these two great subjects, habitually made in the early periods of childhood, will influence the life more than any other considerations; will revive, after they have been long thought to have been forgotten; and will produce happy effects, when all other causes have lost their power.

With the same care should children be accustomed to read the Scriptures, whenever they have become able to read. Here they will find these great subjects, as well as all others of a similar nature, placed in the strongest light, and taught in the most perfect manner; a manner suited to every mind capable of understanding such subjects at all. Here, particularly, facts and characters of a moral nature are exhibited with a felicity altogether unrivalled. With both of these children are delighted; and fasten on both with that peculiar earnestness which prevents them from being ever obliterated. As they are presented in the Scriptures, they are eminently entertaining to children; and to a great extent are set in so obvious a light, as to be easily understood even by very young minds.

Every child should be taught also, that he is a sinner; and, as such, exposed to the anger of God. The efficacy of this instruction upon the early mind is of the most desirable nature. Nothing more successfully checks the growth of pride; the most universal, the most pleasing, the most operative, and the most mischievous of all the human passions. Without this instruction, also, all other religious teaching will be in vain. He who is not conscious that he is a sinner, will never take a single step towards salvation. Happily, children very easily receive and admit this instruction. In the earlier periods of life the conscience is so far unbiassed, and possesses so great power, as to induce the heart, however reluctant in itself, regularly to acknowledge the truth of this important doctrine.

As soon as it is practicable, every child should be conducted to the knowledge of the Saviour. On the infinite importance of this indispensable knowledge, I need not here dwell. Suffice it to observe, that chil-

dren will sooner imbibe this knowledge than parents are usually aware, and that childhood is often the only opportunity for obtaining it which they ever enjoy.

Finally: Children should be carefully instructed in all the external duties of piety. They should be effectually, as well as unceasingly taught to mention the name of God, and every thing obviously related to this awful Being, with profound reverence only; to observe the Sabbath, from the beginning to the end, with religious exactness; to be present punctiliously at the public worship of God, and to attend to all the ordinances of it with reverence and care; to attend in the same manner upon family worship; and in the same manner to perform regularly, every morning and every evening, the duty of secret prayer.

All these things should be explained to children, in such a manner as to render their views of them just and rational, and their practice of them evangelical, and not a mere matter of form.

2. Morality; or the duties which respect our fellow men.

Among these, truth should hold the first place. As I expect speedily to examine the nature and importance of this subject, as well as most others which will be mentioned in this discussion, it will be unnecessary to expatiate upon them at present. It will be sufficient to say here, that a profound and reverential regard to truth should be awakened in the mind of a child, from the moment when he begins to assert any thing; that no variation from it, either in jest or in earnest, should ever be permitted to pass without animadversion; that its nature and importance should be explained to the child, as soon as he is able to understand them; that resistance to falsehood and prevarication should invariably be made unconditionally, and without any abatement; that this resistance should be made in every hopeful manner, and to every necessary degree, and should never cease, until the veracity of the child shall be effectually secured; that every encouragement to veracity which prudence can suggest should be holden out to him continually, and that a rigid example of speaking truth and fulfilling promises should be set before him by all with whom he corresponds, especially by the parents and the family, without any variation from it, either in reality or appearance; that all seeming departures from it should be carefully explained to him; and that he should be obliged to fulfill all his promises, if not unlawful, however inconvenient the fulfilment may be to the parents or to him.

Justice, by which I intend commutative justice, is a kindred virtue to truth, and should be taught from the same period with the same care. Every child should be taught to pay all his debts, and fulfill all his contracts, exactly in the manner, completely in the value, and punctually at the time. Every child should be discouraged from the propensity to make bargains; so early, so strongly, and so universally visible. He should be discouraged also from every wish to make what is called a good bargain, the common source of all cheating; and should be taught, that he is bound to render an equivalent for what he receives. Every bargain disadvantageous to himself he should be bound scrupulously to fulfill. Every thing which he has borrowed he should be obliged to return uninjured at the time; and every thing belonging to others which he has lost, he should be required to replace. In this manner he will grow up to that sense of justice, without which it is impossible for virtue to exist.

Morality, begun in truth, and advanced in justice, is finished in kindness. The minds of children may be easily rendered kind by a wise cultivation; and by the want of it will easily become unfeeling and cruel. Children should be taught, the first moment they are capable of being taught, a lively tenderness for the feelings, the sufferings, and the happiness of all beings with whom they are conversant. The emperor Domitian has proved, that cruelty, when it cannot satiate itself on human misery, can be gratified even with the death of flies. Every child should be invariably instructed to exercise kindness towards animals, and to shun cruelty even to an insect. The plundering of birds' nests, and the capture of their young, is in all ordinary cases, notwithstanding it is so generally allowed, an employment fitted only to harden the heart, and prepare it to be insensible to human sufferings. Still worse is the deplorable practice, extensively allowed also, of setting up poultry as a mark, to be destroyed by gradual torture. Worse still is the practice, so widely, and shamefully extended in some parts of this country, of cock-fighting; abominable for its cruelty, and detestable for its fraud. Children should never injure animals without reproof solemnly administered, or, as the case may be, without punishment. All their unkindness to each other, and all the unkindness of others which falls within their knowledge, should be strongly and unconditionally reprobated. At the same time, every instance of their spontaneous tenderness and beneficence should be strongly commended, and, as prudence may direct, followed by suitable rewards; while every instance of cruelty should he treated with efficacious discountenance, and strenuous opposition, and should be seen to awaken in the mind of the parent detestation and horror. Among the exercises of kindness, which are of prime importance, one of the most difficult to learn is the forgiveness of injuries. On this account it should be taught, early, unceasingly, and strenuously, with powerful persuasion, and distinguishing rewards. An unforgiving and revengeful spirit, on the contrary, should, however difficult and discouraging the task, be at all events broken down; and no attempt should be omitted, until this work is effectually accomplished.

3. Self-government.

Children should, from the beginning, be taught to be industrious. The value of time should be explained to them, as the means of all usefulness and enjoyment, of duty and salvation. To enable them to employ it in the best manner, they should be early accustomed to methodize it by useful divisions; allotting regularly one period to devotion, another to business, and another to recreation. Their business also should be methodized by subordinate divisions: one period being regularly destined to one employment, and another to another. In this manner they will soon see that far more can be accomplished than by loose and desultory efforts. Industry, naturally disagreeable, may be rendered pleasing by address and habituation, advice and example. As this is the fountain, under God, of all human attainments and enjoyments, no exertions should be left untried to establish it, at a very early date, in the minds of children.

Upon industry in his child, every parent should graft economy. To economy the human mind is more reluc-

tant than even to industry. In order to relish it, two great difficulties must be overcome. One is the powerful relish for the gratifications which occasion our expense. The other is the constant, laborious attention, so necessary to the practice of that branch of economy which is employed in preserving the various kinds of property. The latter of these is usually the greater difficulty; but may, as well as the other, be overcome by long-continued, prudent, and unremitted exertion.

The children of the honest and industrious poor, and of persons in moderate circumstances, are usually taught economy from necessity; in most instances, however, not so thoroughly and happily as ought to be wished. The children of opulent parents, and of the idle poor, are to a great extent sadly neglected, as to this necessary part of their education. The consequence is, that the children of the one are kept poor, and the children of the other frequently reduced to poverty. Economy is at least as necessary to prosperity, even in a moderate degree, as industry itself. Equally necessary is it to furnish us the power of doing justice to others; safety from temptations to fraud, falsehood, and innumerable other evils; support in sickness, and old age; the education, and comfortable settlement, of our families; and a host of other blessings. It is therefore an indispensable duty; and is made such by the example and precept of our Saviour. When he had fed a multitude by a creative act of his own, he directed his disciples to 'gather up the fragments, that nothing might be lost.' What was their duty, in such a case, is certainly the duty of all men, in all cases: and, however it may be despised by the proud and the prodigal, or however forgotten by the thoughtless, will be found of incalculable importance to their children.

At the same time, they should be carefully guarded against all tendencies to covetousness, and to every other exercise of a mean and narrow mind. Economy furnishes us with the ability to perform generous acts. Meanness prevents their existence, and destroys the spirit from which they spring. Meanness also roots up, in whatever form it may exist, all the tendencies to virtue; every stem on which it may be hopefully grafted.

Another thing which ought to be cultivated with great care in the early minds of children, and which may be properly ranged under this head, is the exercise of the gentle affections. Violent affections seem to be the chief preventives of virtue, and its chief enemies. Gentle affections are the best preparation for it, and the best friends to it, which are furnished by human nature. All the affections of virtue are ordinarily gentle, the most amiable ones always. This is probably one powerful reason why so many more Christians are usually found in the female sex than in ours; viz., that the softness and sweetness of their affections naturally coincide with religious impressions, while the violence of ours naturally resists them. Children should regularly be checked and subdued in every ebullition of passion; particularly of pride and anger. Nor should they be less carefully opposed in the more unobserved progress of avarice and ambition. The mischiefs of all these, and of all other inordinate passions are known and acknowledged by all men. It will be only necessary to remark concerning them here, that, while they continue in full strength, they absolutely forbid all access of religion, and fix the mind in immovable hostility to the divine pleasure. He who wishes his children to become the subjects of piety, should make it a prime object in their education to check all their inordinate passions with an efficacy of resistance, proportioned to the demands of each case; and should, with equal anxiety, teach them to check, restrain, and subdue themselves. Usually, this work may in early childhood be easily done; but unhappily is too often neglected. The passions in the mind, like weeds in a garden, sufficiently tender and feeble at first, soon strengthen themselves to such a degree by rankness of growth, that to subdue them becomes difficult, if not impossible. Few persons have then sufficient resolution to undertake the task; fewer have sufficient perseverance to execute it. When begun in season it is ordinarily attended with little difficulty.

Gentle affections should be encouraged in children by all the means in our power. They should constantly witness them in us. The exercise of them in themselves should from time to time be commended; the amiableness of them explained and enforced. Companions, possessed of such affections, should be selected for them; and books, containing persuasive examples and illustrations of this character, should be put into their hands.

Intimately connected with this subject is civility and sweetness of manners. Lord Chesterfield justly observes, that such manners are directly required by our Saviour's practical exposition of the second great command of the moral law: 'That we should do to others whatsoever we would that they should to us.' All men love to be treated with civility, and are bound, therefore, by the law of God, to exhibit such treatment to others. The Chinese proverbially and justly observe, that a man without civility is a man without common sense. Such manners are the proper polish of that most beautiful of all diamonds, virtue; and enable it to shine with its own peculiar lustre. They render the character lovely, increase exceedingly the power of those who possess them to do good, and secure to them a thousand kind offices, to which coarse, rough, and brutal men are utterly strangers. Children, in order to be taught such manners, beside being particularly instructed in their nature, should especially be accustomed to the company of those from whom they may be successfully copied.

There is scarcely a fault to which children are prone which is more difficult to be prevented, than the imprudence of the tongue. Passion prompts them to expressions of rashness and violence; example, to profaneness; the love of being listened to, to the betraying of secrets; the telling of marvellous stories, the recitation of private history, to the utterance of slander. In these and other similar ways they often wound their own character, and the peace both of themselves and their connexions. Every attempt of every such kind ought to be repelled at once, and effectually crushed. Neglect here is countenance; inattention, encouragement. What then shall be said of parents, who directly listen to their children while thus employed; and in this manner solicit them to transgress? Few evils need to be more steadily watched, or more powerfully resisted than this. A prudent and well-governed tongue is an invaluable possession, whether we consider the peace of the possessor, the comfort of his family, or the quietness of his neighbourhood. 'A busy-body in

other men's matters is classed by St Peter with 'murderers, thieves, and malefactors.'

Universally, children should be guarded, and taught to guard themselves with the utmost care, against temptations. They should be cautioned not to go, and restrained from going, to places of evil resort. They should be anxiously prevented from the company of wicked children; and, as much as may be, from that of all other persons from whom they will hear dangerous sentiments, or who will set before them dangerous conduct. They should also be never brought, when it can be avoided, into contact with dangerous and fascinating objects. From such objects indeed, and from such company, they cannot be entirely secluded in such a world as this. By watchful and faithful parents, however, much may be done; it is impossible to say how much; but probably so much as, in ordinary cases at least, perhaps in all, to secure the child from the evil to which he is exposed. One important mean of security, never to be forgotten, is an early, strong, and habitual impression of their exposure to temptation, accompanied by explicit and thorough information of the evils which will certainly result from yielding to its influence. This will prove a safeguard to the child, when the parent cannot be present to warn him of his danger.

It will be remembered, that I originally proposed to mention a part only of those things which are to be taught to children. Those which have been mentioned are, if I mistake not, possessed of distinguished importance; and will, I suppose, be acknowledged to claim a primary place in parental instruction. I shall now proceed to consider the manner in which they should be taught.

1. The instruction of children should be begun in very early life.

Very young children are capable of learning many things of incalculable importance to themselves. All parents appear to me to labour under serious mistakes with regard to this subject; and begin to teach their children many things, at least, at a later period than that in which they would advantageously begin to receive them. The infant mind opens faster than we are apt to be aware. This is the true reason why very young children are almost always thought peculiarly bright and promising. We customarily attribute this opinion to parental fondness; in some degree, perhaps, justly; but it arises extensively from the fact, that the intellect of little children outruns in its progress our utmost expectations: the goodness of God intending, I suppose, to provide by this constitution of things the means of receiving the instruction, so indispensable to children at that period. Of this advantage every parent should carefully avail himself. At the same time he should remember, that this is the season for making lasting impressions. The infant mind lays strong hold of every thing which it is taught. Both its understanding and affections are then unoccupied. The affections are then also remarkably susceptible, tender, and vigorous. Every person knows the peculiarly impressive power of novelty. On the infant mind every thing is powerfully impressed, because every thing is new. From these causes is derived that remarkable fact, so commonly observed, that early impressions influence the character and the life beyond all others; and remain strong and vivid after most others are worn away.

From these remarks it must be seen with irresistible evidence, the immense importance of seizing this happy period to make religious impressions on the minds of our offspring. He who loses this season, is a husbandman, who wastes the spring in idleness, and sows in midsummer. How can such a man rationally expect a crop? To the efforts of the parent at this period the professed instructor is bound to add his own. The instructor, who in a school, a college, or a university, does not employ the opportunities which he enjoys of making religious impressions on the minds of his pupils, neglects a prime part of his duty; and so far wraps his talent in a napkin, and buries it in the earth.

2. Children should be gradually instructed.

Knowledge plainly should be communicated in that progressive course in which the mind is most capable of receiving it. The first things which children attain are words and facts. To these succeed, after no great interval, plain doctrines and precepts. As they advance in years and understanding, they gradually comprehend, and therefore relish, doctrines of a more complicated, and difficult nature. This order of things, being inwrought in the constitution of the human mind, should be exactly followed. When it is conteracted, or forgotten, the task of instruction will ever be difficult; and the progress of the pupil, slow and discouraging. A loose and general attention to this great rule of instruction seems to have prevailed in most enlightened countries, but a far less accurate one than its importance deserves.

Among the facts and doctrines suited to the early mind, none are imbibed with more readiness, or fastened upon with more strength, than the existence, presence, perfections, and providence of God; the creation of all things by his power; its own accountableness to him; and the immense importance of his favour, and therefore of acting in such a manner as to obtain his approbation. These things then, together with such as are inseparably connected with them should, without fail, be always taught at the dawn of the understanding.

3. The impressions which are useful to children should be made continually.

Children, more than any other persons, need 'line upon line, and precept upon precept; here a little, and there a little.' It is in no sense sufficient to have taught them either truths or duties. The parent's duty is then only begun. He is not only to teach, but to inculcate; to recall what has been forgotten, to explain what has been imperfectly apprehended, to rectify what has been misunderstood, to illustrate what has been obscure, and to enforce what has been unfelt. A few minds are indeed so happily susceptible, as readily to understand, deeply to feel, and permanently to retain, most of that which they are taught. But such minds are rare and solitary. Almost all children demand, and ought to receive, instruction in the manner here recommended.

4. Instruction should be communicated to children with unwearied patience.

Christ in this and many other respects, has left instructors a perfect example. Although his disciples were 'dull of hearing,' and 'slow of heart to believe;' although they had many, and those often very unreasonable prejudices; his patience was never lessened. He taught them in the gradual manner which I have recommended; 'as,' in his own language, 'they were

able to bear.' He taught them also without weariness, without fretfulness, without discouragement, without reproaches, and without intermission. At times indeed he reproved them, and with some degree of severity, but always with tenderness and good-will.

In this manner should parents teach their children; should be patient with their ignorance, their backwardness to receive instruction, their mistakes, their forgetfulness, the necessity of teaching them again and again, and the doubts and difficulties which from time to time they suggest. In all this, the parents should manifest not only quietness of mind, but cheerfulness and willingness to repeat their instructions.

5. Instructions should be given persuasively.

Children are often discouraged from learning by being compelled to this employment, and punished for not learning; by the gloomy countenance, morose temper, and forbidding manners of the instructor; by being unreasonably confined, and unreasonably debarred from those harmless gratifications which are necessary to preserve their health and spirits; and not unfrequently by the imposition of harder tasks than they are able to perform. If I supposed such persons to act understandingly, I should believe that they intended to prevent children from learning, and that their measures were skilfully contrived for this purpose. But to the end for which they are professedly adopted, they could scarcely be fitted in a more unhappy manner.

To most children learning may be made an alluring object. Pleasantness of disposition, affability, condescension, serenity of countenance, and sweetness of manners, in the instructor; engaging books, moderate tasks, reasonable confinement to study, a proper allowance of recreation, commendation kindly given when merited, and well-directed rewards for improvement, are usually sufficient persuasives to engage children in a spontaneous and pleasurable course of learning. The instructor who will not follow this course must be very imperfectly fitted for his employment.

6. Children should be taught by example.

All men will admit that the moral branches of education can never be taught successfully without the aid of example. Example has, in a great measure, the same influence on every other part of education. Children do little, beside imitating others. Parents who read will have reading children. Industrious parents will have industrious children. Lying parents will have lying children. Example, therefore, is of the highest possible consequence in this important concern.

7. Children should be taught in such a manner, as to be prompted unceasingly to the most vigorous exertion of their own talents.

The human mind is not a mere vessel, into which knowledge is to be poured. It is better compared to a bee, fed during the first periods of its existence by the labours of others; but intended, ere long, to lift its wings in the active employment of collecting sweets from every field within its reach. To such excursions, and to the accomplishment of such purposes, the mind should be early and sedulously allured. This is the only way to give it energy and strength. Without the active exercise of its powers, neither body nor mind can acquire vigour. Without bodily exertions, Goliah, six cubits high, would have been only a gigantic boy; without mental efforts, Newton would have been merely 'an infant of days.'

SERMON CXII.

THE LAW OF GOD.—THE DECALOGUE.—THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT.—DUTY OF PARENTS.

Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it.—Prov. xxii. 6.

In the preceding Discourse I distributed the duties of parents under three heads:

The maintenance;

The education;

The settlement of children.

The education of children I proposed also to consider under the two heads of instruction and government.

The first of these general heads, together with the former division of the second, were examined in that Discourse. I shall now proceed to make some observations on the remaining subjects proposed for discussion at that time.

The parental duty which, according to the plan mentioned, next demands our attention, is the *government* of children. The observations which I shall make concerning this subject, will respect,

The *nature*, the *end*, and the *importance* of this government; and the *manner in which it is to be administered.*

Concerning the nature of parental government, its end, and its importance, my observations must be very summary.

The nature of all government is justly defined to be the control of one being over the actions of another. This control in the hands of parents over their children, is at once the most absolute perhaps, and clearly the most gentle and indulgent dominion which is exercised by mankind. The parent's will is the only law to the child; yet, being steadily regulated by parental affection, is probably more moderate, equitable, and pleasing to him, than any other human government to any other subject. It resembles the divine government more in its nature, and, when wisely administered, in its efficacy, than any other. Correction, sometimes esteemed the whole of it, is usually the least part; a part indispensable indeed, and sometimes efficacious, when all others have failed. Beside correction, it includes advice, commendation, blame, reproof, rebuke,

admonition, expostulation, influence, restraint, confinement, rewards, the deprivation of enjoyments, the infliction of disgrace, the denial of favour, and various other things; each possessing peculiar efficacy; and all of them efficacious, not only in themselves, but also by the variety of administration which they furnish, and the relative power which they derive merely from the fact of succeeding each other.

The end of parental government is undoubtedly the good of children. The end of all government is the good of the governed. Children are given to parents, not to be a convenience to them, but that they may become blessings to the children. In this way, and ordinarily in this alone, will the children become blessings to the parents. Every parent should fix in his mind a strong habitual sense of this end. The good to be accomplished for the child, should be the object of inquiry in every administration of this nature. The kind, the degree, and the continuance of the punishment and the reward, shall be all determined by it. In a word, it should absolutely govern all the conduct of the parent towards the child.

The importance of parental government will demand very few remarks, since no man will question it in earnest. Every parent ought to remember, that his child is committed to him; that all his interests are put into his hands; and that to train up his family for usefulness, and for heaven, is ordinarily the chief duty which God requires him to perform; the chief good which he can ever accomplish. If he neglects this duty, he ought to expect that it will be left undone; for no other person will usually undertake it. If he does not accomplish this good, he ought to believe that it will never be accomplished. On the contrary, the child will be left to himself, to evil companions, to men whose business it is to corrupt the young, to unbridled lusts, to unrestrained iniquity, to Satan, and to ruin. He ought also to remember that childhood is the seedtime for all good, the season when every useful impression is most happily made; the time when almost all that which can be done for the child, is to be done. He should remember, that the encouragement is very great. Experience abundantly proves, that well governed children are almost always well behaved, and that almost all religious persons are of this number. What experience declares, the Scriptures ratify. The text, if not an absolute promise, is yet a glorious encouragement to this parental duty. In the mean time, the peace and pleasantness of his family, the filial piety, amiable conduct, and fair reputation of his children, furnish a rich hope that he will in the end assemble around him his little flock, and be able to say with exultation and transport, 'Behold, here am I, and the children whom thou hast given me.'

The manner in which parental government ought to be administered, demands a more extensive consideration.

The observations which I propose to make concerning it, I shall arrange under the following heads:

1. The government of children should begin with the dawn of their reason.

I have already applied this observation to parental instruction; it is still more forcibly applicable to parental government. The habit of submission can never be effectuated without difficulty, unless commenced at the beginning. The first direction of the infant mind has been often and justly compared to the first figure assumed by a twig, which is ordinarily its figure during every subsequent period of its growth. If children are taught effectually to obey at first, they will easily be induced to obey ever afterward. Almost all those who are disobedient are such as have been neglected in the beginning. The twig was suffered to stiffen, before an attempt was made to bend it into the proper shape. Then it resumed, as soon as the pressure ceased, its former figure. If begun in season, the task of securing filial obedience will usually be easy, and the object effectually gained. If then neglected, it will be attended by a multitude of difficulties and discouragements, and its efficacy will be doubtful, if not fruitless.

2. Parental government should be administered with constancy.

The views manifested by the parent concerning the conduct of the child, should ever be the same. His good conduct should be invariably approved, his bad conduct invariably disapproved. The measures of the parent also should be universally of the same tenor. All proper encouragement should be regularly holden out to obedience, and all rational opposition be steadily made to disobedience.

The active superintendence of the child should be unremitted. He should feel that he is ever an object of parental attention; ever secure, when his behaviour merits it, of parental favour; and ever conscious that his faults will expose him to frowns and censures. This unremitted consciousness of the child can never be produced but by the unremitted care and watchfulness of the parent. The Roman maxim, 'Obsta principiis'—Resist the beginnings of evil, is in all cases replete with wisdom; but is applicable to no case, perhaps, with such force, as to those of children. All their tendencies should be watched. Every commencement of evil, every tendency towards it, should be observed and resisted.

The efforts of parents in this employment should also be unwearied. Discouragement and sloth are two prime evils in the conduct of parental government. The parent seeing so many and so unceasing exertions necessary for the accomplishment of his purpose, usually feels, either earlier or later, as if it could never be accomplished; and hence, from mere discouragement, at first relaxes, and finally gives over, his endeavours. Frequently, also, he becomes, after a moderate number of trials, wearied of a duty which he finds so burdensome, and through mere indolence desists from every strenuous attempt to discharge it. Such parents ought to remember, that they are labouring for the salvation of their children; that this mighty object is pre-eminently committed to them; and that these reasons for their negligence will be unhappily alleged at the final day.

I have elsewhere compared the mind of a child to a rude mass of silver in the hand of the silversmith. A single stroke of the hammer, a hundred, or even a thousand, change its form in a very imperfect degree, and advance it but little towards the figure and beauty of the vessel which is intended. Were he to stop, nothing valuable would be accomplished. A patient continuance of these seemingly inefficacious efforts, however, will in the end produce the proposed vessel in its proper form, and with the highest elegance and perfec-

tion. With the same patience and perseverance should parental exertions be made, when employed in forming the minds of children. Thus made, they will usually find a similar issue.

3. The government of children should be uniformly kind.

Parents not unfrequently administer discipline to their children, because they feel themselves obliged to it by conscience, or to gratify anger, or to retaliate some offence, or to compel their children to accomplish some pleasure of their own. Whenever they act under the proper influence of conscience, they are certainly so far to be commended. But whenever they intend merely to unburden their consciences, and feel that this is done by merely punishing their children, whether the punishment be wise, just, and useful, or not, either their consciences must be very ill informed, or they must be very little inclined to satisfy their demands. In the other three cases the discipline is merely selfish; and partakes as little of the true nature of family government, as that of a den of thieves. There are parents who frankly but foolishly declare, that they cannot correct their children unless when they are in a passion. Such parents I should advise never to correct them at all. Children, even at an early age, usually understand the nature of such government, and indeed almost always discern more perfectly the nature of our improper conduct than we either wish or suspect. He who thinks his child incapable of understanding his open infirmities, will almost of course be deceived. The government of passion, children will always perceive to be causeless, variable, weak, and sinful. The parent who administers it will be dreaded by them, indeed; but he will only be dreaded in the same manner as a wild beast. He will neither be reverenced nor loved. His commands, so far as they cannot be avoided without danger, will be followed by obedience; so far as they can, they will be neglected. The obedience will be a mere eye-service, and never spring from the heart. When the parent is absent, therefore, the child will pursue his own inclinations; and will generally counteract his parent's pleasure, whenever his own safety will permit. Such a government prompts the wickedness of children ten times, where it restrains it once.

The government of retaliation is the government of revenge; and, therefore, not the government of a parent, but that of an enemy. In this manner it will be regularly regarded by the child. Accordingly, he will, as far as possible, prevent its effects, by concealing his faults, in every way which his ingenuity or circumstances can suggest. In pursuit of this object, he will practise every trick, and fetch, and fraud, which his cunning can devise, and ultimately utter every equivocation, and every direct falsehood, which the necessity of extricating himself may require. Nor will it be long before he consider his parent as one party, and himself as the other. He will then begin to retaliate in turn. In this manner a controversy will be instituted, in which it will be the business of each to provoke and injure the other. The child will not, indeed, be able to meet his antagonist in the open field; but he will endeavour to supply this defect by watching every opportunity to do mischief secretly, and by making up in cunning what he wants in power. A species of Indian hostilities will thus be carried on by him; and frequently for such a length of time, as to imbitter the peace of the parent, and to ruin the character of the child.

The government which is employed merely in making a child subservient to the caprice and convenience of a parent, is too obviously selfish and sordid ever to be misunderstood; and it needs only to be understood, to be detested. From parents certainly, if from any human beings, we look for disinterestedness; especially in the management of their children. But there are parents who regard their children as hard masters regard their slaves; and value them only as they hope to derive profit from their labour, or convenience from their subserviency to their selfish wishes. No words are necessary to show that such views, feelings, and conduct, are contradictions to the parental character and duties alike. Equally hostile are they to the good of the child, and are calculated only to destroy all his tendencies towards becoming a useful man. Persons who act in either of these modes, have never set before their eyes the true end of parental government, and have no conceptions of the real nature of that great duty to which they have been called by their Maker. A little attention to this subject would convince them, that all their government is to be administered under the controlling influence of kindness only, kindness, directed solely to the good of their children. They are indeed to reprove and to punish them; but this is to be done only for their good, and never to gratify the resentment, nor to promote the selfish purposes of the parent. It is to be done, because their faults are to be repressed, and because these are the proper means of repressing them; because it is necessary that the children should be sober, discreet, virtuous, and useful; and because these are the proper means of preparing them to become so. As such means only is all discipline to be used. In every other view the nature of discipline is subverted. Reproof becomes reproach, advice contumely, and correction an assault. Instead of rendering that child what he ought to be, the parent will in this way destroy all the worth which he at present possesses, and prevent that which he might acquire.

Among the modes of exhibiting kindness in governing our children, calmness and moderation in reproving and correcting are indispensable. He to whom this office falls, ought, more than in almost any other case, to be in perfect possession of himself. Every thing which he does or says ought to prove that he is so. His countenance ought then to be mild, his accent gentle, his words free from all unkindness, and his conduct such as to prove that he is compelled to this unwelcome office by duty only.

With this spirit, parents will naturally be led not to govern their children too much. Like certain Mohammedans, who estimate the degree of their devotion by the number of prayers which they utter, some persons suppose their duty of governing their children to be performed meritoriously, merely because they reprove and punish their children very often; and accordingly make it their business to find fault with them from morning to night, and to punish them from week to week. In this way both reproof and punishment lose all their power, and only serve to case-harden the child against his duty. Children are as easily injured by too much government, as by too little. Children ought always to be watched with attention and tenderness, but not to be harassed.

Another important office of kindness is to administer reproof and punishment privately. Children sometimes commit their faults before others, when the parent is present; and necessity may then demand that they should be reproved on the spot, and in the presence of those who witness the fault. Whenever this is not the case, it will, in almost every instance, be desirable to administer the proper discipline in private. In this case the child will feel that his character is saved; and will be solicitous, in future, to preserve his own character by good conduct. He will feel, also, that he is treated kindly, and will be grateful for the kindness. His mind will be left free for the undivided exercise of veneration for his parent. The parent, at the same time, will enjoy the best possible opportunity for reproving him freely, largely, pungently, and solemnly; without that embarrassment which will necessarily arise from the presence of others. In the presence of others the child will feel his pride wounded, his character sacrificed, and himself disgraced; and all this without any visible necessity. He will, therefore, be angry, stubborn, pert, and not improbably disposed to repeat his former faults, and to perpetrate others. These emotions, and these designs, he will, not unnaturally, disclose to his companions; and they not less naturally, will enhance and encourage them. Thus the whole force of the parental administration will always be weakened, and most frequently destroyed.

4. The government of children should always be accompanied by proofs of its reasonableness and equity.

Many parents err through too much indulgence, and many through too little. Both extremes are unhappy, as well as unreasonable. Every child ought clearly to see that his parent's censures are not unkind, and that his indulgence is not foolish. To this end, he ought regularly, as soon as his capacity will admit, to be taught the reasons on which the conduct of his parent, from time to time, is founded; not as a piece of respect to him, which he may demand; but as wisely directed information, which will be eminently useful to both parent and child. To the parent it will be useful, by establishing his character in the eyes of his child, as a ruler whose measures are all originated and directed by solid reasons and sound wisdom, steady equity and unfailing kindness; as a ruler, whose government is to be reverenced, whose commands are to be obeyed, and whose wishes are to be accorded with, from their reasonableness, as well as their authority; from the benefit, as well as the duty, of obeying; and from the pleasure universally experienced in conforming to the will of such a ruler. In this case the parent is secured of the obedience of the child, when he is absent (as for the greater part of the time he must necessarily be), no less than when he is present; and is assured also, that his obedience will be voluntary, and exact, and, on both these accounts, delightful. To the child this information will be highly advantageous, because it will early accustom him to obey from the reasonableness of obedience; and will insensibly lead him to examine, feel, and submit to predominating reasons; not only in cases of filial duty, but in all others. Thus he will habitually grow up to a general accordance with the dictates of reason, and the representations of conscience; will sustain a far more elevated and desirable character than a child governed by mere authority; and when absent, abroad, or arrived at the years of self-direction, will be incomparably more safe. The family, in this case, will exhibit the delightful spectacle of rational beings, governed by rational beings; and not the humiliating one of slaves, struggling under the domination of a master.

5. The government of children should be self-consistent.

Every parent ought to possess himself of a scheme of governing his children, before he commences the practice. In this scheme the same things should be uniformly aimed at, the same things required, and the same things prohibited. The character of the parent, also, as displayed in the execution of this scheme, should invariably be the same; and that should be a character formed of reason and principle only. In all the parent's measures the child should see, uniformly and irresistibly, that the parent hates vice above all things, and above all things loves virtue. This hatred to vice, and love to virtue, ought to appear to be inwrought in the very constitution of the parent's mind; to be inseparable from his habitual views and feelings; and to be the first, the unvarying, and, as far as may be, the only movements of his soul, with respect to these great subjects. Of course, all his conduct ought to present the unquestionable proof, which practice and example furnish, that this is his real character.

In consequence of this consistency, children will uniformly expect the same parental opposition to their faults, and the same countenance to their virtuous conduct. Few motives will operate more powerfully than such expectations, either to persuade them to virtue, or to restrain them from sin. Fewer crimes will, therefore, be committed by them; and, of course, the parent will have fewer transgressions to reprove or punish. In this manner a great part of the parent's labour will be prevented, and not a small part of his pain. What remains to be done will be incomparably more pleasant. His encouragement to proceed will, also, be unspeakably greater. To see the efficacy of our endeavours is the most animating of all earthly inducements to continue them.

Besides, children will, in this case, regard their parents with far more veneration than in any other. Consistency of character is essential to all dignity. A changing man, even when not a faulty one, is almost necessarily regarded as a trifler. A man, on the contrary, exhibiting uniform views and principles, in a life uniformly directed by them, governed and governing by the same rules, and an unchanging regard to them, is always possessed of dignity; and, when seen to be steadily opposed to sin and folly, and attached to wisdom and virtue, is possessed of high dignity. This character, seen in a parent, will invariably engage the highest filial veneration.

When children become satisfied that the restraints and corrections which they experience from their parents spring only from a conviction that they are right and necessary, their consciences will almost always acquiesce. What is remarkable, and would, were it not common, be surprising, they love the parent who administers them, much more than him who neglects them. Between parental government conducted in this manner, and that which is passionate, desultory, and fraught with inconsistencies, the difference can scarcely be calculated.

As a general conclusion of my observations concerning the education of children, I add, that all the efforts

of the parent ought to be accompanied with daily prayer to God for his blessing. It is the indispensable duty of mankind to 'pray always with all prayer.' Few, very few, are those employments in human life which so loudly call for the faithful performance of this duty as that which has been under discussion. Wisdom, patience, faithfulness, kindness, and constancy, are rarely demanded of man in any concern, either so unceasingly, or in so great a degree, as in this. All these qualifications are indispensable to our success; and we need them indispensably from 'the Father of lights,' who alone can furnish these and all other 'good gifts.' If we possessed them all, we should equally need his blessing to give an efficacious and happy issue to our exertions. Both the qualifications and the blessing, then, are to be 'asked of God, who giveth liberally unto all;' and who hath assured us, that 'every one who asketh shall receive.' The parent who educates his children with the greatest care, and yet fails to invoke the blessing of God upon his labours, has done but half his duty, and is entitled to no promise of success.

III. *I shall now make a few observations concerning the settlement of children.*

The parent's duty with respect to this subject will be principally concerned with the following things:—

1. The choice of that business in which he is to spend principally his life.

In selecting this object, a parent is bound to regard the state of his own circumstances, the reasonable expectations of his child, his talents, his inclinations, the probability of his obtaining a competent subsistence, the prospect of his usefulness, and the security of his virtue. It will be easily seen, that all these are discretionary things; to be judged of as well as we are able, and reducible to no precise general rule. Where children are not peculiarly froward, and parents not peculiarly prejudiced, the advantage of the child will, in ordinary cases, be sufficiently consulted. The principal difficulty here will usually be, to determine how far regard is to be had to his inclinations. A degree of indulgence is always to be given them. When they direct to a prudent and profitable employment, there can be no controversy; nor when they direct to a dangerous one. All the real perplexity will spring from cases of a doubtful nature. Here the child's inclinations are supposed to lean one way, and the judgment of the parent another. If the parent apprehends the bias of the child to be invincible, it will be both prudent and right to yield to his own inclinations; if not, he may lawfully require the child to make an experiment of the business which he has preferred. The child is then bound to submit quietly to the choice of the parent, and to endeavour faithfully to subdue his own opposing inclinations. If, after a fair trial, he finds them unconquerable; the parent is, in my view, bound to yield the contested point. The happiness of the child ought here to be the commanding object; and no child can be happy, who is prevented from following the business which he loves, and compelled to pursue that which he hates.

Universally, the parent's duty demands of him, to place his child, so far as the case will permit, in that employment which, upon the whole, is best; which will probably be most productive of his comfort, reputation, usefulness, and piety. To some children, on account of their peculiar dispositions, certain employments are sufficiently safe, which for others are to be regarded as eminently dangerous. The business in which children are to be placed, when they are exposed by their dispositions to peculiar temptations, should, as far as may be, always be such as to counteract their dispositions. The employments which awaken a moderate ambition, and a moderate desire of wealth and pleasure, and which yet disappoint no reasonable expectations of children, are usually preferable to all others. Those of a contrary nature, and those particularly which are expected to produce sudden opulence, and speedy aggrandizement, or which conduct to voluptuousness, are fraught with infinite danger and mischief. 'They that will be rich,' or great, or voluptuous, 'fall into temptation, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, that drown men in destruction.' The love of these things 'is the root of all evil: and those who covet after them, pierce themselves through with many sorrows.' Most parents wish these things for their children; but they 'know not what spirit they are of.' Most parents, also, wish their sons to be geniuses and their daughters to be beauties. How unfounded, how self-deceiving, are all these desires! I do not deny, that many men of high office, and of great wealth, men who have possessed in abundance all those which are called the enjoyments of life, have been pious; and, so far as this world permits, happy. I do not deny, that such has been the character and state of many men remarkable for their talents, and of many women distinguished for their beauty. I do not deny, that all these things are, in their nature, to be regarded as blessings; or that they sometimes are actually blessings. But to most of mankind they are plainly curses; and probably to all who ardently desire them. What a melancholy history would the whole history be of beauties, geniuses, and men in high office, of great wealth, and determined sensuality!

2. Marriage.

With respect to this subject, children are usually governed by inclination only, or chiefly; their parents sometimes by judgment, sometimes by avarice, sometimes by ambition, sometimes by hatred to the family or person with whom the child is intended to be connected, and sometimes by favouritism for other persons or families. The parent ought to be influenced by his unbiassed judgment only. By every thing else he will, without suspecting it, be deceived, and sometimes, in a degree which can neither be foreseen nor limited, render both himself and his child unhappy through life.

Parents can never lawfully compel their children to marry persons who are objects of their dislike, nor use at all for such a purpose that influence or those persuasives which operate upon tender and susceptible minds as the worst kind of compulsion. The reasons are plain. The child would be made miserable, and could not, in any event, without a prevarication of the same nature with perjury, take upon himself the marriage vows. But, during the minority of his children, he may be required by indispensable duty to restrain them from marrying, in certain cases. This, however, is an extreme exercise of authority; and should take place only where the cases are extreme; cases, for example, in which the intended partner is an infidel, or grossly vicious, or of a family scandalous for vice, or in some other case of a similar importance. In all inferior cases, the parent's duty is, in my view, confined to information; to persuasion, kindly and reasonably conducted; and to such delays of the intended connexion

as will furnish opportunity to give these dissuasives their full operation. In these cases, children are bound to listen with the utmost willingness and impartiality to the parent's reasons, and deeply to feel and to respect his pleasure. If the reasons are solid, they ought to be influenced by their whole force, and, as far as may be, to overcome their own inclinations; remembering that, although their own happiness is the first thing to be regarded in forming such a connexion, that of their parents is the second; and that parental opposition to their wishes can rarely aim at any thing but their own good. When children have used all reasonable expedients to bend their inclinations to the wishes of their parents, and are yet unable to subdue them, their non-compliance can lawfully neither be punished, nor resented.

3. Assistance towards acquiring a competent living.

When children commence their settlement in life, they often need assistance, at least as much as in earlier periods. This assistance is, however, principally confined to two articles; giving advice, and furnishing pecuniary aid. All parents, perhaps, are sufficiently willing to give advice; and most, I believe, are willing to befriend their children with pecuniary assistance in such a degree as is not felt to be inconvenient to themselves. There are those, however, who impart sparingly enough; and there are others still who are disposed to give little or nothing. Avarice sometimes influences the parent's conduct in this respect; and oftener, I believe, a reluctance to lessen the heap which we have been long gathering, and oftener still the wound which pride feels at being thought to possess less wealth than the utmost of what we have amassed. These are always wretched reasons, and in this case reasons for wretched conduct. A child when setting out in the world finds himself surrounded by a multitude of difficulties, to struggle with which he must be very imperfectly prepared. Inexperienced, alone, suddenly plunged into many perplexities, and unacquainted with the means of relieving themselves, children are often distressed, discouraged, and sometimes broken down; when the helping hand of a parent would with no real inconvenience to himself, raise them to hope, resolution, and comfort. That parents so situated are bound by plain duty to assist their children in these circumstances can need no proof. He who will not thus relieve the offspring of his own bowels, even at the risk of being thought rich, or of being actually less rich, deserves not the name of a parent, and ought to be ashamed to show his face among those who do. For my own part, I cannot conceive that a man who will not deny himself a little to befriend his own children, can have ever compassed the self-denial of forgiving his enemies; nor understand how he can possess sufficient confidence to stand up in morning and evening worship, at the head of his family, and say, in his own name and theirs, 'Our Father, who art in heaven.'

SERMON CXIII.

THE LAW OF GOD—THE DECALOGUE—THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT—THE DUTY OF RULERS.

Honour thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.—Exod. xx. 12.

Beside the direct import of this precept, it has been generally and justly considered as, by a very obvious analogy, including those duties which are reciprocally to be rendered by men in various other relations; particularly those of superiors and inferiors, whatever may be the bias of their relative characters. To an examination of all these duties it might fairly lead. I shall, however, make it my guide to the investigation of one class of them only: viz. The duties of magistrates and subjects.

The relations of magistrate and subject are so obviously analogous to those of parents and children, that magistrates have been often styled the fathers of their people; and their people often called their children. No language of commendation is with more frequency, or with more emphasis, applied to a prince distinguished for his wisdom, justice, and benevolence, than that 'he was a father to his subjects.' In this manner mankind have acknowledged the similarity of these relations; and from a similarity of relations, every man knows, must arise a similarity of duties. Accordingly, the duty to magistrates is enjoined in the very same terms, as that which is owed to parents.

'Fear God,' says St Peter; 'honour the king.' We are also directed by St Paul to render 'reverence, honour, custom, and tribute,' to the several orders of magistracy, as from time to time they are due.

It is my design in this Discourse to state, in a summary manner, the nature of civil government; and the respective duties of rulers and subjects. This I shall do without even a remote reference either to the past or present state of our own government. I never preached what is commonly called a political sermon, on the sabbath, in my life; and I shall not begin now; although to preach such sermons is unquestionably the right, and in certain cases as unquestionably the duty, of every minister of the gospel. All that I shall attempt to perform is to exhibit some of the primary principles and duties which pertain to government, as a branch of moral science. The knowledge of these is in some degree necessary to every man, who wishes to discharge either the duties of a ruler, or those of a subject.

The foundation of all government is, undoubtedly, the will of God. Government, since the days of Mr Locke, has been extensively supposed to be founded in the social compact. No opinion is more groundless than this. The great man whom I have mentioned was probably led to adopt it from his zeal to oppose the ridiculous whims of Sir Robert Filmer; who taught, that kings had a divine hereditary right to their thrones, by virtue of the original gift of universal dominion to Adam. In opposing this monstrous absurdity, Mr Locke, fell into another, not a whit more rational, or defensible. This doctrine supposes that mankind were originally without any government; and that in an absolute state of nature they voluntarily came together, for the purpose of constituting a body politic, creating rulers, prescribing their functions, and making laws directing their own civil duties. It supposes that they entered into grave and philosophic deliberations; individually consented to be bound by the will of the majority; and cheerfully gave up the wild life of savage liberty for restraints which, however necessary and useful, no savage could ever brook even for a day. Antecedently to such an assembly, and its decisions, this doctrine supposes that men have no civil rights, obligations, and duties; and of course, that those who do not consent to be bound by such a compact are now not the subjects of either; such a compact, in the apprehension of the abettors of this doctrine, being that which creates all the civil rights, obligations, and duties of man.

The absurdities of this doctrine are endless. He who knows any thing of the nature of savages, knows perfectly, that no savage was ever capable of forming such a design; and that civilized life is indispensably necessary to the very perception of the things pre-supposed by this doctrine, and absolutely pre-requisite to the very existence of such an assembly. Every one acquainted at all with savages, knows equally well that, if they were capable of all this comprehension, nothing short of omnipotence could persuade them to embrace such a scheme of conduct. There is nothing which a savage hates more than the restraints of civilized life; nothing which he despises more than the civilized character, its refinements, its improvements, nay, its very enjoyments. To have formed such an assembly, or even to have proposed such a system, men must have already been long governed and civilized.

At the same time, there is no fact more clearly evinced by the history of man, than that such a compact never existed. This even the abettors of it are obliged to confess; and this cuts up the doctrine by the roots. For, if the social compact was not a fact, it is nothing.

But it is alleged that, although this compact was never an expressed one, it may be still fairly considered as a tacit and implied compact. To the very existence of a compact it is indispensable, that the contracting party should be conscious that the subject of the compact is proposed to him for his deliberation, choice, and consent; and that he does actually deliberate, choose, and consent. But there is not even the shadow of a pretence, that any man, considering himself as being in a state of nature, and subject to no civil government, was ever conscious of being invited to become a party to such a compact, and of having this question ever proposed to him for such deliberation, or such consent. There is, therefore, as little foundation for the supposition of a *tacit*, as for that of an *express*, social compact.

It is farther alleged, that this scheme, although confessedly imaginary, may yet be advantageously employed to illustrate the nature of civil government. In answer to this allegation, I shall only observe, that the philosopher who believes falsehood to be necessary or useful to the illustration of truth, must be very hardly driven by his own weakness, or by the erroneousness of his system.

If it were indeed true, that government is thus founded, then these fatal consequences would follow:

Every despotism on earth must stand as long as the world continues. Every subject of despotic power is by this doctrine supposed to promise his obedience to it; and no man can ever withdraw himself from the obligation of his own promise. A new government can never upon this scheme be substituted for a former, but by the choice of the majority of those who are subject to it; and, as men come into the world, there never can be in any country a majority of inhabitants who have not already promised obedience to the existing government. A minority, therefore, must always comprise the whole number of those who can lawfully act in the business of modelling the government anew; nor could even these act in concert without being guilty of rebellion; nor could those who had already promised obedience be released from their promise. If, therefore, a new government were to be constituted, there must be two sets of inhabitants, everywhere intermingled throughout such a country, and obeying two distinct and hostile governments.

If any man in any country declines his consent to the compact, he is under no obligation to obey the existing government. Personal consent, according to this scheme, is all that constitutes such obligation. Such a man may therefore fix himself in a state of nature. If he attacks others, indeed, they may attack him in turn; but the government cannot lawfully meddle with him, nor with his concerns.

If the ruler should violate any, even the least, part of his own engagements, then the subjects are released from their engagements, and of course from all obligation to obey the laws. In other words, from the least violation of the ruler's engagements, a state of anarchy lawfully and necessarily ensues. If the subjects pass by such violation in silence, their consent to it, is equally implied with their supposed original compact. Of course, the ruler may lawfully commit the same violation again as often as he pleases; nor can the subjects lawfully complain, because they have consented to it in the same manner as to the pre-existing government. Every such violation, therefore, which is not openly resisted, is finally sanctioned.

On the other hand, if a subject violate any of his engagements, however small, the ruler may lawfully make him an outlaw; and deprive him of every privilege which he holds as a citizen.

A foreigner passing through such a country, can be under no obligation to obey its laws; and if he does any thing which may be construed as an outrage, must either be suffered to do it with impunity, or must be attacked by private violence. Such attacks, a few times repeated, would convert any people into a horde of robbers.

No man could in such a government be punished

with death, however enormous might be his crimes; because no man ever thought of making, or has any right to make, a surrender of his own life into the hands of others.

All these, and a multitude of other deplorable consequences follow, irresistibly follow, from the doctrine, that government is founded on the social compact.

Government, as I have already remarked, is founded in the will of God. The evidence of this position is complete. That God made mankind in order to make them happy, if they themselves will consent to be so, cannot be questioned. As little can it be questioned, that government is indispensable to their happiness, and to all the human means of it; to the safety of life, liberty, and property; to peace, to order, to useful knowledge, to morals, and to religion. Nay, it is necessary to the very existence of any considerable numbers of mankind. A country without government would speedily, for want of those means of subsistence and comfort, to the existence of which it is indispensable, become an Arabian desert; and that, however fruitful its soil, or salubrious its climate. Mankind have never yet been able to exist for any length of time in a state of anarchy. What reason so completely evinces, the Scriptures decide in the most peremptory manner. 'The powers that be,' says St Paul, 'are ordained of God:' in other words, government is an ordinance of God.

It is not here to be intended, that God has ordained a given form of government. This he has never done, except in a single instance. He gave the Israelites a system, substantially of the republican form. This fact may, perhaps, afford a presumption in favour of such a form, wherever it is capable of existing, but can do nothing more. Nothing more is here intended, than that God has willed the existence of government itself. He has undoubtedly left it to nations to institute such modes of it, whenever this is in their power, as should best suit their own state of society.

As God willed the existence of government for the happiness of mankind, it is unanswerably certain that every government is agreeable to his will, just so far as it promotes that happiness; that that government which promotes it most, is most agreeable to his will; and that that government which opposes human happiness is equally opposed to his will. From these undeniable principles both rulers and subjects may easily learn most of their own duty. Whatever is conformed to them is right; whatever is contrary to them is wrong of course. This, it will be remembered, is the dictate both of common sense, and of the Scriptures.

Every ruler is accordingly bound to remember, that he is raised to the chair of magistracy solely for the good of those whom he governs. His own good he is to find in the consciousness of having promoted that of others; and in the support, affection, and respect which they render, and are bound to render him for discharging this important duty. There is no greater mistake, there is no more anti-scriptural, or contemptible absurdity, than the doctrine of millions made for one; of a ruler raised to the chair of magistracy to govern for himself; to receive homage, to roll in splendour, to riot in luxury, to gratify pride, power, and ambition at the expense of the toils and sufferings of his fellow men. Such a ruler is only a public robber! Every man in office, however elevated, is bound to remember, as a being equally accountable to God with his fellow men, that his personal rights are, by the divine constitution and pleasure, the same as those of others; that his personal gratification is of no more importance, and can claim no greater sacrifices, than that of others; that peculation, fraud, falsehood, injustice, oppression, drunkenness, gluttony, lewdness, sloth, profaneness, irreligion, and impiety, in a word, every crime, is accompanied by greater guilt in him than in men at large; because of his superior advantages to know, and his superior inducements to perform, his duty. Forsaking all private gratifications, then, so far as they are inconsistent with the public happiness, just so much more important than his, as those who enjoy it are more numerous, he is required indispensably to see that his government has that happy and glorious influence upon his people, which is described by a man thoroughly versed in this subject, in the following beautiful language: 'The Spirit of the Lord spake by me; and his word was in my tongue. The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me, He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God: and he shall be as the light of the morning when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain,' 2 Sam. xxiii. 2—4.

To possess this beneficent influence—like this glorious luminary, to diffuse light, and warmth, and animation, and happiness, to all around him—a ruler ought,

1. To be a man of absolute sincerity.

Of the ruler of the universe it is said, that 'it is impossible that he should lie.' 'Mercy and truth,' said the wisest ruler that ever lived in this world, 'preserve the king.'—'The lip of truth,' says the same prince, 'shall be established for ever.' 'If truth,' said king John of France, 'were to be banished from the world, it ought still to find a residence in the breast of princes.' On the importance of truth I shall have occasion to dwell hereafter. It ought, however, to be observed here, that truth is the basis on which rest all the natural and moral interests of intelligent beings; that neither virtue nor happiness can exist without it; and that falsehood, generally diffused, would ruin not only a kingdom, or a world, but the universe; would change all rational beings into fiends, and convert heaven itself into hell.

There are two kinds of government; that of force and that of persuasion. A government of persuasion is the only moral or free government. A government of force may preserve order in every case which that force can reach; but the order is that of a churchyard, the stillness and quiet of death. The inhabitants of a kingdom governed in this manner, are tenants of the grave; moving masses, indeed, of flesh and bones; but the animating principle is gone. The soul is shrivelled, and fled; and nothing remains but dust and putrefaction.

A government of persuasion subsists only in the mutual confidence of the ruler and the subjects. But where truth is not, confidence is not. A deceitful ruler is never believed for a moment. If we could suppose him desirous to do good, he would want the power; for none would trust either his declarations or his promises. The only feelings excited in the minds of the community towards him and his measures, would be jealousy and hatred. Even fools know that upright

and benevolent measures not only need no support from falsehood, but are ruined by it. The very connexion of falsehood, therefore, with any measures, proves irresistibly to all men, that the measures themselves are mischievous, and that the author of them is a villain. Where confidence does not exist, voluntary obedience cannot exist. A lying ruler, if his government is to continue, makes force or despotism indispensable to his administration. So sensible are even the most villanous magistrates of these truths, that they leave no measure untried to persuade their subjects, that themselves are men of veracity. Nay, all sagacious despots carefully fulfill their promises to such of their subjects as they think necessary to the support of their domination, and to the success of their measures. Falsehood may, indeed, in the hands of a man of superior cunning, succeed for a time; but it can never last long; and, whenever detection arrives, it draws after it a terrible train of avengers.

Besides, lying is the most contemptible of all sins. 'Ye are of your father, the devil,' said our Saviour to the Jews; 'for he was a liar from the beginning, and the father of it.' This contemptible resemblance to the vilest and most contemptible of all beings, the source of complete debasement to every one who is the subject of it, is pre-eminently contemptible in a ruler. He is, of course, the object both of public and private scorn. No degradation is more indignantly regarded than that of being governed by a liar.

'If a ruler hearken to lies,' says Solomon, 'all his servants are wicked.' Such a magistrate will be served by none but profligate men. The evils of his government will therefore spread, by means of his subordinate officers, into every nook and corner of the land. Like the simoom of Nubia, he spreads poison, death, and desolation over the wretched countries subjected to his sway.

2. A ruler is bound to be a just man.

'He that ruleth over men,' saith God, 'must be just.' This, indeed, is united of course with the preceding character. 'He that speaketh truth,' saith Solomon, 'showeth forth righteousness.' The importance of justice in government is, like that of truth, inestimable; and, as it respects the divine government, is exhibited with wonderful force in that declaration of Moses, 'He is the rock;' that is, the immovable foundation on which the universe rests. Why? The answer is, 'His work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment' (or justice); 'a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is He.' On the truth and justice of the Infinite Mind the universe is built, as a house upon a rock. 'Fiat justitia; ruat cœlum;' is an adage, proverbially expressing the judgment of common sense concerning this subject. 'Let justice be done, although heaven itself should tumble into ruin.'

This comprehensive attribute demands,

(1.) Of the legislator, that he enact just laws.

Laws are the rules by which rulers themselves, as well as the people at large, are or ought to be, governed. If these are unjust, the whole system of administration will be a system of iniquity; and the mass of guilt thus accumulated will rest primarily on the head of the legislator.

(2.) Of the judge, that all his interpretations of law, and all his decisions founded on it, be just.

'Woe unto them,' saith Isaiah, 'who justify the wicked for a reward, and take away the righteousness of the righteous from him.'—'Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment,' said God to Israel; 'thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor honour the person of the mighty; but in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbour.'—'It is not good,' says Solomon, 'to have respect of persons in judgment.'—'He that saith unto the wicked (that is, in a judicial sentence), Thou art righteous; him shall people curse: nations shall abhor him. But to them that rebuke him shall be delight; and a good blessing shall come upon them.' Tribunals of justice bring laws to every man's fire-side; and apply them directly to his property, liberty, person, and life. How just soever, how reasonable soever, laws may be, an iniquitous tribunal may prevent all their good effects, and render a country as miserable by its decisions as it could be by the operations of original tyranny in the legislator. When God established the government of Israel, he himself formed the constitution and enacted the laws. All the political evils which that people suffered, therefore, were effectuated by the unjust application of those laws. They were, however, oppressed, at times, as intensely as the nations who have been under despotic dominions. The guilt and the mischiefs of this oppression are in the Scriptures charged wholly and truly to the judicial and executive magistracy. The same evils in the same degree may be derived to any people from the same sources. A wise and upright judiciary is a public blessing, which no language can adequately exhibit, which no people can too highly prize, and too strenuously vindicate; and without which no people can be safe or happy.

(3.) Of the executive magistrate, that he execute the laws faithfully, invariably, and exactly. This is so plain a truth, and so universally acknowledged, as to need no illustration. The end of all legislative and judicial efforts is found here; and, if this great duty is unaccomplished, both legislative and judicial efforts, however wise, and just, and good they may be, are a mere puppet-show.

3. A ruler must be a benevolent man.

Of the universal Ruler it is said, 'God is love.' Of the same character ought all his earthly delegates to be possessed.

Under the influence of this spirit, infinitely important to the happiness of intelligent beings, rulers are bound to make the public good their sole object in governing. Their own personal interests, compared with the general interest, are a unit to many millions; and are immensely better promoted by securing the common good, than by any possible pursuit of that which is private and selfish. If they think otherwise, it is either because they cannot, or will not, discern the truth.

Under the influence of this spirit also, he is bound to administer justice with mercy. In the conduct of such beings as men, there are very many cases in which a rule, generally just, becomes unjust by a rigid application. For these cases wise governments have endeavoured to provide, by intrusting the proper magistrate with a discretionary authority; in the exercise of which, clemency may be extended wherever it may be extended with propriety. Even where a strict application of law is right and necessary, there may be a harshness and unkindness in the manner of application, sometimes scarcely less cruel than injustice in the applica-

tion itself. A benevolent ruler will never administer government in this manner.

Universally, a benevolent ruler will prevent, redress, relieve, and remove the wrongs both of the public and of individuals, as far and as soon as it shall be in his power. He will cast an affectionate eye on all the concerns of his countrymen, and wherever he sees calamities arise, will kindly interpose with those means of relief which God has placed in his hands. The extensive power of doing good with which he is intrusted by his Creator, he will consider as thus intrusted, only that he may do good; and will feel himself delightfully rewarded by having been selected as the honourable instrument for accomplishing so glorious a purpose. That all this is demanded by his duty, it is unnecessary even to assert.

4. A ruler is bound to respect the laws of his country.

By this I intend, particularly, that he is bound to conform to them in all his conduct, personal and public. The laws of every free country prescribe alike the conduct of the ruler and the ruled. The official conduct of all magistrates, whatever be their office, is directed by particular laws. To every one of these, so far as his own duties are marked out by it, each magistrate is bound to conform with absolute exactness; not generally and loosely only, but with respect to every 'jot and tittle.' The personal conduct of the ruler is prescribed by the same laws which direct that of his fellow citizens. These laws, also, it is his duty faithfully and scrupulously to obey: a duty enforced by higher obligations than those which respect men in general; because he is fairly supposed to understand more perfectly the duty and importance of obeying, and because, in violating law, his evil example will weaken the government, and prompt others to the same violation, more than that of any private individual. The ruler who violates the laws of the land, and yet attempts to compel or persuade others to obey them, labours, with the Danaides, to fill with water a tub full of holes.

Concerning the king, whom God foresaw the Israelites would one day elect to govern them, Moses, by his direction, says to Israel, 'It shall be, when he sitteth upon the throne of the kingdom, that he shall write a copy of this law in a book, out of that which is before the priests, the Levites; and it shall be with him; and he shall read therein all the days of his life; that he may learn to fear the Lord his God, to keep all the words of this law, and these statutes, to do them; that his heart be not lifted up above his brethren; and that he turn not aside from the commandment to the right hand or to the left,' Deut. xvii. 19, 20.

5. A ruler ought to be a man of piety.

That a ruler is bound to sustain this character, by all the obligations which are incumbent on other men, will not be questioned. I intend something more. A ruler is under peculiar obligations to sustain this character, beside those which are common to other men. As a private citizen, he was under all the common obligations to sustain this character. As a ruler, he is under new ones. His duties are become more important and arduous; and demand, in an eminent degree, the blessing of God to enable him to perform them aright. He has greater means of doing good put into his hands, and needs, in a peculiar degree, the divine assistance, to enable him to use them. If he should be left to unwise or wicked measures, they will be far more mischievous to his countrymen, than any thing which he could formerly have done, when he was a private citizen. His personal conduct also cannot fail to be much more beneficial, or much more noxious, to his country, than if he had not been invested with a public character.

In accordance with these observations, the Scriptures inform us, that the rulers of Israel and Judah were eminent blessings, or eminent curses, to the people over which they presided. David, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, and Josiah, are remarkable examples of the glorious influence which a ruler may possess, towards reforming a nation, and rendering it happy. Jeroboam and Ahab are terrible proofs of the power which a ruler may exert, to change a nation into a horde of profligates. What magistrate, except such as Ahab and Jeroboam, would not covet the character and influence of the four first of these princes! What man of common sobriety would not shrink with horror from the thought of resembling the two last! But the four first were men of exemplary piety, while the two last were impious beyond example.

At the same time, God usually blesses a nation for the sake of pious rulers; whereas an impious one cannot fail to become a curse. But all blessings are given in answer to prayer. 'Ask, and ye shall receive,' is the only promise of good to man; involving the condition without which it is never promised. If rulers, then, would obtain blessings either for themselves or their people, they, like all other men, must pray for them. 'But the sacrifice of the wicked,' and of wicked rulers, as well as of other wicked men, 'is an abomination to the Lord;' while 'the prayer of the upright is his delight.' Which of these men ought we here to suppose that God will answer and bless?

6. A ruler is bound to become a blessing by his example.

The character of a good ruler is forcibly and perfectly described by St Paul, when he styles him 'a minister of God, for good' unto his people. This is his whole business; and, while he pursues it, he is acting in his only proper character. To form this character, every thing which I have mentioned contributes, as an essential part. But every thing which has been said, except what was observed concerning his personal obedience to the laws of the land, and his piety, respects his official duties. The observation now to be illustrated respects his conduct as a man. As a man, he is peculiarly required to be an example of all the Christian virtues. Whatever he does, others will do, because he does it; and many more will imitate him, than if he were a private person. The weight of power, and the splendour of office, give to the example of the ruler, especially in an elevated station, an authority, a persuasiveness, a charm, which fascinates multitudes. If his example be virtuous, it will greatly discountenance and check vice; and greatly encourage, diffuse, and strengthen virtue. If vicious, it will become pestilential; and spread contagion, decay, and death through all around him. No man can be so great a blessing or so great a curse, in this respect, as a ruler; and the example of every man in high office will invariably be either a public curse, or a public blessing. Jeroboam and Ahab were incomprehensible curses to the Israelites, through every succeeding age of their national

existence. What man of common sense, in such an alternative, can balance a moment concerning the choice, which he shall make?

7. Every ruler, vested with the appointment of subordinate officers, is under indispensable obligations to select men of the very same character which has been already described.

'Moreover thou shalt provide,' said Jethro to Moses, 'out of all the people, able men; such as fear God; men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them, to be rulers of thousands, and rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens; and let them judge the people at all seasons.' 'Judges and officers,' said Moses to the Israelites, 'shalt thou make thee in all thy gates, which the Lord thy God giveth thee throughout thy tribes: and they shall judge the people with just judgment. Thou shalt not wrest judgment: thou shalt not respect persons; neither take a gift; for a gift doth blind the eyes of the wise, and pervert the words of the righteous.'—'Him,' says David, speaking of this very subject, 'him that hath a high look, and a proud heart, I will not suffer. Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me; he that walketh in a perfect way, he shall serve me. He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house, he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight.' These passages need no comment. The voice of God has here determined this point in a manner which cannot be misunderstood.

With this decision exactly accords that of experience, and that of common sense. Subordinate officers are eyes and ears, and hands and feet, to their superiors in office. They are the means of furnishing them with the most necessary information; that of the wants, circumstances, dangers, and sufferings, of the nation; that of the real influence of governmental measures, whether beneficial or mischievous; and, generally, all that on which future regulations ought to be grounded. They are the immediate means of executing every law, and carrying into effect every measure of administration. Their own conduct, example, and influence, reach every neighbourhood, every fire-side. Nations have almost always suffered incomparably more from a multitude of little tyrants, than from a single great one; and have been immensely more corrupted by a host of evil examples, than by a solitary pattern of wickedness, however great and splendid. In vain will the wisest, most upright, and most benevolent ruler, labour to promote public happiness, if he commits the administration of his measures to profligates and villains. It is, however, to be remembered, that a ruler will, of course, appoint to subordinate offices men whose character corresponds with his own. A wise and good ruler, so far as his information extends, will choose none but wise and good men to aid him in the business of governing. A bad ruler will find none but bad assistants convenient for his purposes.

8. A ruler is under the highest obligations to be industrious.

Industry is the duty of all men, and pre-eminently that of a ruler. The various, complicated, and arduous business of governing, demands the full exertion of all the talents, and the full employment of all the time, allotted to man. Persons in high offices, particularly, are bound to improve their talents by every well directed effort. They are under indispensable obligations to gain, so far as it is in their power, the most enlarged and exact information of their official duties, and the best modes of discharging them, of the interests of the people and country over which they preside, of the means by which their rights may be most effectually secured, of the dangers, either at home or abroad, to which they are exposed, and of the ways in which those dangers may be averted; of the best means of private safety and national defence; and, in a word, of all those measures by which may be insured the safety, peace, good order, and universal happiness of the nation.

On this information ought to be founded a course of unremitted industry in effectuating, by the most useful measures, all these great and good purposes. A weak and ignorant ruler may deserve pity; a lazy one can only merit abhorrence. Both are, of course, public nuisances. When God was about to punish the Jews in a terrible manner for their sins, he announced the alarming judgment in this remarkable prediction: 'Behold, the Lord, the Lord of hosts, doth take away from Jerusalem, and from Judah, the stay and the staff; the whole stay of bread, and the whole stay of water; the mighty man, and the man of war; the judge, and the prophet, and the prudent, and the ancient; the captain of fifty, and the honourable man, and the counsellor, and the cunning artificer, and the eloquent orator. And I will give children to be their princes; and babes shall rule over them. And the people shall be oppressed, every one by another, and every one by his neighbour. The child shall behave himself proudly against the ancient, and the base against the honourable.' In the view of God, therefore, the loss of wise and able rulers, and the government of weak and foolish ones, such as indolent men in office always are, are both terrible judgments upon a nation, and severe inflictions of the divine vengeance upon guilt of no common dye.

SERMON CXIV.

THE LAW OF GOD.—THE DECALOGUE.—THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT.—DUTY OF SUBJECTS.

Honour thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.—Exod. xx. 12.

In the last Discourse I considered, at some length, the duty of rulers. I shall now go on to examine that of subjects. As a free government is that with which alone we have any practical concern, my observations

will be especially referred to a government of this kind. All subjects have, indeed, many duties in common; but there are some which are peculiar to men living under despotic dominion. These I shall not think it necessary to particularize.

Every free government is more or less elective. The privilege of choosing those who are to govern them, is to every people possessing it, a blessing of inestimable importance; and, like other blessings, brings with it the corresponding duties. Out of it particularly arises,

1. The great duty of free citizens, which is to elect always, as far as may be, rulers possessing the several characteristics mentioned in the preceding Discourse: such as are sincere, just, benevolent, disposed to respect the laws of their country, pious, exemplary, industrious; and thus prepared to select for subordinate offices, whenever vested with the power of selecting, men of the same character.

That such rulers are agreeable to the will of God, and that he has required all rulers to be such, cannot be questioned. No more can it be questioned, that one great reason why he has required them to be of this character, is the establishment in this way, of the happiness of the people whom they rule. In every ordinance of this nature God has directly consulted the happiness of his creatures, and has undoubtedly chosen the very best means of accomplishing it. The establishment of national happiness then demands, indispensably, that rulers be of this character. But, in the case supposed, the people themselves elect their rulers. They are, therefore, bound indispensably to elect such, and such only, as are agreeable to the will of God, as unfolded in his word; such and such only, as will contribute directly to the establishment of public happiness.

Every people ought to remember, that in this case the magistracy is of their own creation; that just such men are introduced into it, as they please; and that if they are not men of wisdom and virtue, the electors are the sole and blameworthy cause. In the very act of electing weak and wicked men to places of magistracy, they testify publicly to God and the world, that they choose to have weak and wicked men for their rulers. All the evils of a wicked and weak administration of government are, therefore, chargeable in the first instance, and in the prime degree, to themselves only. By what solemn obligations, then, are they bound to take the most effectual care, that those whom they elect be men of acknowledged wisdom and virtue! To choose men of the contrary character is to rebel against the known will of God, to sport with their own happiness, and to hazard that of their posterity. The only part of this subject about which a question will be raised, and the part about which no question can consistently, either with the Scriptures or common sense, be ever raised, is the declaration, that a ruler ought to be a virtuous man. To the question concerning this subject the scriptural answer is short. 'As a roaring lion, and a ranging bear; so is a wicked ruler over the poor people.'* This, it is to be remembered, is the decision, not of Solomon only, but of God. Common sense, directed by its own unerring rule of experience, has regularly given the same decision; and mustered before the eyes of mankind a long host of tyrants and public plunderers, of profligate legislators and abandoned magistrates, whose names have been followed by the hisses, and loaded with the execrations of mankind. Virtuous rulers, on the contrary, have always, unless in times of peculiar violence and prejudice, been seen and acknowledged to be public blessings. Indeed, it may be doubted whether the general proposition now under consideration was ever seriously questioned by a sober man. All the doubts concerning it, all the opposition which it has met with, seem to have arisen in seasons of party and dissension; from the wish to carry some favourite point, or the desire of advancing to place and power some favourite person.

In the preceding Discourse I have illustrated this subject, in a summary manner, from the political history of Judah and Israel, recorded in the Scriptures. This illustration, corresponding exactly with every other of the same nature, and, in the light and conviction which it communicates, totally superior to them all, deserves to be resumed in this place, and to be insisted on particularly; much more particularly, indeed, than the present occasion will permit. Every virtuous prince of Judah was regularly a public blessing; beloved of his people; devoted to the advancement, and sedulously engaged in employing the means of accomplishing the actual and extensive advancement of their happiness; the acknowledged object of peculiar Divine favour; the cause, in this manner, for which peculiar blessings descended on his nation; and the honourable instrument of producing a sudden, general, and important reformation, not only in his court, but throughout his kingdom. Whenever such a prince ascended the throne, piety and morality immediately lifted up their heads, and began to find friends, to exert their influence to abash vice, to silence murmurs, to diminish sufferings, and to create, what they always create, public and individual happiness. Such princes also regularly appointed, so far as it was in their power, men resembling themselves to the subordinate offices of government; and thus stationed public benefactors in every corner of their country. For all these reasons, their names, as a sweet memorial, have been wafted down the stream of time with distinction and honour, and have commanded the esteem of every succeeding generation. Such rulers were Moses, Joshua, Gideon, Deborah, Samuel, David, Solomon, before his declension, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, Josiah, and Nehemiah. Such also were the brave and virtuous Maccabees. I shall only add, that these rulers strenuously defended the country which they governed.

Take now the reverse of this picture. The wicked princes, to whose dominion these nations were at times subjected, blasted both their virtue and their happiness. Ahaz, Manasseh, Amon, and the three last kings of Judah, were malignant and affecting examples of this truth. Weak, as well as wicked, these princes ruined their people at home, and provided no means for their defence against enemies abroad. With an unobstructed and terrible rapidity, the nation which they ruled slid down the steep of declension, and plunged suddenly in to the gulf at the bottom.

Still more instructive is the account given us concerning the kings of Israel. Of Jeroboam, the first of these princes, the most dreadful of all characters is communicated to us in this remarkable declaration; that 'he sinned, and made Israel to sin.' A polluted

* Prov. xxviii. 15.

and profligate wretch himself, he converted all around him into profligates; and began a corruption of religion and morals, which, extending its baleful influence through every succeeding age, terminated in the final ruin of his country. The evils introduced by him operated with a commanding and universal efficacy; and they were cherished and promoted by Nadab his son, Baasha his murderer, Elah his son, and Zimri his murderer; and by Omri, Ahab, and every one who followed them. By their pestilential example, and under their deadly influence, the nation became abandoned. Truth, justice, and piety sighed their last farewell to the reprobated race, and took their final flight. A nuisance to the world, and an object of the Divine abhorrence, the unhappy nation became lost to every hope of recovery, and was finally given up as a prey to the Assyrian, at that time the general scourge and destroyer of mankind.

It is impossible for any people, with its eyes open, to wish for such rulers as these. When it is remembered, that this testimony concerning evil rulers is the testimony of God himself; that the same causes will always produce the same effects; and that evil rulers were no more injurious to Israel, than they will be to every other people, governed by them; it is plain, that no people can elect such rulers, without assuring themselves, that in this very act they are accomplishing their own ruin. A nation which elects wicked rulers, it ought ever to be remembered, is chargeable, not only with the guilt of being corrupted, as Israel was, but with the additional and peculiar guilt also of originating the means of its own corruption. It not only becomes wicked, but makes itself wicked, by giving to evil men the power and influence which enable them to spread the plague of vice through every part of the political body. What man of common sense and sober reflection can consent to make himself chargeable with these evils?

But it may be said, that those who elect will often be unable to distinguish virtuous men from such as are not virtuous. I answer, that churches of Christ are also unable to make this discrimination with certainty; yet, wherever they are faithful and vigilant, they find no serious difficulty in keeping themselves, to a good degree, pure, and safe from gross and unhappy mixtures. I answer, farther, that a steady, regular aim, on the part of a whole nation, or other body politic, to choose virtuous rulers, and none but such as are virtuous, will ordinarily accomplish this invaluable purpose. Should it fail in any instance, the nation will still have done its duty. As to extreme cases, such as those in which no virtuous man can be found to fill the office contemplated, they must occur so rarely, as hardly to require rules of direction. It will always be in the power of a people to select from the candidates the best man; and such a selection will undoubtedly answer the demands of duty in a case of this nature. The true difficulty does not lie in our inability to determine who are virtuous men, nor in their want of the proper qualifications for office; but in the want of a fixed and general determination to choose them, in our defective estimate of the importance of virtue to public office, in our preference of other qualifications to this, in party attachment, in personal favouritism, and in gross and guilty indifference to the public good. All these are deplorable prejudices, and palpable crimes; miserably weak, as well as dangerously sinful; fraught with innumerable evils, not always immediate, perhaps, but always near, certain, and dreadful.

2. Subjects are bound faithfully to obey their rulers.

Concerning this truth in the abstract, there will probably be no debate, except what is excited either by passion or by frenzy. The only serious questions which can rationally be made here, are, How far is this obedience to extend? and, What are the cases in which it may be lawfully refused? The importance of these questions must be deeply felt by every man. By St Paul 'every soul' is required to 'be subject to the higher powers;' because, as he informs us, 'the powers that be are ordained of God.' By the same apostle we are farther told, that 'whosever resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God, and shall receive to himself damnation:' that is, not damnation in the proper sense, or as the word is now understood; but the condemnation denounced by the law of God against all sin. By St Peter we are directed to 'submit to every ordinance of man, for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors;' that is, generally, to all persons possessing lawful authority; 'for such,' he declares, 'is the will of God.' With these precepts in his hand, no Christian can fail to believe the questions mentioned above to be of incalculable importance to him and his fellow men. It is as really the duty of a minister to explain this part of the gospel to his congregation, and to enforce upon them these precepts, as any other. Nor can he be at all excused in passing them by. I shall therefore exhibit to you, on the present occasion, my own views concerning this long and vehemently disputed topic.

(1.) Subjects are not bound to obey the commands of magistrates, as such, when they are not warranted by law.

The law creates magistrates, and defines all their powers and rights. Whenever they require that which is not warranted by law, they cease to act as magistrates, and return to the character of mere citizens. In this character they have plainly no authority over their fellow citizens. It is not the man but the magistrate, whom God requires us to obey.

(2.) Subjects are bound to obey magistrates, when acting agreeably to the laws, in all cases not contrary to the will of God, as unfolded in the Scriptures.

This I take to be the true import of the directions given by St Peter and St Paul. These apostles cannot, I think, be rationally supposed to enjoin upon subjects obedience to those commands of a ruler, which contravene the laws of the land; or which lie beyond the limits of his lawful authority. They require our obedience to the magistrate, acting as a magistrate, or within the limits of his lawful authority; and not to the magistrate, transgressing the bounds of law, and acting merely as a private individual, according to the dictates of his own discretion, caprice, or whim. Much less can they be supposed to require our obedience to those commands of a ruler which are opposed to the law of God. Whether we should 'obey God rather than men,' can never be seriously made a question by common sense, any more than by piety.

There may be, there often are, cases in which, from motives of prudence and expediency, we may feel ourselves bound to obey magistrates, for the time at least, when acting beyond their authority, and aside from law. This subject is too extensive to be particularly consi-

dered on the present occasion. I shall only observe, therefore, that we are bound to fix in our minds a high sense of the duty and importance of obeying rulers; and of the danger always threatening the public peace and prosperity from unnecessary disobedience. Such a sense will, it is believed, prevent most of the real difficulties to be apprehended in cases of this nature.

The observations already made concerning this general subject, will prepare the way for settling our opinions concerning a particular question involved in it, which is of high importance to mankind. It is this; Whether a nation is warranted to resist rulers, when seriously encroaching on its liberties? It is my intention to confine the answer which will now be given to this question, to the lawfulness of such resistance. The expediency of it I shall suppose to be granted, so far as the safety and success of the resistance is concerned. In other words, I shall suppose the people immediately interested in the question, to have as fair an opportunity as can be reasonably expected, of preserving or acquiring political liberty; and of establishing, after the contest is ended, a free and happy government. In this case, the resistance in question is, in my own view, warranted by the law of God. It is well known, that this opinion has been adopted by some wise and good men, and denied by others. But the reasons alleged by both classes for their respective doctrines, have, so far as they have fallen under my observation, been less satisfactory than I wished.

A nation, already free, ought, whenever encroachments upon its freedom are begun, to reason in some such manner as the following:—

'Despotism, according to the universal and uniform experience of man, has regularly been fatal to every human interest. It has attacked private happiness, and invaded public prosperity. It has multiplied sufferings without number, and beyond degree. It has visited regularly the nation, the neighbourhood, and the fireside; and carried with it public sorrow, and private anguish. Personal liberty has withered at its touch; and national safety, peace, and prosperity, have faded at its approach. Enjoyment has fled before it; life expired, and hope vanished. Evils of this magnitude have all been suffered, also, merely to gratify the caprice, the pride, the ambition, the avarice, the resentment, or the voluptuousness of one, or a few individuals; each of whose interests is of the same value in the sight of God, and no more, than those of every other individual belonging to the nation. Can there be a reason, do the Scriptures furnish one, why the millions of the present generation, and the more numerous millions of succeeding generations, should suffer these evils, merely to gratify the lusts of ten, twenty, or one hundred of their fellow men?'

'If an affirmative answer should be given to this question, let it be remembered, that the same despotic power has, with equal regularity, cut off from subjects the means of usefulness and duty. Mankind are sent into the world to serve God, and to do good to each other. If these things are not done, we live in vain, and worse than in vain. If the means of doing them are taken away, we are prevented, just so far, from answering the end of our creation. In vain is mental and bodily energy, in vain are talents, opportunities, and privileges, bestowed by our Creator, if they are to be wrested from us by our fellow men, or the means of exerting them taken away. In vain are we constituted parents, if we are precluded from procuring the comfortable sustenance, providing for the education, and promoting the piety and salvation of our offspring. In vain are we made children, if we are forbidden to perform the filial duties. In vain are we placed in the other relations of life, if we are prohibited from performing the duties to which they give birth. Take away usefulness from man, and there is nothing left which is good, but every thing which is bad. This usefulness, however, despots have in a dreadful manner either prevented, or destroyed. They have shrunk the talents, and palsied the energy of the mind; have shut the door of knowledge, and blocked up the path of virtue; have wilted the human race into sloth and imbecility, and lowered the powers of man almost to the level of brutism. The little spot of Greece exhibited more energy, and more specimens of mental greatness, in one hundred and fifty years, than the Chinesian world has exhibited in two thousand.'

'But this is not all. Despotic rulers have exercised a most malignant influence upon the virtue of mankind. They have assumed the prerogatives of heaven; and prescribed, as the will of God, a system of religious doctrines and duties to their subjects. This system has invariably been absurd, gross, and monstrous. The morality which it has enjoined has been chiefly a code of crimes fitter for the regulation of banditti, than of sober men. The religion which it has taught, has been a scheme of impiety. Yet this system they have enforced by the most terrible penalties; by the loss of property, liberty, and life; by the jail and the gibbet, the wheel and the rack, the fagot and the cross. Blood has stained the sceptre—martyrs have surrounded the throne.'

'Even this is not all. Despots, bad men themselves, must be served by bad men. The baleful and deleterious influence of the head and the members united, has extended everywhere, even to the corner and the cottage; and, like the deadly damp of the cavern, has imperceptibly and silently extinguished light and life, wherever it has spread. Virtue has fallen amid the exhalation, unobserved and unknown. In its place has arisen and flourished a train of monstrous corruptions, which, with continually increasing strength, have finally gained an entire possession of the land. Degenerated beyond recall, and polluted beyond hope, a people under this influence has sunk into remediless ruin; and only continued to exist, until mercy was wearied out by their profligacy, and reluctantly gave the sign for vengeance to sweep them away. One regular and complete example of all these evils is given us by the voice of God himself in the kingdom of Israel. Profane history records a multitude. Is there any principle, either scriptural or rational, which demands of any nation such a sacrifice?'

'But were we to admit, that such a sacrifice might lawfully be made by us, so far as ourselves only are concerned, it is farther to be remembered, that we are intrusted with all the possessions, privileges, blessings, and hopes of our offspring, through every succeeding generation. Guardians appointed by God himself, how can we fail of discharging punctiliously this sacred trust? The deposit is of value literally immense. It involves the education, the comfort, the safety, the usefulness, the religious system, the morals, the piety, and

the eternal life of millions, which can neither be known nor calculated. This is a trust which cannot lawfully be given up, unless in obedience to a known and unquestionable command of God; and no such command can be pleaded. Equally important is it, that we prevent (for, under God, none but we can prevent,) the contrary innumerable and immeasurable evils.'

'At the same time, it is ever to be remembered, that under a free government, all the blessings which I have mentioned, so far as they are found in the present world, live and prosper. Such a government is the soil and the climate, the rain and the sunshine of human good. Despotism, on the contrary, is the combined drought and sterility of Nubia, the frost and darkness of Zembla; amid which, virtue, comfort, and safety can never spring.'

With these considerations in view, it is unquestionably evident to me, that nations are bound, so far as it is possible, to maintain their freedom, and to resist every serious encroachment upon it, with such efforts as are necessary for its preservation.

(3.) Subjects are bound to obey every magistrate, acting lawfully, in the same manner.

The constable and tithing-man are, in their own sphere, as truly armed with the authority of the state, as the governor and the prince: and the divine command is 'Submit to every ordinance of man,' that is, to governmental authority in every department, 'for the Lord's sake.' To resist rulers in high stations may be productive of more mischief, than to resist those in low ones. In other respects, the guilt of the resistance is the same.

3. Subjects are bound to honour their rulers.

They are bound to treat them with all the becoming marks of respect and reverence. Rulers, when treated with little external respect, will soon cease to be respected.

They are bound to support them honourably. This is one of the few doctrines in which all ages and nations have united. Avarice alone has, in any case, prompted men to believe the contrary doctrine, or hindered them from carrying this into proper execution. An honourable support to rulers is that which the general sense of propriety pronounces to be of this nature.

Subjects are bound also to speak respectfully of their rulers. On this subject it will be necessary to be somewhat more particular.

'Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people,' is certainly a precept dictated by reason as well as revelation. Still it cannot, I think, be denied, that the faults of rulers are, on certain occasions, to be exposed, as well as those of private individuals. The prophets frequently exposed the faults of their rulers; and Christ and his apostles those of the magistrates of their day. The question, When, and in what manner this may be done by us, becomes, therefore, a serious topic of investigation.

Concerning this subject, the following thoughts have occurred to me:

(1.) Censures of rulers, in order to be lawful, must be true.

(2.) There must be a real and solid reason for uttering them. It is not enough, that a ruler has done evil. In order to be justified in publishing it, we must be assured that some important good will, with high probability, spring from the publication. The evil arising from this source is, in the abstract, always real and important. Where there is no good sufficiently probable and sufficiently important to balance this evil, we cannot be vindicated in bringing it into existence.

(3.) We must sincerely aim at doing this good.

A watchful and faithful determination of this kind, accompanied by a scrupulous and conscientious sense of its high importance, as a part of our duty, will ordinarily preserve us from the danger of transgression. He who, in a proper and evangelical manner, has formed such a determination, and made it an habitual part of his character, will almost always perform his duty with respect to this subject; and rarely, or never, censure a ruler, unless on solid grounds.

(4.) Such censures should in all ordinary cases be uttered in the language of moderation, and not of invective, or ridicule.

A great part of the evils done in this way flow from the manner in which the censure is conducted. Where this is sober and temperate, there is usually little room to fear. Where it is not, the censurer is always exposed to the danger of criminality.

4. Subjects are bound to defend their rulers.

This duty equally includes opposition to private and civil violence, and resistance to open hostility; and is so obvious and acknowledged, as to need no illustration. In defending their rulers, subjects are only employed in ultimately defending themselves.

5. Subjects are bound to furnish all necessary supplies for the exigencies of government.

'For this cause,' says St Paul, (that is, 'for conscience' sake') 'pay ye tribute also. For they' (that is, rulers) 'are God's ministers; attending continually upon this very thing. Render, therefore, to all their dues; tribute to whom tribute is due, and custom to whom custom.' Taxes are, ordinarily, the only national supplies. Every public object almost demands some expense; in peace not a little, in war much more. If the necessary supplies be not furnished, these objects must either languish, or fail. God has, therefore, wisely and benevolently required mankind to render tribute and custom, when lawfully demanded. It is to be remembered, that this requisition is made by infinite authority; and can no more be dispensed with, than any other command of God.

6. Subjects are bound to pray for their rulers.

To the performance in this duty no virtuous subject can ever want motives. The arduous nature of those duties to which rulers are called, the responsibility of their stations, the difficulties which they have to encounter, and the discouragements under which they labour, teach us in the strongest manner, that they daily and eminently need the divine blessing. This blessing, like all others, will be given only in answer to prayer, to the prayers, indeed, of the rulers themselves: and still more to the united prayers of both rulers and people. Mere benevolence then, mere compassion for men struggling with peculiar difficulties in their behalf, demands this duty from subjects.

At the same time, it is loudly called for by the regard which we owe to the public welfare. National blessings are given in answer to national prayers. Of these blessings rulers are the chief instruments. But they cannot be the means of good to a nation unless their efforts are crowned with a divine blessing. If nations then would receive public blessings, they are bound

indispensably, to supplicate for their rulers the favour of God.

Finally, God has required such prayers at our hands. 'I exhort, therefore,' says St Paul, 'that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men: for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life, in all godliness and honesty; for this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour.'

The only remark which I shall annex to this Discourse, is, that, connected with the preceding one, it shows, unanswerably, the groundlessness and folly of an observation, repeated proverbially by multitudes of men in this and other countries; viz. that religion has nothing to do with politics, or, in other words, with government.

These Discourses, summarily as the subjects of them have been considered, prove beyond all reasonable debate, that the whole vindicable conduct of rulers towards their subjects, and of subjects towards their rulers, is nothing but a mere collection of duties, objects of moral obligation, required by God, and indispensably owed to him by men. The Christian religion, therefore, the rule of all duty, and involving all moral obligation, is so far from having nothing to do with this subject, that it is inseparably interwoven with every part of it. Accordingly, the Bible regulates, and, were it not sinfully prevented from its proper influence, would exactly and entirely control, all the political doctrines and actions of men. It is, indeed, as easy and as common to deny truth, and refuse to perform our duty, to disobey God, and injure men, in political concerns, as in any other. In truth, there has been no field of iniquity more extensive than this; none in which more enormous crimes or more terrible sufferings have existed. All these crimes and sufferings have sprung from the ignorance of, or disobedience to, the Scriptures. Were they allowed to govern the political conduct of mankind, both the crimes and the sufferings would vanish; every duty, both of rulers and subjects, would be performed, and every interest would be completely secured. In what manner the doctrine against which I am contending ever came to be received by any man, who was not peculiarly weak or wicked, I am at a loss to determine. It would seem, that even the careless and gross examination of the most heedless reflector must have evinced both its folly and falsehood. A dream is not more unfounded; the decisions of frenzy are not more wild. To villains in power, or in pursuit of power, office, and public plunder, it is undoubtedly a most convenient doctrine; as it will quiet the reproaches of conscience, where conscience has not ceased to reproach; and throw the gate which opens to every crime and selfish gratification from its hinges. To subjects, to a state, to a nation, it is literally fatal. The people which have adopted it, may be certainly pronounced to have bidden a final adieu to its peace and its happiness, its virtue and its safety.

SERMON CXV.

THE LAW OF GOD.—THE DECALOGUE.—THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT. KILLING—WHEN LAWFUL AND WHEN UNLAWFUL.

Thou shalt not kill.—Exod. xx. 13.

In the five preceding Discourses I have considered summarily several classes of duties involved in the fifth command. Had I no other object before me, beside the examination of this precept, I should feel myself obliged to investigate also the mutual duties of men in various other relations of life, particularly those of husbands and wives, masters and servants, ministers and their congregations. All these, together with the duties of friends and neighbours, of the aged and the young, are, I think, obviously included in this precept, and are of sufficient importance to claim, not only a discussion, but a more extensive and minute investigation, than I have given to those already examined. But a work of this nature, although it may seem large, must necessarily be compendious. The field is too vast even to be wandered over by any single effort, and many parts of it must be left unexplored by any traveller.

The command, which is given us in the text, is expressed in the most absolute manner: 'Thou shalt not kill.' To kill, is the thing forbidden; and by the words it is forbidden in all cases whatever. Whenever we kill any living creature, therefore, we are guilty of a transgression of this command, unless we are permitted to take away the life in question by an exception which God himself has made to the rule.

This consideration of the absolute universality of the command in the text, ought invariably to be remembered in all our comments upon it. These, it is ever to be remembered, are the words which God himself has chosen. They accord, therefore, with the dictates of infinite wisdom concerning this subject, and bind us with infinite authority. Man cannot alter them. Man cannot lawfully originate an exception to them, nor in any other manner limit their import. Every comment upon them must, of course, be derived from the words themselves, or from other precepts, or from comments on this precept, found in other parts of the Scriptures. At the same time, a scrupulous attention to the words themselves will, if I mistake not, remove several difficulties concerning this subject, and contribute not a little towards settling finally some important doctrines of morality.

In examining this subject, I shall endeavour to point out,

I. *Those instances in which life may be lawfully taken away, agreeably to scriptural exceptions under this law;*

II. *Some of those instances in which life is destroyed, in contradiction to this law.*

I. *I shall mention those instances in which life may be lawfully taken away under scriptural exceptions to this law.*

1. The life of animals may be lawfully taken away in two cases; when they are necessary for our food, and when they are hostile and dangerous to us.

In Gen. ix. 3, 'God said to Noah and his sons, Every thing that moveth shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things.' That this permission was necessary, we know, because it was given. But if it was necessary, men had no right to eat the flesh of animals before it was given. The same thing is evident, also, from the terms of the permission, 'Even as the green herb have I given you all things.' If God gave men all things, that is, all animals, to be their food, then men have no original, natural, or previous right to use them for food. Accordingly, the antediluvians, abandoned as they were, appear plainly never to have eaten animal food. Noah and his descendants began this practice, under this permission. Here is found the only right of mankind to this food. Animals belonged originally and solely to their Creator. We, therefore, could have no right to their lives, unless he who alone possessed that right, had transferred it to us.

From these observations it is plain, that infidels, who deny the divine revelation of the Scriptures, can plead no right to eat the flesh of animals. The only being who can possibly communicate this right to us is God, since he is the only being who possesses the right to dispose of them. But God has nowhere communicated this right to mankind, unless he has done it in the Scriptures. But this communication they deny to have been made; and are, therefore, without any warrant for the use of animal food. Nor can they ever make use of it, without contravening the dictates of a good conscience, and violating the plainest principles of justice and humanity.

The arguments by which infidels have endeavoured to defend this conduct in themselves, are, in my view, miserable fetches of a disingenuous mind, struggling hard to justify itself in a practice which it is loth to give up, and not the honest reasons of fair conviction. They are these: 'It is the analogy of nature, that the stronger should prey upon the weaker; that we feed animals, and have therefore a right to their lives, and their flesh, as a retribution for our kindness to them; and that, if we did not destroy them, they would multiply in such a manner, as ultimately to destroy us.'

These reasons are characteristically suited to the mouth of a wolf, or a tiger, but proceed with a very ill grace from the mouth of a man. Were a savage, of superior force, to attack an infidel, plunder his property, and destroy his life, in order to convert his flesh into food; and were he, beforehand, to allege, as the justifying reason for this conduct, that it was the analogy of nature for the stronger to prey upon the weaker; the argument, it is believed, would scarcely satisfy the infidel. Were the ox endued with speech, he might unanswerably reply to the allegation, drawn from the kindness of men to oxen, that their labour was an ample compensation for their food; and that men fed them for their own benefit, and not theirs. With respect to the third argument, he might ask, without fearing any reply, Where, and when, did oxen ever multiply in such a manner as to become dangerous to mankind? If infidels can be satisfied with these arguments for the use of flesh, we can no longer wonder, that they are equally well satisfied with similar arguments against the revelation of the Scriptures.

The truth is, they are not thus satisfied with either the one or the other. Inclination, and not conviction, is probably the source of their conduct in both cases. Were they as scrupulous, as all men ought to be, they would, like the Hindoos, and even the antediluvians, abstain entirely from eating the flesh of animals.

Animals hostile and dangerous to men, God has not only permitted, but commanded, us to put to death; at least whenever they have intentionally destroyed human life. In Genesis ix., he says to Noah and his children, 'Surely your blood of your lives will I require: at the hand of every beast will I require it: and at the hand of man.' Agreeably to this law, which makes animals in this situation punishable with death, the ox, which gored a man, or woman, was commanded to be stoned. As the beast which had perpetrated this act could be punished only by men, men were required to put him to death. It will not, I suppose, be contended, that we are not warranted to anticipate this mischief, and prevent the tiger from shedding human blood, as well as to destroy him after his depredations are completed.

In all other cases we are unwarranted to take away the life of animals, because God has given us no warrant.

There are persons who destroy their domestic animals by compelling them to labour beyond their strength, or their capacity of enduring fatigue. There are others, who beat them, under the influence of furious passions, in immoderate degrees, or afflict them by other exertions of violence and cruelty. There are others, who deny them the necessary food, and keep them continually half famished through hunger. There are others, who take away the lives of birds, fishes, and other small animals, for the mere purpose of indulging the pleasure of hunting, or fishing. And there are others still, who find an inhuman pleasure in merely distressing and torturing this humble and defenceless class of creatures. Of the first of these modes of cruelty, horse-racing is a scandalous example. A brutal specimen of the last is presented to us in cock-fighting.

'A righteous man,' says Solomon, 'regardeth the life of his beast,' Prov. xii. 10; that is, a righteous man realizes, in a just manner, the value of the life of his beast, entertains a steady conviction, that he has no right unnecessarily to shorten or imbitter it; and feels the solemn obligation which he is under, to use all the means dictated by humanity and prudence, for preserving the life of those animals which are under his care, and for rendering them comfortable.

In all these instances of cruelty, the life of animals is not immediately taken away. But in all of them it is either suddenly or gradually destroyed; and often with greater cruelty, and more abominable wickedness, where the process is slow, than where it is summary. The spirit of this command is violated in them all.

Children, who are either taught, or permitted, to exercise cruelty towards animals in early life are efficaciously fitted in this manner to exercise cruelty towards

their fellow men. If they escape the dungeon, or the gibbet, they will be little indebted for this privilege to those who had the charge of their education. It is remarkable, that the law which punished murder with death, was immediately subjoined to the permission to take the life, and eat the flesh, of animals. In this fact, if I mistake not, the Creator has taught us, that the transition from shedding their blood, to shedding that of man, is so short and obvious, as to render a new law necessary for the prevention of murder; a law which, it would seem, had not been demanded by the circumstances of preceding ages.

2. The life of man may also be lawfully taken away in certain cases, according to the Scriptures.

(1.) This may be done, when this act is necessary for our own defence. A sufficient warrant for this is given us in the case of the thief, mentioned Exod. xxii. 2, 'If a thief be found breaking up, and be smitten that he die; there shall no blood be shed for him.' In this case, the thief was killed in the defence of a man and his family; and the act of killing him is plainly warranted. By parity of reason, the warrant extends to all cases, which in substance compare with this. In other words, we are justified in putting to death the person who assails the life of ourselves, or others, wrongfully, whenever our own defence, or theirs, make it necessary.

In every case of this nature, we are, however, indispensably bound to be sure, that we act only in the defence of ourselves or others; and that there are no perceptible means, beside this extreme one, of warding off the threatened evil. Wherever such means exist, it is our indispensable duty to employ them. We are bound, also, in no case to take away life for an injury already done, and in the indulgence of anger, malice, or revenge. At the same time, if the right invaded, or the injury to be done, is of moderate importance, we are prohibited from proceeding to this extremity.

On this ground alone, that it is an act of self-defence, can war be justified. Aggressive war is nothing but a complication of robbery and murder. Defensive war is merely the united efforts of several persons to defend themselves against a common inroad, or enemy. It is therefore equally lawful with self-defence in an individual. By aggressive war, here, I do not intend that which is first commenced under the name of war; but the original outrage, or series of outrages, out of which the war has lawfully arisen, on the part of the injured nation.

A numerous, and on many accounts respectable, class of Christians, the *Friends*, have denied the lawfulness of war. It is to be wished that the world would universally adopt the practice of these pacific men. But, so long as the present disposition of mankind predominates—so long as men will attack and destroy the life, liberty, and property of their fellow men—defensive war is absolutely necessary, and absolutely lawful. A nation which should adopt the contrary doctrine, would be undone. This society of Christians could not possibly exist in a national state. The province of Pennsylvania, and perhaps the rest of the British colonies together with it, came very near being finally destroyed by the prevalence of this very doctrine in its House of Representatives. Such a nation would publicly proclaim itself an unresisting prey to the rest of mankind; and, like the deer, would become a victim to the fangs of the wolf and the tiger.

That war is lawful in the abstract, we know with certainty; because it has been directly commanded, unequivocally approved, and miraculously prospered, by God. He commanded Israel to make war upon Amalek, until the name of that guilty nation should be blotted out from under heaven. In the same manner, he commanded them to make war upon the inhabitants of Canaan; and approved of their conduct in making war upon that people. In the same manner, he commanded the Israelites to make war repeatedly upon Midian and upon Hazer; censured the tribe of Reuben, and by his angel commanded the Israelites to 'curse Meroz,' because they neglected or refused to make active exertions in this war. He also miraculously aided the Israelites against Midian, Amalek, the Philistines, and others. See Exod. xvii. 8; Judges vii.; 1 Sam. vii.; and 2 Sam. v.

But all that has been commanded, approved, and miraculously prospered by God, is in itself right. For it is impossible that God should either command or approve of that which is wrong. The only question, therefore, which can be rationally made in this case, is, In what circumstances is war lawful? With this question it cannot be supposed that I have here any concern.

(1.) The life of man may be lawfully taken away, when by crimes it has been forfeited to the law of the land.

Mankind are commanded, in the original law concerning murder, given us in Gen. ix., to put the murderer to death. 'Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed.' In the Mosaic code the same punishment is annexed to a variety of crimes; such as adultery, filial stubbornness, idolatry, and several others. In each of these cases men are required to take away human life, as the proper punishment of a crime by which it has been forfeited; and are not merely warranted to do this by a permission. In the former case, the command is addressed to all men. Accordingly we find it repeated by Solomon, as a universal precept, in the most absolute terms. 'A man that doeth violence to the blood of any person, he shall flee to the pit; let no man stay him.' It is also made a part of the Jewish law in various places. Exod. xxi. 12, 14; Lev. xxiv. 17; and very comprehensively, Numb. xxxv. 16, &c. In the latter cases, the command is addressed to the Israelites. The Jewish law is binding upon other nations, only in those cases whose nature is unchangeable and universal; or in those in which the circumstances are precisely the same. Still, this law is a complete proof of the absolute rectitude of that conduct which it prescribes. For God cannot possibly prescribe that which is wrong. The same law also teaches, that in the same circumstances, the same conduct may, with the strictest propriety, be pursued by us. For God cannot command that which, in the given circumstances, is unwise. It is evidently lawful therefore for other nations, as well as the Jews, to put men to death for other crimes beside murder.

But in every case of this nature, we are, in my view forbidden by the general spirit of the gospel, and as I apprehend, by the plain dictates of reason also, to take away life, wherever a milder punishment may be safely substituted. Murder, we are bound invariably to punish with death. For every other crime a milder penalty may, and ought to be, adopted, whenever it

will answer the proper ends of punishment. All evils which are suffered beyond the necessary purposes of penal jurisprudence, are suffered gratuitously; or, in other words, without any justifying cause. In this case the infliction ceases to be justice, and becomes oppression.

It is ever to be remembered, that, even when the punishment of death is lawfully to be inflicted, it can be warrantably executed only by the magistrate; and by him only when acting according to the decisions of law. Private individuals have no more right to interfere, than if the man condemned were innocent; and were they to lay violent hands on him, although proved to be guilty, and rightfully condemned, they would themselves become murderers. Nor can the judge lawfully condemn any man, whatever he may think concerning the rectitude of the decision, unless upon adequate legal testimony, fairly exhibited in open court, and in exact conformity to the modes of trial, by law established. Neither can the executive magistrate warrantably do any thing, in a case of this nature, beside merely executing the sentence of the judge; whether he esteems that sentence just, or unjust. The time, the manner, and the circumstances of execution, ordered by law, he is bound exactly to observe. A criminal, although condemned to death, may, instead of being executed, be murdered: and that as truly as any other man. The sheriff also can easily lay aside the character of a magistrate, and assume that of a murderer.

At the same time, all magistrates, in whatever station they act, are indispensably prohibited from the exercise of hatred, or revenge, in every form and degree, against the criminal. Magistrates here, as well as elsewhere, are 'ministers of God for good' to his people. In the awful employment of executing penal justice, it is their unalterable duty to exercise the benevolence of the gospel; to be exactly just and faithful; and to 'rule in the fear of God.' As instruments in his hands, disposed conscientiously to do that, and that only, which is required by his will, and demanded by the public safety, they will be approved by him; and ought ever to be highly honoured by their fellow citizens. But, if they turn aside from their duty, and indulge their own passions, instead of obeying the dictates of public justice, they assume the character of oppressors, and lay aside that of rulers, merit the severest censures of their fellow men, and prepare a terrible account of their stewardship against the final day.

II. *I shall mention several instances in which life is destroyed in contradiction to this command.*

Of these, the only one which I shall mention at the present time, is that which is appropriately called murder; usually defined the killing our neighbour with premeditated malice.

On this subject, so long, so often, and so thoroughly canvassed, so perfectly understood, and so harmoniously considered by mankind, it cannot be necessary to dwell. I shall dismiss it therefore with the single observation, that the very necessity of forbidding this crime, a necessity daily and unanswerably manifested, is a most dreadful proof of the extensive depravity of man.

I shall now proceed to make several observations, more necessary, and more instructive to this audience, concerning several crimes, more or less intimately connected with this subject.

1. All those actions which involve murder, are undoubtedly of the same nature.

Such are the burning of a house, supposed by the incendiary to be inhabited; making a dangerous leak in a ship having men on board; shooting or casting the instruments of death into a crowd; treason, rebellion, and other acts of a similar nature. It is to no purpose here for the perpetrator to allege that death may possibly not be the consequence of his nefarious conduct. Had he any other regard to the value of human life, and to the sacred obligation which he is under, not only not to invade, but to preserve it, beside what a murderer feels, he would never be guilty of the conduct, nor think of this reason as a justification of it. A bare possibility of this nature must be alleged, if alleged at all, not to convince, but to affront the understanding.

2. Under this head are also included all those actions by which the life of man is destroyed through a criminal negligence.

There are many cases in which we may easily foresee that the death of others will be a consequence of our negligence. A sacred regard to the value of human life duly felt by us, would necessarily produce that attentive care which, so far as is in our power, would ensure safety to the lives of our fellow men.

3. To contrive the death of others is a crime of the same general nature.

The crime of murder lies in the dispositions and designs of the heart. To constitute us murderers in the sight of God, it is not necessary that we should be guilty of any overt act whatever. It is amply sufficient to contrive the death of others. So plain is this truth, that it has been generally acknowledged by mankind. The real and the prime guilt, probably, almost always lies here. The providence of God not unfrequently prevents the contrivance from being executed. But the contriver is still a murderer in his sight.

4. To wish the death of others, although we form no plans for accomplishing it, is a crime of the same general nature.

'He who looketh on a woman to lust after her,' saith our Saviour, 'hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.' By parity of reason, wishes indulged against the life of our neighbour, are the commission of murder. There are probably many persons who secretly wish the death of their fellow men, and who yet never form, nor think of forming, any plan to accomplish their death. Most, if not all of these, perhaps, feel little remorse at the remembrance of their conduct, and probably rarely suspect themselves of being even remotely concerned in transgressing this command. Every such person is grossly deceived, and will be found charged with the guilt of murder at the final judgment.

5. To wound our neighbour, and deprive him of the use of his limbs or faculties, is a crime of the same nature; though I acknowledge, of inferior guilt.

Although to destroy another's limbs is not to take away his life, it is yet to take away a part of the usefulness and comfort which make life desirable. We may continue to live, when we are rendered chiefly useless, and unhappy. But life itself, so far as this world is concerned, must be of little value to the possessor. Nor can it easily be believed, that he whose malevolence can be gratified by depriving his neighbour of his limbs, or other peculiarly important blessings, would, under a

little additional provocation, be reluctant to take his life.

6. Quarrelling and fighting are crimes evidently of the same nature.

A great part of the murders committed in this world are merely the conclusions, or catastrophes, of these crimes. So evident is this, that nothing is more common with respect to an existing quarrel, than to hear the persons who mention it express their apprehensions that it may terminate in murder. Indeed, the spirit which begets contentions of this nature is only an inferior degree of that which malignantly destroys the life of man. 'The beginning of strife,' says Solomon, 'is as when one letteth out water:' an evil, the degree, the mischiefs, and the end of which can never be anticipated by the human mind.

7. All violent, unreasonable anger, envy, and hatred, are evils of the same nature.

Christ, in commenting on the sixth commandment, says, 'Whosoever shall be angry with his brother, without a cause, shall be in danger of the judgment; and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council; but whosoever shall say, Thou fool' (or, as Doddridge seems inclined to render it, 'Thou villain,') 'shall be in danger of hell-fire.' St John, in a manner more summary, and still more explicit, observes, 'He that hateth his brother is a murderer.' From these passages it is evident, that all the several things which I have considered as involved in the general crime of murder, or as acts of disobedience to this precept, are actually of this general nature. They are not, indeed, all marked with the same malignity as the crime usually known by this name. But they all partake of the same nature, and are either murder in the proper sense, or steps which lead directly to it; seeds, impregnated with that very poison which, more perfectly connected in the future growth of the plant, becomes so rank and so fatal to the life of man.

Finally: I hesitate not to pronounce that unkindness, which, especially when exercised towards inferiors and dependents, wears upon the spirits and often breaks the hearts of our fellow creatures, to be a crime of the same nature.

In order to shorten human life, it is not necessary to use a bludgeon, nor a pistol. Servants may be easily brought to an untimely grave by stinting them with respect to their necessary food, clothes, lodging, or fuel; or by a repetition of tasks unreasonably burdensome. A delicate and susceptible child may be easily driven into a consumption by parental coldness, fretfulness, severity, the denial of necessary indulgences, or the exaction of undue compliances. Mere conjugal indifference may easily break the heart of an affectionate wife. Faithless friendship may destroy at once the life of a friend. Ungrateful subjects have shortened the life of an affectionate ruler by their ingratitude merely. Rulers have, probably, in millions of instances, put their subjects to death, without any immediate violence, by the gradual but sure operations of a comprehensive and hard-handed oppression.

From these observations it is evident, that murder, in the proper sense, is begun in unkindness; and that unkindness is begun in the early and unrestrained indulgence of human passions. This indulgence, therefore, parents, and all other guardians of children, are bound faithfully to restrain from the beginning. The first tendencies towards cruelty, the first evidences of an unfeeling disposition, should be repressed, discouraged, and, as far as may be, destroyed. Tenderness, on the contrary, a spirit of general benevolence, and an active, affectionate beneficence to others, should be cultivated in every child, with care, sedulousness, and constancy, resembling that with which an impassioned florist watches, nurses, and cherishes a choice flower, procured with great expense from a distant climate, his own favourite possession, pre-eminent for its fragrance and beauty, and regarded by him as the pride and boast of the country in which he lives.

SERMON CXVI

THE LAW OF GOD.—THE DECALOGUE.—THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT. DUELLING.

Thou shalt not kill.—Exod. xx. 13.

In the preceding Discourse from these words I proposed to point out,

I. *Those instances in which life may be lawfully taken away, agreeably to scriptural exceptions under this law;*

II. *Some of those instances in which life is destroyed in contradiction to this law.*

The first of these heads I discussed at that time; and made several observations under the second. The remaining subjects included in this division, are duelling, suicide, and drunkenness. The first of these, viz., duelling, shall be the topic of immediate investigation.

That duelling is a violation of the command in the text, is evident,

1. From the words of the precept itself; 'Thou shalt not kill.'

I have already observed, that these words contain a command entirely absolute, without either condition, or exception. I also observed, that, as this is a command of God, man cannot, without impious presumption, attempt to limit it; and that no other exceptions, therefore, can be made to it, beside those which God himself has made. But God has made no exception which the most ingenious mind can so construe, as to render it,

even in the most remote degree, favourable to duelling. As this assertion will neither be denied nor doubted, it will only be necessary to add, that this precept stands in full force against duelling; and that every duel is a gross violation of its whole authority.

Nor is this all; duelling is a violation of this precept of the very worst kind; superior in its guilt to most other crimes of the same nature, and inferior to none. For,

2. A duel is always the result of a design to take away human life.

I say always. It is not, however, my intention to deny, that there may be exceptions to this general declaration. But these are probably as few as to any general rule concerning human conduct. The challenge originally contains a proposition to kill, or to be killed. It is accepted with an expectation of killing, or of being killed. Each of the combatants also takes his aim at the seat of life, and intends to destroy his antagonist, if he can. No pretence, therefore, is more unfounded, than that duellists do not design to kill each other.

3. Duelling always involves efforts to destroy life.

The weapons used in it are always the proper instruments of death; and they are used with the utmost skill and care which the parties possess, for the direct purpose of producing this dreadful catastrophe.

4. Men are put to death in duels with more deliberation than in almost any other case whatever.

The challenger has always ample opportunity to deliberate, before he gives the challenge. This opportunity also, it is reasonably supposed, he extends as far as he pleases, both because the case is of the utmost importance to himself, and because he manages it according to his own choice. To him it is entirely optional, whether he will fight at all; and, when he has determined this point, at what time he shall give the challenge. Whatever time, therefore, he chooses to take for consideration, he actually takes; and this he himself will not deny to be a sufficient time. During this period, also, the subject, being of the highest importance, and necessarily making the strongest impressions, must be often, if not always, in his mind; must therefore be viewed in its various lights, and must receive all the examination which such a mind is capable of giving to subjects of the highest consequence. Of course, a duel is invariably the result, if it be not the challenger's own fault, of the most ample deliberation. It must be his own fault also if this deliberation be not cool and thorough. All these observations, it is to be remembered, are applicable with the same force to the person challenged.

5. Duelling is, probably, always perpetrated with a spirit of revenge.

I say probably *always*. For that this is usually the fact, no sober man can doubt for a moment. To me it seems inconceivable, that any man, whatever may have been his feelings in the earlier parts of this transaction, should go into the field, and employ himself in the several measures adopted by duellists for the purpose of taking away each other's lives, and not be under the influence of predominating passions. These passions can be no other than hatred and revenge. If we trace this subject with even a moderate degree of attention, from its commencement to its close, it will, I think, be impossible for us to adopt any other opinion. The challenger receives, or at least believes himself to have received, an injury (of what kind it is a matter of perfect indifference) sufficiently great to demand of him the exposure of his own life to probable destruction, and the death, so far as he is able to compass it, of the injurer. Now, let me ask, and let every sober man answer the question, whether an injury, felt to be of this magnitude, was ever regarded, or can possibly be regarded, by such men as duellists always are, without strong feelings of wrath and revenge? Duellists, every one knows, are men pre-eminently proud, haughty, insolent, and proverbially irritable; jealous to an extreme of what they call their own rights; disdaining to have them determined, as those of other men are, by tribunals of justice. They regard the forgiveness of injuries, and all the peaceful and gentle virtues of man, with supreme contempt; and claim to themselves, in opposition to the laws of God and their country, the adjudication of their own disputes, and the retribution of their own injuries. What should hinder a man of this character from indulging or executing revenge in any case, especially in a case of this importance? The rectitude of revenge is a prime principle of his creed; a principle to which he adheres with such tenacity and uniformity, as, in a better cause, would do honour to the most exemplary Christian. He does not come to the consideration of this subject with doubts concerning the rectitude, or a conviction of the sinfulness, of revenge; but with a determination, long since established, and never called in question, that it is right; a determination to which he gives the extensive and commanding influence of a maxim. From the indulgence and the execution of revenge, he is restrained therefore by no moral consideration whatever. On the contrary, it is sanctioned by the very first principles of his morality. Of course, it becomes his boast; and is regarded by him as a part of his moral worth; as the ornament and glory of his character. It is evident, then, that there is nothing to hinder him from the indulgence of this passion in any case; especially in a case to which he attaches this high importance.

Should it be said, that the injury in question is not considered as being of such magnitude; but that the laws prescribed by duellists to themselves compel a man of honour to resent injuries, which they themselves esteem small, in this manner: I answer; that the injury, how insignificant soever it may be in reality, is still such in the estimation of duellists as to subject the challenger, unavoidably, to this exposure, and to all the evils by which it is followed. In this view only it is regarded by him; and all the resentment, all the feelings of revenge, naturally flowing from an injury of this magnitude, will be awakened in his breast.

In the mind of the challenged the same emotions will be roused, of course, by the challenge itself. The challenge, in his view, infers the same obligation on his part to expose his own life, and either to lose it, or destroy that of his antagonist. Against his antagonist, therefore, all that hostility will be excited in his mind, which is the natural result of such an injury. Now, let me ask any man of common candour, whether it is credible, that in two men, thus circumstanced, strong feelings of revenge will not of course be kindled? They are men, not only wrathful and revengeful in their nature, but glorying in the indulgence of wrath and revenge. They openly declare the exercise of

these passions in this extreme manner to be right, honourable to themselves, and ornamental to the human character. For this very exercise of these passions they esteem themselves superior to other men; style themselves 'brave,' 'men of honour,' and 'gentlemen:' and name others 'cowards,' 'scoundrels,' and 'rascals.' Is it possible that, habitually entertaining these opinions, and habitually indulging these passions, they should not exercise them peculiarly on such an occasion?

I well know that duellists profess themselves to be free from these passions in cases of this kind; and declare, that they proceed to these horrible rencounters with entire coolness and good nature. These professions, however, have not the most distant claim to credit. All men who feel themselves exposed to the censures of mankind, endeavour to rebut them in the best manner in their power. Fair professions are the most obvious means of rebutting them. In the same manner, the bully conceals his cowardice, and the hypocrite his irreligion; and both have as good claims to be believed, as the duellist. Cool, indeed, he may be in some instances; that is, not agitated by fear; but every thing in his situation and in his conduct proves, that he is angry and revengeful.

6. Duellists take the utmost pains to prepare themselves for this dreadful employment.

In places where duelling is generally practised, it has become a regular employment; and may be fairly considered as a branch of the regular education of children and youths, to acquire skill and adroitness in the art of destroying human life by this species of violence. Children, at a very early period, employ themselves daily and yearly, through long periods of time, in shooting with pistols; and acquire skill by this practice, just as penmanship is acquired; with as much coolness, and with as much success. Men also who have not received this education in early life, employ the sober years of maturer age in learning the same horrid art. To excel in it is regarded, by the adept himself, and his fellows, as an attainment of high distinction. To be able to split a ball upon the edge of a knife, or extinguish a candle with a pistol ball, at the distance of the utmost goal of duelling, is, in the view of these men, to have arrived at glory not a little resembling that of Turenne, or Marlborough.

In all this conduct is seen, with the slightest glance, a deliberate design, a cold-blooded system, of taking away the life of man with the hand of violence; a design, a system, begun in childhood, and cherished, cultivated, and perfected through every succeeding period. What dupe of credulity can be so absolutely blind to the whole nature of evidence, as not to see in this conduct, designs equally hostile against human life, more deliberate, and certainly not less guilty, than those of the professed assassin?

7. The duellist takes away the life of his neighbour without a cause.

In this respect, the murderer, in the appropriate sense, nay, the professed assassin, can, in many instances at least, more speciously justify himself than the duellist. The murderer attacks his victim under the domination of furious passion; at the moment when he has lost the possession of reason and conscience, and the consequent government of himself; under the consciousness of a real and intense injury; or with the hope of delivering himself from a persecutor. Brutus expected to free his country from a tyrant; and Charlotte Corde, to deliver hers from another. These, I acknowledge, are far from being solid or justifying reasons; yet they are specious. They are such as, in the moment of provocation and bitterness, would have great weight, and go far, in the phrenetic mind of a man violently in a passion, towards vindicating him to himself. But the duellist is roused to battle by a contemptuous look, a slight word, or some other wound given to mere pride. All these and the like things are perfectly harmless, if passed by with serenity and self-possession. At the worst, they are mere expressions of the opinion which the provoking person entertains of our character; an opinion which, if we are faithful to ourselves, can do us no harm; and which usually merits nothing but disregard, contempt, or pity. This the duellist has ample time to investigate, and to know: for the very manner of executing his resentment postpones the execution beyond the ordinary period of violent passion. Every duellist must confess, unless he will acknowledge his whole life to be a paroxysm of rage, that the seasons in which he acquires the skill of directing surely the weapons of death, in which he determines to become a professed duellist, in which he settles the principles, and learns the rules of his profession, in which he fixes in his mind the proper causes of a challenge, the proper motives for fighting, and the proper modes of conducting it, are not seasons of violence and provocation. He will confess, that the time of his future life, independently of the little periods of actual combat, which he spends in avowedly professing his deliberate intention of acting as a duellist on every occasion which he thinks a proper one, is not a time of agitation, wrath, and partial insanity.

Nor is the duellist more happy with respect to the final cause of his conduct, or the end which he expects to accomplish by this species of controversy.

Reparation for an injury received, is commonly alleged as this end. But the death of his antagonist furnishes no such reparation. His neighbour's loss of life lessens in no manner or degree any injury which he has received from him; and cannot possibly restore to him lost property, or lost reputation. The fact, that he has challenged and killed a man, will make him neither richer, nor more honourable, nor more happy. He may, indeed, acquire honour in the opinion of a few men, as foolish, unprincipled, and abandoned as himself; but the good opinion of these men is disgrace. In the view of every wise and good man he renders himself deeply shameful, and supremely guilty. He may, perhaps, enjoy what men of furious passions sometimes call happiness, viz., the fell pleasure found by such men in revenge. That revenge is sweet to the taste of a bad man, I am not disposed to question; but it is bitter and dreadful in the end. Let the duellist remember, that God hath said, 'To me belongeth vengeance and recompense:' that he has forbidden us to 'avenge ourselves;' or to 'bear any grudge against our neighbour:' subjoining this solemn and authoritative reason, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay it.' Let him read and ponder the parable of the servant who owed ten thousand talents; and, when he finds that servant 'thrust into prison, and delivered over to the tormentors,' as his final and irrevocable doom, let him ask himself what will become of him who, instead of im-

prisoning his fellow servant, puts him to a violent death, and sends him into eternity, with all his sins upon his head? Then let him farther ask, whether the pleasure of revenge is sufficiently great to balance the immense hazard, which he incurs for the sake of his gratification?

In the mean time, a duel, allowing that it should terminate in the death of him who gave the provocation, alters not in the least the state of the supposed injury, nor of him who received it. If he has been charged with cowardice, and is really a coward, he will still remain so; if he is not, the charge will not make him a coward. If he has been charged with lying, and has really lied, he will still remain a liar; unless he becomes an honest man by repentance and reformation. If he has not lied, the charge can never seriously affect his reputation, nor persuade a single sober man to believe him a liar. Men, in this country at least, have usually little to fear from such charges as these. If they will be faithful to themselves; if they will exhibit the virtues which are denied to them, on all such occasions as call them into exercise; and renounce or avoid the opposite vices, the world, bad as it is, will almost always discern their true character, and will most generally do justice to it. Sometimes, I acknowledge, they may, even while they exercise a good degree of patience smart under the lash of unmerited censure. These seasons, however, can rarely be of long continuance; and while they last, will to a wise man, in most cases, be eminently profitable, by teaching him to moderate the inordinate attachment, so commonly, so foolishly, and so dangerously indulged, to the applause of mankind. This is one, and in my view the chief, exercise of that 'love to the world,' which the Scriptures declare to be incompatible with 'love to God.' The effectual mortification of this attachment, strange as it may seem to the duellist, would yield him more serene, unmingled, and enduring pleasure, than all that which has been found in all the gratifications furnished by duelling since the beginning of time. Let the duellist also remember, that in this very act of attempting to destroy his neighbour's life, he more grossly injures his own character, than ten thousand charges, such as those which he thus furiously resents, could possibly do. In the view of every man of sober reflection, he brands upon his character the stamp of murder, the blackest mark of infamy which can be worn by man.

But it will be replied to these observations by the duellist, that the anguish which he suffers is such as he cannot possibly bear; and that there is no way in which he can render life even supportable, under such an imputation on his character, without taking the life of the slanderer. This plea has been often seriously made. I will therefore examine it.

(1.) The allegation contained in it is untrue. The anguish complained of might be easily supported, without the death of its author. There are no words which more frequently delude those who use them, than *can* and *cannot*, *possible* and *impossible*. We often say and believe, that we cannot do that, which we merely will not; and frequently pronounce that conduct to be impossible which is only very disagreeable. The apostles, and the Christian martyrs of every age, were, in many instances, possessed of as much understanding and sensibility, and therefore understood the nature of the injuries which they received as well, at least, as the duellist in question, and felt them as deeply. Yet they bore slanders more gross, more frequently repeated, more extensively believed, and continued through a much longer duration. They bore them also, without repining, often without complaining, and always without sinking. Women also, of extreme delicacy, and exquisite sensibility, have sustained, not with patience only, but with fortitude also, the most brutal accusations. Certainly a man who boasts so much of his firmness of character, as a duellist always does, must be ashamed of possessing less hardihood than women and Christians.

(2.) This anguish chiefly is voluntarily created by himself. It is nothing but the pain of wounded pride; a passion more injurious to his peace, and more hostile to his moral character, than the slander which he feels so deeply; a passion which, if he were a wise and good man, he would use every hopeful exertion to mortify and subdue. Independently of the feelings occasioned by this passion, the slander of which he complains would do him very little harm.

But he has been called a coward. So have thousands and millions of others, who regarded the imputation only with sport. But he has been called a liar. So have vast numbers of the best men who have ever lived; who, though not insensible of the slander, have nevertheless passed quietly on through life, in much the same manner as if it never had been uttered. Were the duellist possessed of the same spirit, he would feel as little anguish from this source as they felt. The whole difference between him and them is created, both foolishly and sinfully, by his own pride.

(3.) The murderer, in the appropriate sense, can usually make the same plea, in his own behalf, and with more force. It cannot be doubted, that, in the hour of extreme provocation and abuse, such as awakens, for the first time, the dreadful purpose of murder, an agitation must be felt, and an anguish suffered, far more intense than that which is ordinarily experienced by the duellist. He has made it a part of his general system, and a deliberate purpose, to destroy human life. To a mind thus prepared, no event of this nature can come wholly unlooked for, or be, as in the other case, a matter of mere and absolute surprise. A mind thus circumstanced can hardly suffer in the same degree from the very same provocation. But the provocations usually given to the duellist are injuries far inferior in their degree to those which ordinarily excite in the human breast a purpose, so new to it, and so horrible, as murder. The duellist has been disciplined to this object, and comes to it with the cool feelings of a veteran. The murderer is a raw adventurer, who has never seen this terrible object in a near view before. He is therefore urged to the conflict by extreme provocatives only, with intense agitation, and with an impelling anguish sufficiently great to overcome his dread and horror.

(4.) The laws of the land provide, in the mean time, a reasonable reparation for all those injuries which the wisdom of legislators has thought it proper, or been able, to redress, and, at least, as ample reparation for him, as for his fellow citizens. With this reparation he is bound to be contented, until the legislature shall provide farther redress. If he has a right to adjudicate his own cause, and redress his own injuries, every citizen has the same right. But if this pretended right were to be universally exercised, government would be

at an end. Anarchy, the real box of Pandora, would empty all its miseries upon mankind, and the nation be converted into a band of murderers. He who, in this plainest of all cases, will not 'submit to the ordinances of man for the Lord's sake,' will certainly receive the 'condemnation' which he has threatened.

(5.) There are innumerable other cases, in which greater injuries are done to mankind than those which are done to the duellist, and in their nature far more distressing. Those who have suffered them have therefore, according to this argument, a right to relieve themselves of their distress, by taking away the lives of those who have occasioned it. My neighbour, for example, has ejected me from my farm by an injurious lawsuit, and left me and my family beggars. He has accused me, as a merchant, of negligence, fraud, or bankruptcy; and, by bringing my creditors suddenly upon me, has not only stripped me of my property, but precluded me from acquiring any more. He has negligently brought the smallpox into my family, and has thus produced the death of my child. He has impeached my Christian character, and has thus procured my excommunication from the church of Christ. All these injuries are incomparably greater than those which usually occasion duels. But who that has any conscience, or any common sense, will say, that I am warranted for any or all of them to put my neighbour to death? Who does not see that, were these and other injuries of a similar nature to be retributed in this manner, a nation would be converted into banditti, and their country into a field of blood.

8. The duellist acts against the most powerful and persuasive reasons; unanswerably obliging him to abstain from this guilty conduct.

(1.) He most wickedly exposes his own life to destruction. On this subject I shall not dwell at present, because I expect to consider the subject of suicide in the succeeding Discourse.

(2.) He wickedly deserts the duties which he owes to his family and friends. If he has parents, he owes them reverence, gratitude, strong affection, filial care in sickness and old age, support if they need it, and the innumerable consolations which that evil day so affectingly demands, and which none but a child is either able or willing to give. Particularly, he owes them that exquisite enjoyment, which is found in the affectionate, virtuous, and amiable conduct of our beloved offspring. If he has a wife, he owes her all that provision for her wants and for her comfort, the consolations in sickness and in sorrow, the kindness and tenderness, the faithful and affectionate attention to her happiness, which he has engaged in the marriage covenant; a covenant, involving substantially the same obligations with those of an oath. If he has children, he owes them sustenance, education in knowledge, business, and religion; his instructions, and his government, his example, and his prayers. But all these duties, required by the infinite authority of God, and in the two last cases voluntarily assumed also by himself, he basely deserts; and, by entering the field of slaughter, cuts them off from the possibility of receiving, and himself from the power of performing them. At the same time, he leaves them all buried through life in the hopeless agonies of remembering and feeling, that he voluntarily went 'as an ox to the slaughter'—'died as a fool dieth'—and, in the combined perpetration of suicide and murder, entered without a prayer, and without a hope of forgiveness into the presence of his Judge.

But should he (a thing which he has no right to expect) survive the conflict, he survives only to present to his parents a son, to his wife a husband, and to his children a father, blackened with the guilt of cold, deliberate, murder. In the mean time, he has tempted his neighbour to the same enormous sin; and entailed upon his family and friends also the same tremendous evils.

(3.) He does incalculable and irreparable injuries to his country. He weakens the government of his country by practically adopting a principle which, if right in him, would be equally right in all others; and which, if adopted by them, would destroy social order in a moment: viz. that an individual is to be his own judge in his own cause. He injures his country also, by robbing it of the services and life of one of its members; in all probability more important, as the case may be, and has been, to its safety and welfare, than those of millions like himself. Finally, he injures his country boundlessly, as well as irreparably, in contributing by his opinions and example, to authorize, extend, and perpetuate the same baleful iniquity in his fellow men.

REMARKS.

1. The observations made in this Discourse present to us one of the strongest examples of human depravity.

Life to man is his all. On it every thing is suspended which man can call his own: his enjoyments, his hopes, his usefulness, and his salvation. Our own life is to us, therefore, invaluable. As we are most reasonably required to 'love our neighbour as ourselves;' his life ought, in our estimation, to possess the same value. In conformity to these views, mankind have universally regarded those who have violently deprived others of life, with supreme abhorrence, and branded their names with singular infamy. Murderers have been punished, in every age and country, with the most awful expressions of detestation, with the most formidable array of terror, and with the most excruciating means of agony. On the heads of murderers, at the same time, mankind have heaped curses without bounds. The city of refuge, nay, the altar itself, a strong tower of defence to every other criminal, has lost its hallowed character at the approach of a murderer, and emptied him out of its sacred recesses into the hands of the 'avenger of blood.' God hath said, 'A man that doeth violence to the blood of any person, he shall flee to the pit: let no man stay him.' In solemn response, the world has cried, 'Amen.'

But all these sentiments, all these rights, all the obligations of this law, the duellist has violated. Nay, he has violated them in cool blood, with the deliberation of system, in the season of serenity, in the tranquillity of the closet. This violation he has made a part of his creed, and settled purpose of his life; a governing rule of his conduct. All this he has done amid the various advantages of birth and education, under the light of science, with the Bible in his hand, and before the altar of his God. He has done it all also in the face of arguments, which have commanded the conviction of all mankind, except himself; and which would have convinced him, had his mind been honestly open to the force of argument. His opinions have been a thousand times exposed; his arguments have been a thousand

times refuted. Against him have been arrayed in every Christian country, the common sense of mankind, the feelings of humanity, the solemn voice of law, and the infinitely awful command of the eternal God. With a moral hardihood, not often exampled even in this world, he encounters them all, overcomes them all, and goes coolly onward to the work of destruction; as coolly as if he were only performing a duty. How sinful must that heart be which can act in this manner?

2. The government of every country is bound, indispensably, to punish duelling with exemplary severity; and, wherever death has been the consequence, with death.

From the observations which have been made in this Discourse, it is clear, that few cases of murder occur among mankind equally atrocious, or equally deserving of death, with that which is committed in a duel. Every thing pertaining to this subject also tends towards this issue, as regular and uniform means towards their proper ends. The crime, being as gross and heinous as murder in other cases, deserves the same punishment. It is also far more dangerous to a community, than murder in the customary acceptation. The persons whom duelling especially threatens are, in many instances, persons of distinction; formidable obstacles to the ambition of duellists; persons who, by their influence and talents, would naturally become important instruments of the public good; persons, against whom the vulgar assassin rarely aims the stroke of his dagger. At the same time, the ravages of duelling are far more widely extended; and the number of its victims is of course far more multiplied.

The manner in which God has judged, concerning this subject, is awfully displayed in the following passage: 'If a man smite any person with an instrument of iron, so that he die; he is a murderer: the murderer shall surely be put to death. And if he smite him with throwing a stone, wherewith he may die, and he die; he is a murderer: the murderer shall surely be put to death. Or if he smite him with a hand-weapon of wood, wherewith he may die, and he die; he is a murderer: the murderer shall surely be put to death. The revenger of blood himself shall slay the murderer; when he meeteth him, he shall slay him. And if he thrust him of hatred, or hurl at him by lying of wait, that he die; or in enmity smite him with his hand, that he die; he that smote him shall surely be put to death: for he is a murderer. The revenger of blood shall slay the murderer, when he meeteth him. Whoso killeth any person, the murderer shall be put to death by the mouth of witnesses; but one witness shall not testify against any person, to cause him to die. Moreover, ye shall take no satisfaction for the life of a murderer, which is guilty of death; but he shall be surely put to death. And ye shall take no satisfaction for him that is fled to the city of his refuge, that he should come again to dwell in the land, until the death of the high-priest. So ye shall not pollute the land, wherein ye are: for blood, it defileth the land; and the land cannot be cleansed of the blood that is shed therein, but by the blood of him that shed it. Defile not, therefore, the land which ye shall inhabit, wherein I dwell; for I, Jehovah, dwell among the children of Israel.'

SERMON CXVII.

THE LAW OF GOD.—THE DECALOGUE.—THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT.—SUICIDE.

Thou shalt not kill.—Exod. xx. 13.

The next violation of this command which I shall have occasion to consider, is suicide, or self-murder. In examining this subject, I shall,

I. *Consider the principal arguments urged in justification of suicide;* and,

II. *Shall allege several proofs of its criminality.*

Before I proceed to the consideration of the arguments which have been supposed to justify suicide, it will be necessary to observe, that there are two totally distinct classes of mankind, by which this crime is committed: those, who are labouring under the disease of melancholy, or that of derangement; and those who act in the same manner, in the full possession of their faculties. In the former of these classes the mental powers are so much disordered, as greatly to change, if not absolutely to annihilate, the criminality. The latter are guilty of this crime in the same sense as of any other. To the former class, it is obvious, arguments on this or any other topic can be of no use, if addressed to them while under the influence of these infirmities. An habitual conviction of the turpitude of this crime, established in their minds, when possessed of their full strength and soundness, may indeed, and not improbably, so far influence them as to prevent this terrible catastrophe. In their diseased state, such of them as have fallen under my observation, have been incapable of being controlled by the force of argument. The observations which I shall make concerning this subject, will therefore be directed to those of the latter class: to men who, in the full possession of their reason, from sudden passion, from disappointment in the pursuit of some darling object, such as fame, power, wealth, or pleasure, the loss of some important enjoyment, the sufferance of some severe disgrace, or the dread of some expected evil, put an end to their lives. These men, though acting thus irrationally under the pressure of violent feeling, may yet be reasoned with in their cooler moments. In these moments a conviction may perhaps

be wrought, and principles established in their minds, which may control the distempered thoughts, and prevent the dangerous decisions, too naturally springing up in seasons of violent agitation.

The general doctrine insisted on by Mr Hume, the only writer whom I shall attempt to answer, or whom I consider as having any claim to an answer on this subject, is, that man has a right to dispose of his own life. This he asserts in various forms of expression; all of them contributing to show, that he considered this right as to be exercised according to the pleasure of the individual. Indeed, if such a right exists, the exercise of it cannot be limited in any other manner, unless the limitation be directly expressed by him who alone can give or limit the right. But no such limitation has been expressed by him. In the Scriptures this is not even alluded to; and, whatever proof the light of nature may furnish that God has given us this right, there cannot be a pretence that it discovers to us any such limitation. The right itself therefore is to be exercised according to every man's judgment; or, what will in this case be exactly the same, according to every man's pleasure.

But where is the proof, that God has given this right to mankind? The arguments which Mr Hume adduces to this purpose are chiefly the following:—

1. That we are created for the end of effectuating our own enjoyment in the present life. 'Men,' he says, 'are intrusted to their own judgment and discretion, and may employ every faculty with which they are endowed, to provide for their ease, happiness, or preservation.'

In a former Discourse I have explained the end for which man was made; and have, I trust, satisfactorily proved that man was made to glorify his Maker, by knowing, reverencing, loving, serving, and enjoying him for ever. The accomplishment of this end in the creation of man, I have, unless I have been deceived, shown to be in the highest degree honourable to God, and in the highest degree productive of happiness to man. That this end, whether the real end for which man was created, or not, is incomparably nobler, better, and more worthy of God, than the end proposed by Mr Hume, which is no other than the enjoyment of the pleasures of sense in this world, cannot be denied. No more can it be denied, that of the ends which were capable of being answered by the creation of man, God selected that which was noblest, best, and most worthy of his character; unless it be also denied, not only that he is infinitely wise and good, but that he is wise and good at all. As therefore there are ends for which man might be created, nobler and better than that alleged by Mr Hume, as one infinitely nobler and better has been pointed out, it is certain, that that proposed by him is not the true end of the creation of man.

Besides, the enjoyment of this pleasure in the manner exhibited by Mr Hume himself, is inconsistent with the existence of virtue in man, and much more with the existence of perfect virtue. But to be virtuous, is to render more honour to our Creator, to be more conformed to his pleasure, and to enjoy more happiness than is possible, if we are destitute of virtue. To be perfectly virtuous is to render the highest honour to our Creator, to be perfectly conformed to his pleasure, and to be perfectly happy. If then God regarded either himself, or us, he did not propose, as the end of creating man, the enjoyment of the happiness mentioned by Mr Hume.

2. Mr Hume alleges, as another argument for this right, the insignificance of human life.—'In the sight of God,' he says, 'every event is alike important: and the life of a man is of no greater importance to the universe, than that of an oyster.'

Our Saviour informs us, on the contrary, that 'men are of more value in the sight of God than many sparrows.' Common sense irresistibly subscribes to the truth of this declaration. It is impossible to believe the contrary declaration. God unquestionably sees things as they are. But, as unquestionably, a mind possessed of the powers of thought, volition, and motivity; a mind capable of knowing, and in many instances actually knowing, loving, serving, and glorifying its Creator; a mind which can originate and diffuse important good to its fellow creatures; a mind formed for immortal being, and destined to an endless improvement in knowledge, virtue, and enjoyment, is certainly of more value than many oysters. All this, however, depends on the life of man. The life of man therefore is of more value than that of an oyster. Were it not, parents, so far as the light of nature teaches us, might, in agreement with the doctrine of Diogenes, and other cynics, lawfully roast and eat their children, as lawfully as they may now roast and eat oysters. A man of common sense would hardly be persuaded, that Moses, Paul, Louis the Good, the two Gustavuses, Alfred the Great, and Washington, were of no more importance to the universe than oysters. With a view, probably, to strengthen this allegation, Mr Hume asks, 'Where is the crime of turning a few ounces of blood out of their channel?' By this question he undoubtedly intends, that his readers shall suppose suicide to be nothing more than merely diverting the course of a few ounces of blood. If Mr Hume believed this, he deserved very little of that reputation which he has acquired for understanding. If he did not believe it, the question does very little honour to his candour or sincerity. It is no crime to turn a few ounces of blood out of their channel; often it is a duty; because it is the means of preserving or restoring health. Many ounces of blood may be thus diverted from their course, and life be not only continued, but invigorated, and prolonged. In this case, the sphere of man's usefulness, and duty, and comfort, may in this world be enlarged, and his happiness in the world to come secured and increased. But the destruction of human life, by whatever means it is accomplished, terminates usefulness, duty, and comfort in the present world, and, if voluntarily accomplished, prevents the existence of happiness in the world to come. The difference between these things, as intended by Mr Hume, is of course infinite. The phraseology, which appropriately expresses the one, cannot therefore be employed, consistently with propriety, nor even with vulgar honesty, to denote the other.

3. The same writer argues this right from the smallness of the objects and accidents by which the life of man is frequently destroyed without his concurrence. 'A hair,' he says, 'a fly, an insect, is able to destroy this mighty being, whose life is of such importance. Is it an absurdity then,' he asks, 'to suppose, that human prudence may lawfully dispose of what depends on such insignificant causes?'

To this question the reply is easy, and complete.

The destruction of human life by a fly, an insect, or a hair, is accomplished, as every man perfectly well knows, and as every man habitually says, by the immediate providence of God. In the case of suicide, it is destroyed by the will of man himself. God, who gave life, has an unquestionable right to take it away. It is yet to be proved, that man, who has only received it from God, has a right to destroy it without the known permission of its author.

4. This assertion is, however, denied by Mr Hume; and he directly declares, that suicide is as absolutely the work of God, as any of those events specified under the preceding head. 'When I fall upon my own sword,' he says, 'I receive my death equally from the hands of the Deity, as if it had proceeded from a lion, a precipice, or a fever.'

Mr Hume does not in this Essay anywhere, in form, discuss the question, 'Whether man is a moral agent, in such a sense as to be accountable for his actions, and to be deserving of praise or blame, punishment or reward.' But it is evident, that he all along proceeds upon the supposition, that man is not such an agent. Of this he has given very numerous and very plain indications. A very clear and decisive one is found in the declaration which I am now considering. If man is not such an agent, all the observations in this Essay might have been spared. For plainly no action of man could in this case be of a criminal, because it could not be of a moral, nature. In this case, it would be equally just to censure a post or a wall for falling upon a man, and killing him, as to censure an assassin for producing the same catastrophe by an act of murder. If man be not such an agent, all inquiries concerning the moral nature of his actions are nugatory; because they are unmeaning. Mr Hume, particularly, ought never to have written the numerous things which he has so strenuously urged concerning right and wrong, in the different parts of his works. Neither rectitude, nor its opposite, are predicable of brutes. Why? Because they are not moral agents. If men are not moral agents, neither would these attributes be any more predicable of them. But if men are moral agents, then those which are called human actions, are not in any such sense the acts of God, as to prevent men from being accountable for them, or to prevent them from being truly commendable and rewardable for one class of such actions, and blameworthy and punishable for the opposite. All nations, in all ages, have accordingly censured and punished such as were guilty of one class of these actions, and praised and rewarded such as performed the other. On this foundation rests all human intercourse, and all human discipline. The child is punished at home and at school, because he is considered as having done that which is wrong; and rewarded in both, because he is considered as having done that which is right. On the same grounds men are disesteemed, hated, censured, and punished even with death; or approved, loved, applauded, and have their merit acknowledged by the most ample reward. As this has been the universal conduct of men from the beginning, it is a clear and full testimony of the views entertained by the human mind concerning this subject. It is farther to be observed, that men cannot act in any other manner. The admission of the doctrine, that mankind are not such agents, would ruin the world. Nor ought it to be forgotten, that, although many persons have thought proper to assert this doctrine, not an individual among them has ever been found who acted in conformity to it; not one, who did not as bitterly complain of what he called wrongs, or vindicate as strenuously what he called his rights, as his fellow men. But should we admit this argument, it will prove more than either we, or even Mr Hume, may be aware of; at least, more than he intended. If men are not moral agents, if their voluntary actions are merely the acts of God, then it will follow that, equally with suicide, their frauds, lies, oppressions, and murders, are acts of God. Should a swindler cheat Mr Hume out of his estate, or an assassin plunge a poniard into his bosom, it would, I think, be a very odd, a very unsatisfactory consolation to him, to be told by the villain, that he ought to be perfectly contented with the villany, since it was only an act of his Creator.

5. Another argument alleged by Mr Hume for the right in question is, that suicide does not disturb the order of the universe. 'There is no being,' he says, 'which by ever so irregular an action can encroach upon the plan of the Creator's providence, or disorder the universe.'

If Mr Hume intended by this declaration, that God rules all things with such a universal and absolute dominion, as that 'none can stay his hand,' nor any being lawfully 'say unto him, What dost thou?'—as that he will bring 'good out of the evil, and order out of the confusion,' occasioned by sin—he has undoubtedly declared here a truth of high importance. Unfortunately for him, however, this truth will contribute nothing to the support of his cause. No being can indeed resist the hand of God: but every sinner wishes to resist it; and in this wish becomes guilty, hateful, and deserving of punishment.

In this declaration, and many others contained in the same treatise, the author studiously avoids mentioning, what he ought everywhere to have strongly insisted on, the broad and obvious distinction between the providential and the preceptive will of God. It is unquestionably a part of the providential will of God, to permit (for reasons inscrutable by us, at least in most instances, but undoubtedly sufficient in themselves) the existence of sinful actions; but it is no part of his preceptive will, either to require or to allow them. His preceptive will, or, in other words, the moral law, requires of all intelligent beings perfect holiness; a disposition perfectly loving what he loves, and hating what he hates. So evident is this truth, that all nations, not absolutely sunk in ignorance, have discerned it to a considerable extent by the mere light of nature. The savages of the western wilderness have acknowledged, equally with the Greeks and Romans, that reverence and gratitude were due to their gods, and that they required of men justice, truth, and kindness to their fellow men.—Mr Hume himself would not dare to say, that God does not love these things; nor that he does not require them of his creatures, any more than he loves and requires impiety, ingratitude, injustice, falsehood, and cruelty. He would not say, that God at all loves or requires the things last mentioned. Loose as his apprehensions concerning religion or morality were, he would not say, that God does not hate the crimes which I have specified; nor that he has not forbidden them to mankind. He would not say, that these crimes are equally agreeable to the will of God, equally pleas-

ing to him, as actions of his intelligent creatures, with the virtues mentioned above. But all this he must say, in order to make this allegation an argument to his purpose.

If no action of any being can be so irregular as to be opposed to the preceptive will of God: then it will follow, that impiety, ingratitude, profaneness, atheism, fraud, lying, oppression, injustice, adultery, rape, and murder, are equally agreeable to the Creator with piety, justice, truth, benevolence, purity, and mercy. Then it will follow also, that God is wholly indifferent to all these objects; and that all which is meant by right and wrong, holds exactly the same place in his estimation and pleasure. In other words, it will follow, that the Creator of the universe is wholly regardless of the moral character and conduct of his creatures.

6. Mr Hume insists, that suicide does no harm to society; or, at the least, that, as by cutting off his life in this manner he only ceases to do good, he does the least supposable harm to society.

To this I answer, that if he has friends, he compels them to lament his death, with views peculiarly distressing by their perplexity, and with feelings of agony and despair. Perhaps no object, unless the person who is cut off in the unrepented guilt of murdering another, is regarded with more painful emotions, than a beloved friend, who has voluntarily terminated his own life. The minds of those whom he leaves behind him sink under the remembrance of what he has done in this world, and tremble to follow him to another. Keen indeed must be the edge of that distress which finds its only consolation, and its only hope, in the doubting belief, perhaps in the faint conjecture, that the friend whom it deplores was hurried out of life by the impulse of delirium.

If the suicide had a family, he has robbed them of all that advice, consolation, sympathy, and those kind offices universally, which he owed to them in a peculiar manner. All these he has vowed to his wife. God has made it his duty to render them to his children. To both also he is bound by the same obligations to furnish support. This perhaps he may have provided. If he has, he has still robbed his children of that parental instruction, government, habituation, and example which together constitute in most cases far the most arduous, the most important, and the most useful labour of man, and the chief duty which, ordinarily, he has it in his power ever to perform.

Society at large he robs of one of its members, and of all the duties which that member owed to society.

At the same time he has presented to all these an example, which, if followed by them, would destroy at once the family, the community, and the world. Yet, if he has acted right, it would be equally right for them to follow him. No rule can be formed concerning this subject, but a universal one. Mr Hume has made it such. If his rule be right, then, by merely adhering to rectitude, the present inhabitants of the world may exterminate the race of man in a moment. But,

7. Mr Hume, supposing that men would not make use of this right, unless in circumstances of distress, considers this, at least, as a justifying cause for suicide.

'Most people,' he says, 'who lie under any temptation to abandon existence, are in some such situation; that is, in age, or under infirmities; incapable of promoting the interest of society, a burden to it, or afflicted in some manner or other.'

On this subject I observe,

(1.) That this situation, whatever it may be, is one in which God by his providence has placed the man. It is therefore a situation of which we cannot reasonably or lawfully complain, unless we can lawfully and reasonably complain of the dispensations of God.

(2.) It is a situation in which, if we perform our duty, we may glorify our Maker, by voluntarily fulfilling such designs as infinite wisdom and goodness has thought proper to accomplish by our instrumentality, and has put it into our power to accomplish. It may be said, that, should we put an end to our lives, God will still be glorified. I grant it. But we shall not be voluntary instruments of his glory. This is our duty, and our only duty. If this then be not done, our whole duty is left undone. If we refuse to do this duty, we refuse to obey the will of our Maker, rebel against his government, and voluntarily oppose his designs. This is sin, and the only sin. What the duties are, to which we are called in cases of affliction, common sense, even without the aid of revelation, might, one would think, determine with no great difficulty. They are obviously the duties of submission, dependence, patience, and fortitude; prayer for our support and deliverance; and such efforts for this end as are consistent with the spirit here specified. By this character God is as really and certainly glorified, as by any other which man can exhibit. It scarcely needs the aid of revelation to discern, that submission to God must be an acceptable offering to him. But, if we put an end to our lives because we are afflicted, we declare, in the decisive language of action, that we will not, or cannot bear what God has been pleased to lay upon us. In the former case, we declare that we will not submit to his dispensations; in the latter, we moreover declare, that the burdens which he lays upon us are such as we cannot, and therefore such as we ought not, to endure: of course, that they are oppressive, and unjust.

(3.) The case is falsely stated by Mr Hume.

There is no situation which is intolerable, except those by which life is brought to an end without our intervention; and these are incapable of being referred to the case in hand. In every other case, we can sustain our afflictions, if we please. That it is our duty to sustain them, and to sustain them willingly, cannot be denied, unless by him who also denies, that it is our duty to obey God in any case.

(4.) The position of Mr Hume, that we are useless to society, in any situation in which we can become guilty of suicide, is also false.

It will be remembered, that I all along except cases of melancholy and delirium. It is however true, that even in these cases no man can know that he will not, at some future time, be useful to his fellow men. In every other case a man, possessed of the power of contriving and executing his own destruction, may be, and can know that he may be, useful to the world. I can think of no case more favourable to the position of Mr Hume, than that of a person confined for a long period to his bed; or, as it is commonly termed, bed-rid. A man, even in this situation, may, if he pleases, be extensively useful. The patience, fortitude, and piety, with which he may sustain this trying affliction, may be among the most edifying and persuasive proofs of the

reality, power, and excellence of the religion which he professes, and the efficacious means of conversion and salvation to multitudes. Mr Hume himself says, that 'the damnation of one man is an infinitely greater evil, than the subversion of a thousand millions of kingdoms.' This evil the man who is bed-rid may prevent with regard to himself, and with regard to others; and may also be the means of accomplishing the contrary inestimable good. It cannot be said, that such a man is useless. At the same time, it is a false supposition, that a man can be useless who acts as he ought; or, in other words, does his duty in any situation in which God is pleased to place him. God does nothing in vain. Still less can it be supposed that he places an intelligent being in any situation in which his obedience to the divine will must be useless.

(5.) Neither is it true that any man is necessarily a burden to society.

A vicious man is, I acknowledge, often such a burden. But he is not necessarily vicious. His sloth, prodigality, insincerity, profaneness, falsehood, fraud, cruelty, or whatever vice he may be guilty of, is wholly the result of his own choice. The moment he renounces these evils, he will become, not a burden, but a blessing.

A virtuous man may become unable to support himself, may be incurably sick, or hopelessly bereft of his most useful faculties, and in either of these situations may be esteemed a burden to society by the lazy, the covetous, and the unfeeling. But he will be esteemed such by no virtuous man. He who remembers that ministrations of kindness to the 'least of Christ's brethren' will be accepted as offerings to himself, will never, unless in some unhappy moment of sloth, or worldliness, think the performance of it burdensome. Christ has informed his disciples, that 'the poor they will always have with them.' On his part the legacy was not unkind; to us it is obviously a blessing. Nothing more enlarges the heart, refines the affections, or improves the character, than kindness freely rendered to the afflicted. Nothing more excites a spirit of dependence on God, or awakens gratitude for his blessings to us, or expands the feelings of benevolent sympathy, or endears to us our fellow men, particularly our fellow Christians, or assimilates our disposition to that of the Redeemer. He to whom, without any fault of his own, mankind are indebted for these benefits, cannot be a burden to society.

I have now reviewed every argument of Mr Hume which, in my opinion, merits an answer; and his arguments, so far as I know, are all of any importance which have been hitherto alleged in favour of suicide. I shall only add one observation to those which I have already made under this head. It is this: All the distresses almost which give birth to this wanton destruction of human life are the mere effects of predominant wickedness in the mind of the suicide. Losses at the gaming-table, disappointments of ambition, mortified avarice, wounded pride, and frustrated hopes of sensuality, are usually the immediate sources of this crime. Instead of killing himself for such reasons as these, the true interest of the unhappy man demands of him, with infinite force, that he should live, repent, and reform.

II. *I shall now allege several proofs of the criminality of suicide, in addition to those which have been unavoidably specified in answering the arguments of Mr Hume.*

Of these, the first which I shall mention is the text.

In the first Discourse from this passage it was observed, that the command which it contains is expressed in the most absolute manner. 'Thou shalt not kill;' that to kill is the thing forbidden, and by the words is forbidden, in all cases whatever; that the words were chosen by God himself, and bind us therefore with infinite authority; and that man cannot lawfully originate an exception, nor in any other manner limit their import. These observations, it is presumed, cannot be denied to be true. But if they are true, the text forbids suicide in the most absolute manner.

Mr Hume indeed observes, that the law of Moses is abolished, except so far as it is established by the law of nature. A Christian will probably be satisfied of the authority of the decalogue, without this condition, when he finds it expressly established by Christ.

2. In addition to this decisive proof, a proof so decisive, as to need no addition, I observe, that the suicide hurries himself to the judgment in the commission of a gross crime, of which he cannot repent. If we should even allow, that the criminality of this act was not capable of being proved, so far as the act itself only is concerned, it cannot be denied, that he who commits it, is in some degree, at least, uncertain whether it be lawful, or not. To abstain from it, he at the same time knows to be lawful. In this case, to commit suicide is a gross sin; because the perpetrator refuses to do that which he knows to be right, and does that, of whose rectitude he has no assurance.

Farther: No person who thus puts an end to his life is assured that his salvation, independently of this act, is secured. Of course, even on the most favourable supposition, he puts his eternity at hazard, and ventures, in an inexcusable and dreadful manner, upon perdition.

Finally: There are, to say the least, strong, and hitherto unanswered, reasons to prove suicide a crime; and that of enormous magnitude.

These reasons will never be answered. It will always be true, that there are important ends to be accomplished by every man during the whole period through which his life would extend, did he not lay violent hands on himself. These ends are constituted, and set before him by God himself. In refusing to accomplish them, the suicide violates the highest obligations under which he is or can be placed. He is, according to the supposition, in affliction. This affliction both reason and revelation declare to be sent by his Creator. It is sent for the very purpose of amending his character, awakening in him patience and submission, faith and fortitude, enabling him to feel his dependence, softening his heart with tenderness towards his fellow creatures, exciting in him a spirit of universal obedience, and thus preparing him for endless life. I need not say, that these designs, on the part of God, are pre-eminently benevolent; nor that in refusing to accomplish them, nor that 'in sinning against God,' in this manner, he supremely 'wrongs his own soul.'

Human life is plainly intended by the Creator to be a mere course of duty and obedience. This is the direct appointment of the Creator. To wish to frustrate or reverse this appointment, much more to attempt the frustration or reversion of it by overt acts, is sinful of course. How sinful then must be this violent attempt to oppose the divine will!

But the suicide cuts himself off from every opportunity, from the very possibility, of repenting of these multiplied crimes. Hurried into eternity by his own hand, he appears before the bar of God, with all his guilt upon his head. Should it be said, that he may secure himself an opportunity of repentance by a gradual death; I answer, that neither the temper of mind with which he destroys his life, nor the views which God cannot but entertain of this violent act of rebellion, furnish him with any hope that he will become penitent.

3. The Scriptures expressly forbid us voluntarily to sink under any affliction.

'My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, neither faint when thou art rebuked of him.'—Christ has said to all his disciples, 'In the world ye shall have tribulation:' but he has most benevolently subjoined, 'in me ye shall have peace:' that is, peace, awakened in the midst of your afflictions, or flowing from them as a regular consequence of your submission and sanctification. Accordingly, St Paul declares, that, although no affliction is for the present joyous, but all are grievous: yet nevertheless they afterward yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness.

In these passages we are required, unconditionally, to sustain our afflictions with submission, patience, and fortitude. This command we cannot disobey, even in thought, without sin; much less in so violent an act of opposition. Suicide is the result, not only of a total want of submission, but of direct and violent hostility against the will of God. It is a declaration, that we will not 'endure the chastening of God;' and that the afflictions with which he is pleased to visit us are intolerable; and that they are therefore unreasonable and unrighteous specimens of oppression in his administrations. No charge can be more obviously blasphemous than this; more unsuited to the character of the Creator, or more unbecoming the mouth of a creature.

4. The suicide is always bound to prolong his life, by personal duties, which are indispensable.

He is bound to secure his own salvation. He is bound to provide for his family. If he performs not these so long as they need them, and so long as it is in his power, 'he denies the faith, and is worse than an infidel.' He is bound to train up his children 'in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.' He is bound to promote the happiness and salvation of those around him; and, generally, of his fellow men. Universally, whatever is his situation, he may, if he lives, do good to himself, and to mankind; and this good he is bound to do, so long as God is pleased to spare his life. When he destroys himself, he is guilty of gross rebellion against God in refusing to perform these duties.

5. The Scriptures never exhibit suicide as the conduct of any but very wicked men.

Job, David, Elijah, Jeremiah, Daniel and his three companions, Christ and the apostles, underwent afflictions incomparably more severe than those for which the suicide destroys his life. Yet neither of these thought it proper voluntarily to terminate his own life. Daniel and his companions, Christ and his apostles, were in most instances, however, destined to a violent and scandalous death; one of the very cases which Mr Hume has selected to show the lawfulness of suicide. This they perfectly well knew; but not one of them appears to have thought of preventing the pain and disgrace by laying violent hands on himself. This case is plainly an extreme one. None can be more so. Yet the perfect piety of Christ, and the exemplary piety of these virtuous men, instead of dictating this desperate course of conduct to them, taught them, severally, to wait with humble resignation for the will of God, and patiently to receive their destiny from his hand. The example of these persons will be followed by every virtuous man.

Saul, an open rebel against his Maker, and the intentional murderer of David and Jonathan; Ahithophel, a traitor to his lawful sovereign; and Judas, a traitor to his Redeemer—were suicides. This conduct in them was the result of their dispositions, the product of such principles as controlled these abandoned men. It is therefore rationally argued, that suicide, in the view of the Divine mind, is the moral consequence of the worst principles only. On the contrary, it is equally clear, that virtue, in the evangelical sense, is totally incompatible with the perpetration of this act, and absolutely forbids the voluntary destruction of our own lives. He who meditates the voluntary termination of his own life, ought solemnly to remember, that he is indulging a spirit which is directly opposed to that of Christ, and strongly assimilated to that of Saul, Ahithophel, and Judas.

SERMON CXVIII.

THE LAW OF GOD.—THE DECALOGUE.—THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT.—DRUNKENNESS.

And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess.—Eph. v. 18.

In the preceding Discourses I have considered several methods in which life is destroyed, in opposition to the sixth command of the decalogue. In this Discourse I shall make some observations concerning another of these methods; viz. Drunkenness.

Drunkenness is nearly allied to suicide. It is an equally certain means of shortening life. The principal difference, so far as the termination of life is concerned, lies in the mode. What is appropriately called suicide, is a sudden or immediate termination of life. Drunk-

enness brings it gradually to an end. The destruction in both cases is equally certain, and not materially different in the degree of turpitude. In many instances, indeed, this catastrophe is brought to pass, at least as suddenly, by drunkenness as by suicide. There is also another difference between these crimes. The suicide intends directly to destroy his life, and makes this his prime purpose; the drunkard thinks of nothing less: the prime object in his view is the gratification of his relish for strong drink, united with that bewildered elevation of spirits, which he feels in the hour of intoxication.

In the text we are expressly and universally forbidden to commit this sin. The penalty incurred by the commission is as expressly declared in 1 Cor. vi. 10; where it is said, that 'Drunkards shall not inherit the kingdom of God.' This threatening we are not indeed to consider as absolute, any more than others expressed in a similar manner. Undoubtedly, no person who enters eternity in the character of a drunkard will 'inherit the kingdom of God.' But I know of no reason to conclude, that he who, though once a drunkard, has become a penitent, will not be accepted.

This interesting subject I design to consider at large under the following heads:—

I. *The nature,*

II. *The causes,*

III. *The evils of drunkenness,* and

IV. *The means of avoiding it.*

I. *I shall make a few observations concerning the nature of this sin.*

Drunkenness is that singular state of man in which he loses, either partially or wholly, the use of his bodily and mental powers, under the operation of spirituous drink, opium, or other means of intoxication.

Drunkenness is either occasional or habitual.

Occasional drunkenness exists only in irregular, separate, solitary, or even single instances; and is produced sometimes by design, and sometimes by accident.

Habitual drunkenness is a frequent, and usually a regular intoxication; occasioned by that increased and peculiar love of strong drink, which is generated by occasional drunkenness.

Habitual drunkenness will be the principal subject of this Discourse. It will only be necessary to remark concerning occasional drunkenness, that all the observations almost concerning habitual drunkenness will be applicable to it, although in an inferior degree; and that, wherever the subject shall appear to demand any serious discrimination, I shall endeavour to make them in the progress of the discussion.

II. *The causes of this sin* (by which I intend, not the immediate, and properly efficient causes, such as those already mentioned; but those which, although more remote, are yet deeply concerned in the production of it) are principally the following:—

1. Example.

By this I intend, that we gradually acquire a habit of drunkenness, by seeing others drink; and, if I may be allowed the expression, catching the practice merely from the fact, that we often witness it in others. Wherever the character of those who set the example is the object of particular affection, esteem, or reverence, the influence of the example becomes proportionally great and dangerous. Parents in this manner become peculiarly, and other relations and friends generally, powerful means of seduction and ruin to their children, and other relatives. In this case I suppose nothing but the example, and the veneration and endearment by which it is accompanied, to produce the corruption of those to whom it is exhibited.

2. Frequenting those places where strong drink is conveniently obtained.

A tavern, especially a vulgar one, or a dram-shop, or an ale-house, newly opened, usually exhibits strongly, as well as clearly, the efficacy of this cause. Each of them soon begins to attract its train of drinking customers; and within a moderate period becomes surrounded by its circle of drunkards. There is scarcely a greater nuisance to society than houses of this nature; in which spirituous liquors are sold in small quantities to the neighbouring inhabitants. Millions of the human race have in these baleful haunts taken the first fatal step towards perdition.

3. Evil companions.

These usually combine all the efficacy of the former causes, with many additional temptations. They present the example, they provide the retreat, and the convenience. At the same time, they add to these the force of direct and powerful solicitations, the sprightliness of wit, the gayety of sports and songs, the pungency of ridicule, the influence of good nature and affection; and the power of that sympathy which is always found in social festivity. Such a combination is too powerful to be resisted by common minds; perhaps by any mind which is voluntarily, for any length of time, within its reach. He who frequents the society of jovial companions in an habitual manner, may fairly consider himself as destined in the end to become a sot.

4. Customary and regular drinking.

Multitudes of persons accustom themselves to take a moderate quantity of strong drink, day by day, at regular periods; in the morning, immediately before dinner, or in the evening. Labouring men in this country are, to a great extent, accustomed to use ardent spirits at certain given times of the day; considering them as necessary to recruit their strength, which is supposed to be wasted by their toil. Some of them, less attentive to particular times of drinking, demand stated quantities of strong drink, which they regard as indispensable to enable them to pursue their daily labour. Men of wealth and fashion, with nearly the same regularity, consume large quantities of wine at and after dinner. In these, and in all other, cases of regular drinking, an habitual attachment to strong drink is insensibly begun, strengthened, and confirmed. The man who drinks spirits regularly, ought to consider himself as having already entered the path of habitual intoxication.

5. Affliction also is, not unfrequently, a cause of drunkenness.

The affliction here referred to is both bodily and mental. Certain diseases of the body, it is well known, bring with them lowness of spirits, discouragement, and melancholy. The patient oftentimes resorts to the use of strong drink, as a remedy for these evils, and finds in it a temporary relief from the pressure. Oftentimes the physician prescribes this remedy in form, and thus adds the sanction of his skill and character to the patient's inclination. In every case of this nature a degree of pain is usually experienced in that part of the

stomach which is sometimes called the *second sensory.* This is commonly relieved, at least in some degree, by the use of strong drink, taken at first in moderate quantities. The remedy, however, leaves the disease worse than it found it. To produce the desired effect a greater quantity is soon necessary, and then a greater still. In this manner multitudes of persons become drunkards.

The mental evils which give birth to this unhappy habit are numerous. Most or all of them, however, are such as, instead of exciting, waste or destroy the energy of the mind. Of this nature are a strong sense of irretrievable disgrace, a painful consciousness of perplexed or desperate circumstances, merited loss of esteem and affection highly valued by ourselves, long-continued suspense concerning some important interest, final discouragement of ardent wishes or favourite pursuits, together with several other very anxious and hopeless situations of the mind. From the distress suffered in these and the like cases, it often betakes itself for relief to spirituous liquors. The relief is necessarily transient; and, in order to be enjoyed to any great extent, must therefore be often repeated. By this repetition the sufferer soon becomes, of course, habitually intemperate.

6. A small number of persons find a cause of drunkenness in an original, native appetite for strong drink.

The number of these is so small, and the cause itself so little needs explanation, that it is unnecessary to dwell on this part of the subject.

III. *The principal evils of drunkenness are the following:*

1. It exhibits the subject of it in the light of extreme odiousness and degradation.

Drunkenness always deprives a man, either partially or wholly, of his reason, and very often of his bodily faculties. A man without reason is either a maniac, or a brute; and, for the time, presents the eye with a spectacle more sunk than the brute, and more painful than the maniac. The loss of reason is to man the loss of all which renders him either comfortable, respectable, or useful. How painful, how humiliating is the sight of an idiot! How excruciating the appearance of a lunatic! How lowering to human pride and independence, to sober contemplation and real dignity, a respectable man, transformed by age or sickness into a driveller! Such a transformation the drunkard accomplishes for himself, during every period of his intoxication; and adds to all the other circumstances of degradation, the peculiarly humbling and hateful one, that he has voluntarily degraded himself.

In this situation the drunkard becomes, in the literal and most emphatic sense, a fool. His conversation is that of a tongue, vibrating without a mind; moving, because it has been accustomed to move; lisping and babbling an imperfect, cluttered, and dragging articulation; a kind of instinctive effort, resembling that of the idiot, who having learned to count the strokes of a clock, continued to count after the clock had ceased to go.

In the mean time, many drunkards, who partially lose their reason, set their passions on fire. All restraints in this case vanish with their reason. The mind becomes a furnace of frenzy; and the bodily powers, stimulated to more than ordinary vigour, are employed only as the instruments of rage and violence. In the former case, the man sank down to the level of a swine; in this, he converts himself into a tiger. In the former case, he became loathsome and despicable; in this, he becomes equally the object of hatred and terror.

There is, however, a stage in the progress of both, at which they lose alike, and absolutely, the powers of both body and mind. Each then becomes absolutely stupid; a mass of flesh, in which a soul once lived, thought, animated, and controlled; but from which it has fled, indignant at the brutal abuse which it has suffered. It has become palsied, lifeless, and, for the period, extinct under a shock which it was unable to sustain.

2. Drunkenness exposes the subject of it to many, and those often extreme, dangers.

The drunkard is always exposed to be overreached and defrauded during the seasons of his partial insanity. At these seasons, many persons, devoted to the use of strong drink, are peculiarly inclined to manage business, and make bargains. The weakness, the want of self-control, and the incapacity of forming just estimates of men and things, always visible at these seasons in such men, mark them out as prey for the cheat and the sharper. Accordingly, they often take such measures to produce in them such a degree of intoxication, as they well know will effectually answer their own purposes. Without any such pre-concertion, there are, however, always sharpers enough, ready to arrest the drunkard in his intoxication, and drunkards enough to furnish them with victims. At almost all such periods, the losses incurred are material, frequently they are great, and sometimes they are fatal.

At other seasons, when the intoxication is complete, the subject of it is exposed to extreme personal dangers. Few men in this situation are aware, so long as they retain a partial use of their limbs, and some faint glimmerings of understanding, how incompetent they have become to direct their own conduct with safety. Of course, they venture without apprehension into such situations as demand the full exercise of their bodily and mental powers. Hence, one of them has fallen from his horse, and broken his limbs or his neck. Another has fallen into the fire, and either terminated his life, or made himself through the remainder of it a miserable cripple. A third has lost himself in a wintry storm, and perished, because he could not find the way to his own house. A fourth hath fallen overboard, and been drowned. A fifth has killed himself by swallowing a larger quantity of ardent spirits than he was aware, or than his nature could sustain. By these and many other accidents, to some or other of which the drunkard is almost always exposed, multitudes have come to an untimely end.

Nor is the danger much less to the intoxicated person of doing, without any design, and even in contradiction to his prevailing wishes, serious injuries to those around him. Not a small number of dwelling-houses have been consumed by these undesigning incendiaries. In the conflagration, the inhabitants, whoever they may have been, most frequently his family, and perhaps as frequently the drunkard himself, have perished. Who, that has the least share of sober reflection or common sense left, would not tremble at the first approach towards this terrible catastrophe?

3. The drunkard exposes himself to many temptations, and many sins.

Of this nature indeed are all those things which have

been mentioned under the preceding heads. But, beside these evils, the use of spirituous liquors produces many others. It excites to a high degree of intenseness most of the vehement passions of man, particularly anger and lust. As the government of reason is lost, and the power of conscience laid asleep, the passions, at all times sufficiently strong, assume, with increased strength, the absolute control of the man, and spur and goad him on to every crime within his reach. In this situation, it is to be remembered, he is rarely alone. Other drunkards are usually around him, whose reason is equally enfeebled, and whose passions are equally awake. Among men of strong passions, and little reason, disputes cannot fail to arise. In such men, disputes generate anger of course. Anger here regularly issues in quarrelling; and quarrelling terminates in maimed limbs, bloodshed, and death. A large part of the murders which have existed in this world have grown out of intoxication.

4. A drunkard necessarily wastes his own property.

This he often does, as I have already observed, by the foolish and mischievous bargains which he makes during the hours of intoxication. But this is far from being all. In the mere purchase of strong drink he expends greater sums than any man, without an arithmetical calculation, would suspect, and obviously greater than moderate property can bear.

Nor is this all. A great part of his time is spent in preparing the means of intoxication, in the haunts to which he resorts for it, among his drinking companions, and in sleeping and wearing off its immediate effects. All this time would otherwise have been employed in useful business, and would have thus been the means of increasing, instead of diminishing, his property.

Nor is he less a sufferer by that gradual diminution of bodily and mental powers mentioned above. His frame and limbs are of course diseased. In this manner he becomes, at times, disabled from pursuing his business at all; and, at other times, obliged to pursue it to very little purpose. What he does in this situation is but half done; and would often have been as well or much better omitted. His judgment, also, and skill, are equally impaired; and, instead of directing his business with success, are wasted on feeble, fruitless plans, miserably executed. As these powers decay, he becomes careless, listless, and negligent of his concerns; and sees them continually declining, and himself daily approaching towards beggary, without either the power or the will to stay the deplorable progress.

Thus he voluntarily robs himself of a comfortable support in old age, and in the sickness to which he is so eminently exposed; and, at an untimely period, withers the power and wastes the means of enjoyment.

5. The drunkard destroys his health.

No constitution is able to resist the scorching efficacy of that liquid fire, which this slave of sense and sin incessantly swallows. Pain, sorrow, and disease, are its inevitable effects. The stomach becomes speedily too much weakened to receive, and the appetite to relish, food, until both have been stimulated by a new draught. Speedily, the limbs complain and decay, the senses become obtuse, and all the energy of the body gradually wastes away.

In this situation, also, the skill of the physician and the power of medicine are rendered useless. A large proportion of all the useful medicines, those particularly which the diseases of drinking men chiefly demand, are stimulants. But these men have used one of the most powerful of all stimulants so often, and so long, that medicines of this nature cease to operate upon their constitutions with their proper sanative power. They are left, therefore, in a peculiar degree to the ravages and sufferings of disease, without the usual means of cure, alleviation, or hope.

6. The drunkard wastes his reputation.

'A good name is better than great riches.' It would be no small consolation therefore to a man of this description, under the loss of his property and his health, if he could at the same time preserve his character. But, unhappily for him, his reputation is squandered faster than his property, and destroyed more suddenly than his health. Drunkenness is a sin which, after it has once become habitual, is so rarely relinquished, as hardly to admit the feeblest hope of reformation. In a very early part of his progress, therefore, he becomes branded with the full and entire character of a drunkard. His reputation, of course, is lost at an untimely period; and his infamy is of a premature growth. But what character can be more degrading, more indicative of the loss of virtue and common sense, and of the voluntary assumption of folly and self-pollution? What name is more scandalous; more evidential, that a man has left his proper rank in the creation and sunk himself down to the level of brutes, than that of a sot? But on this reputation, thus wantonly and profligately wasted, hangs almost all the comfort and usefulness of men. To preserve it fresh and untainted, therefore, is alike their interest and their duty; a duty indispensable, an interest which cannot be estimated. He who does not highly value it is a fool; he who wantonly throws it away is a madman!

7. The drunkard destroys his reason.

Reason has been often, and justly, styled 'the light of the mind.' Mr Locke, with great force and beauty, styles it 'the candle of the Lord, shining within man.' It is our only ultimate directress. Even the doctrines and precepts of revelation can be nothing to us, until reason has first discerned it to be a revelation, and determined the real import of its precepts and doctrines. Still more absolutely is it the arbiter of all our ordinary concerns. For these we have no other guide, and can submit them to no other control. In a word, reason makes us men; and without it we should be brutes.

But this invaluable possession, this essence of his character as a human being, himself, his all, the drunkard rapidly wastes away.

8. The drunkard destroys his usefulness.

This evil is dreadfully involved in the loss of his property, health, reputation, and reason. The perpetual degradation with which he daily appears to the eyes of those around him, not only forbids the esteem and confidence which are indispensable to the attainment of useful business, but renders him an object of abhorrence and loathing. Thus, without reputation to recommend him to others, or property, or even inclination to befriend them; with health and reason so decayed, as to be unable to befriend himself; he ceases to be of any serious use to either. Of course, he becomes a burden, a nuisance, a calamity to the world. 'Good would it have been for this man, if he had never been born.'

In the mean time, sunk and lost as he is, he continues, and usually for a length of time, to be a merry and jovial haunter of taverns and dram-shops; and, like a vessel of variolous matter occasionally opened, spreads, from day to day, a pestilential contagion through the clusters of miserable wretches who frequent these dangerous resorts. Few men injure a community more dreadfully than a drunkard. The sin which peculiarly constitutes his character is almost wholly derived from example. Every such example, therefore, is the real cause of extending the evil to succeeding generations, as well as of corrupting his contemporaries. Were the injurers of mankind to receive their real deserts, Newgate would exchange many of its present tenants for the mischievous slaves of strong drink.

9. The drunkard ruins his family.

In this comprehensive and affecting article, several particulars merit the most serious consideration.

(1.) He spreads through his family the habit of intoxication.

The influence of parental example, especially when an evil example, I have already had occasion particularly to unfold. In the present melancholy case, all the power of such an example is felt to the utmost. It is an example seen daily, in the house, and in the parent. It is seen by children so soon as they can see any thing, and long before their minds are capable of distinguishing its nature or its tendency. The parent visibly regards spirituous liquors as a peculiarly interesting enjoyment of sense, at a time when they know no enjoyments but those of sense; of course, they cannot but think it eminently valuable. The means of intoxication are also provided to their hand; and their own home, so far as a dangerous and malignant influence is concerned, is changed into a dram-shop. The mother, in the mean time, not unfrequently contracts the same evil habit from the father; and thus both parents unite in the unnatural and monstrous employment of corrupting their children. What a prospect is here presented to our view! A husband and wife, to whom God has given children, to be trained up by them for heaven, united together in taking them by the hand, and leading them coolly to perdition! What heart, not made of stone, can look at such a family, without feeling exquisite distress, and the most terrible forebodings? Contemplate, for a moment, the innocent, helpless beings, perfectly unconscious of their danger, and incapable of learning it, thus led as victims to the altar of a modern Moloch, less sanguinary indeed, but not less cruel, than the heathen god, before whom the Israelitish parents burnt their own offspring; and say, whether you most pity the children, or detest the parents.

(2.) By squandering his property he deprives them of both comfort and respectability.

The comfort which we enjoy in the present world, so far as the world itself is concerned, is principally found in realizing the expectations which we have rationally and habitually formed concerning our future circumstances in life. These expectations are, of course, grounded on the circumstances of our parents. We expect what we are thus taught to expect; and this naturally is, that we receive such an education, and pass through life in such a manner, as is common to the children of those who are in similar circumstances. These expectations the drunken parent gradually frit-ters away with the gradual diminution of his estate. The mind of the child sees, with more and more discouragement, one expected gratification vanish after another, till it ceases to expect at all; and sinks down into sullen or broken-hearted despair.

Among the evils which children suffer, a prime one is the loss of education; of that education, I mean, which is suited to their condition in life. The instructions which children receive are a debt which no parent can, without extreme guilt, refuse to discharge; and of which no child can be prevented, but by robbery, as well as fraud. They are the chief means of his future comfort and his future usefulness. They take him out of the list of savages, and place him in the rank of men. They form him to wisdom, to worth, and to honour. Beyond this, they open to him the gates of virtue, glory, and immortality, and point to him the path to heaven.

The most important of these instructions the parent himself is able, and therefore bound, to give; the instructions, especially of a moral and religious nature, which are given and received with incomparably the greatest efficacy in the morning of life. But what instructions can a drunkard communicate? What must be the efficacy, even of truth itself, proceeding from disturbed reason, a reeling frame, and a babbling tongue? With this image before him, what child can sufficiently withdraw himself from shame and anguish to learn at all? With what a contradictory and monstrous deformity of character must religious truths and precepts be inculcated on his child, by a man imbruted by strong drink!

The government of children is obviously of no less importance than their instruction. But what must be the government exercised by a sot? A mixture of contradictions, imbecility, and rage; a mixture which every child six years old perfectly understands, and which no child of that age can respect or love. How can he reprove them for their faults? His own life is nothing but a tissue of faults. How can he enjoin upon them virtuous conduct? His own life is a perpetual war upon virtue. How can he recommend to them religion? His whole character is an insult upon religion. All this his children perfectly know; and their meaning eyes, if he will look into them, will tell him the story in language unutterable.

(3.) He breaks their hearts by subjecting them to insupportable mortification.

The drunkard presents his family with the melancholy sight of an intoxicated parent; an image always before their eyes; an image which sinks them in the dust; an image which overwhelms them in despair. What child can look at such an object, and remember that this object is his parent, without a broken heart?

The distresses thus experienced he renders double-edged by his own fretful and passionate temper. All drunkards almost assume this temper of course; and in this manner become intolerable nuisances to those with whom they are most intimately connected. The house of a drunkard is always the seat of discontent and turmoil. The sufferings of his family soon become too great to be borne with patience. Complaints, which nature cannot stifle, beget criminations, reproaches, abuses, and quarrels; terminating not unfrequently in wounds, bloodshed, and death.

In this manner the temper of his family is ruined.

They are taught, and in a sense forced, to become hostile to each other; and prepared to become enemies to mankind. At the same time, they are rendered uncomfortable to themselves; and, should they have families of their own, are made curses to them also.

Their spirits, in the mean time, are broken down by an unceasing consciousness which they cannot escape, that their disgrace, in all its complication, is known and published wherever they are known. The head, at least, of their domestic body is not only distressingly, but scandalously sick; and sick with a hopeless, as well as shameful disease. The members in greater or less degrees, suffer with the head, and for it, at least, suffer inexpressibly.

To all these things ought to be added their continual apprehension, that their husband and parent will come to some dreadful disaster, or to an untimely end, by some one of that numerous train of accidents to which he is daily exposed; and the terrible conviction that, should he even escape these evils, he is still going regularly onward to final perdition. This consummation of evils they are compelled to expect, with an assurance little short of absolute knowledge; and cannot fail to tremble in the morning, lest the dreadful event should arrive before the close of the day.

10. The drunkard destroys his life.

The drunkard is as really a suicide, as if he compassed his death by the pistol or the halter. The difference is, principally, that the destruction is slower, and accomplished by a long succession of sins, and not by one bold and desperate effort of turpitude; and that the drunkard, instead of aiming at his life, aims merely at the gratification of his appetite; while the suicide makes his own destruction his prime purpose. The drunkard is a negligent, the suicide an intentional self-murderer. Often, indeed, the drunkard destroys himself in a moment. Often, as I have already observed, he falls from his horse, or into the fire, or into the water, or is brought to an untimely end by some other fatal accident. Most usually, however, he wastes gradually the taper of life before the time; and thus cuts off one-fourth, one-third, or one-half of his 'accepted time;' even while he lives, by his desperate progress in sin he terminates all his hopes of salvation.

II. *The drunkard ruins his soul.*

It has been heretofore observed, that the drunkard destroys his reason. In this manner he is unfitted for all profitable use of the means of grace, and for all attention to eternal life. Every call of mercy finds him stupid and regardless. To every threatening his ears are deaf; to every promise his heart is insensible. The power of motives he knows not how to feel; and even their nature he cannot comprehend. To temptations, on the contrary, he is always exposed, alive, and awake. Around him therefore temptations throng, and every tempter fastens on him as his prey. Sin, of course, becomes his business; and 'he draws iniquity as with a cart rope.'

In the mean time he is, beyond most other men, hopeless of reformation. The hopeless condition of a sot is proverbial. Amendment in this case is so rare, as scarcely to admit belief. Indeed, heaven seems to have stamped this sin almost always with reprobation. To complete his miserable condition, he is cut off from prayer. No person who intends to sin can pray. No person who intends to tempt himself, as the drunkard always does, can say, 'Lead me not into temptation; but deliver me from evil;' and no person who cannot pray can be saved. Thus the drunkard holds out to his family and to the world the deplorable spectacle of a sinner hardened beyond the common measure; exposing himself to sin of every kind, and in every degree, and yet voluntarily depriving himself of the usual means of repentance; hastening to perdition, and yet closing his eyes to the dangers of the precipice on which he stands, and to the terrors of the gulf which opens beneath.

IV. *I shall now endeavour summarily to point out the means of avoiding this dreadful evil.*

1. Among these means, it will be readily seen, must be the avoidance of the causes by which intoxication is solicited or encouraged.

Most of these causes may ordinarily be avoided by a little care, and a little resolution. No persons, except the family of the drunkard, are obliged to be present, unless casually, to examples of this nature. No person is necessitated to frequent the places in which, or the company of the persons by whom, this evil habit is encouraged. Every man can avoid regular drinking. That all this is the duty of every man, a duty of the most pressing kind, will not be questioned. Every thing here depends on resisting, or avoiding, 'the beginnings of evil.'

Peculiarly is it the duty and wisdom of all men to abstain from the haunts of drunkenness, from drinking companions, and from regular drinking. Almost all habits of intoxication are originated by one or other of these causes. He who becomes familiar with these temptations, is advancing to perdition with his eyes open.

2. The man who finds in himself any peculiar relish for spirituous liquors, is bound to abstain from them wholly.

The relish for these increases invariably with every instance and degree of indulgence. To cherish it therefore, is to make ourselves drunkards; and it is cherished most efficaciously by repeated drinking. No man will do this, who is not a fair candidate for Bedlam.

3. All persons who have already begun the habit of intoxication, are bound to desist absolutely from all use of strong drink.

Every effort at gradual reformation will only cheat him who makes it. At first it may seem to promise something; but it will soon be found to perform nothing of any use. The candidate for reformation will speedily find himself more entangled than ever, and at a greater distance from the reformation intended. Hard as the case may be, he must break off at once, or be ruined.

4. Persons not peculiarly in danger of this evil, are, nevertheless, bound scrupulously to guard against it.

No reputation, no wisdom, nor hardly any worth, will secure man against drunkenness. This sin is found in the cottage, and in the palace; in the study of the philosopher, and in the sacred desk; in the hall of council, and on the bench of justice; and, contrary to what would seem the dictates of nature, as well as delicacy, in the female sex; even in instances where distinction, understanding, amiableness, and refinement would appear to forbid even the suspicion. In most, if not all of these cases, the evil creeps insensibly on the unhappy

subject, and overcomes him before he is aware. A prime object to be here regarded, is therefore, to keep the danger always before our eyes. We are ever to feel that we ourselves are in danger; and to consider an habitual lively dread of it as our safety. We are to form also vigorous and standing resolutions, that we will not be overcome. These we are invariably to form in the fear of God, with a solemn recollection of his presence, with a humble dependence on him to bless us, and with fervent supplications for his blessing. To strengthen our resolutions, and to keep our fears awake, we are to mark the miserable victims of this sin with anxiety and terror; to regard the sin itself as 'the highway to hell;' and to realize, that in yielding to it we seal our own reprobation.

To all this conduct motives can never be wanting. Multitudes of the highest import, and the most commanding efficacy, have been already suggested in the progress of this Discourse. Every heart in this house, which is not formed of adamant, must have felt their force. Nothing pleads for it, except the mere appetite for strong drink; an appetite usually unnatural, and created by casual indulgence. All things else in heaven and in earth exclaim against it with a single voice. Our health, our reputation, our safety, our reason, our usefulness, our lives, our souls, our families, and our friends, in solemn and affecting union, urge, entreat, and persuade us to abstain. God commands, Christ solicits, the Spirit of grace influences, us to abstain. Angels and glorified saints behold our conduct with such anxiety and alarm as happy beings can feel, and watch and hope to see our escape. The law, with a terrible voice, thunders in our ears that dreadful denunciation, 'Drunkards shall not inherit the kingdom of God.' Even hell itself, hostile as it is to our salvation, follows the rest of the universe; and, in spite of its own malevolence, subjoins its dreadful admonition, by marshalling before us the innumerable hosts of miserable wretches whom this sin has driven to its mansions of despair. Who, that does not already sleep the sleep of death, can refuse to hear, awake, and live?

SERMON CXIX.

THE LAW OF GOD.—THE DECALOGUE.—SEVENTH COMMANDMENT.—THE ORIGIN, NATURE, AND BENEFITS OF MARRIAGE.

Thou shalt not commit adultery—Exod. xx. 14.

Before I enter upon the direct consideration of the precept in the text, it will be useful, for the purpose of illustrating and enforcing it, to examine the nature of marriage. The sin immediately forbidden in the text derives, in some respects, its existence from this institution; and is in all respects intimately connected with it, in whatever manner or degree the sin may exist. Such an examination also derives particular importance from the fact, that it has been rarely made in the desk. Indeed, I do not know where it has been made in such a manner as to satisfy my own wishes.

In discussing this subject I shall consider,

I. *The origin,*

II. *The nature,*

III. *The benefits of marriage.*

I. *The origin of marriage is from God.* In other words, *marriage is a divine institution.*

The proof of this position is complete in the following passage. Matt. xix. 3—6; 'The pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? And he answered, and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning, made them male and female; and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore, they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder.'

In this passage of Scripture our Saviour declares, that when God had created man male and female, he said, 'For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife; and they twain shall be one flesh.' These, it is ever to be remembered, are the words of God himself, as they are here declared to be by Christ; and not, as they have often been erroneously supposed to be, the words of Adam. God made man male and female for this end, and in these words delivered his own ordinance to mankind; at once permitting and directing that a man henceforth should leave his father and mother, and that lawfully, notwithstanding his high and otherwise indissoluble obligations to them, and be united to his wife. Accordingly he declares them henceforth to be 'no more twain, but one.'

That these words contain an institution of God, and that this institution is marriage, cannot be doubted for a moment. The only question which can be asked concerning the subject is, for whom was this institution designed? Plainly it was not designed for Adam and Eve; for they had neither father nor mother, and were therefore not included in the terms of the ordinance; and, being already married by God himself, were necessarily excluded from any ordinance succeeding that event. The ordinance then respected their posterity only; and, as it is delivered in absolutely indifferent terms, terms unrestricted to any individuals, or collections of mankind, it respected all their posterity alike.

In this manner it is directly explained by our Saviour, in the passage quoted above. The Pharisees asked him 'whether it was lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?' Christ replies, that in consequence of this institution, a man and his wife are no more twain, but one; that is, a man and his wife, at the time in which he was speaking, and from the time when this ordinance was made, are no more twain, but, from the day of their marriage, are by this ordinance constituted one. Accordingly, he subjoins, 'What God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.' As if he said, 'God hath joined together by this ordinance all men and women who are lawfully married; or, in other words, every lawfully married pair. Man, therefore, cannot lawfully disjoin them.' Here it is evident beyond a debate, that our Saviour pronounced men to be married, or joined together, at the time when he made these declarations, by God himself in this ordinance. Of course the ordinance extends to all lawfully married persons.

II. The *nature of marriage* may be explained in the following manner:

Marriage is a union between two persons of different sexes. It is carefully to be remembered, that the ordinance of God, which gave birth to it, limits the union to two. God said, 'For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife;' not, Men shall leave their fathers and mothers, and shall cleave unto their wife; nor, A man shall leave his father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wives, and they twain shall be one: Not, they indefinitely, without declaring how many; nor, they three, four, or five; but 'they twain.' The ordinance, therefore, on which alone marriage is lawfully founded, limits this union, in the most express and definite manner, to two persons. What God has thus established, man cannot alter.

It is the most intimate union which exists in the present world. The persons who are thus united are joined together in a more intimate relation than any other which exists, or can exist, among mankind. No attachment is so strong, no tenderness so great, as that which is originated and cherished by this institution. This is directly predicted, and very forcibly declared, in the passage which I have quoted from St Matthew. 'For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife, and they twain shall be one.' Accordingly, the union of affections, interests, labours, and life here existing, has no parallel in the present world.

It is also a perpetual union. The connexion is entered into by both parties for life. God has constituted it, by joining the parties with his own infinite authority; and has forbidden man to put them asunder. It is indissoluble therefore on any ground but that of crime; a crime of one kind only; and in its nature fatal to all the blessings and hopes intended by the institution.

It is a union also formed by a most solemn covenant. In this covenant God is appealed to, as a witness of the sincere affection and upright designs of the parties; both of whom engage mutually the exercise of those affections, and the pursuit of that conduct, which together are the most efficacious means of their mutual happiness. This covenant plainly approaches very near to the solemnity and obligation of an oath; and exclusively of that in which man gives himself up to God, is, without a doubt, the most solemn and the most important ever entered into by man. When the duties of it are faithfully performed, they furnish a fair foundation for the best hopes that the union will be immortal.

III. *The benefits of this institution are incalculably numerous, and inestimably important.*

This truth is clearly evident from the observations already made, concerning the origin and nature of marriage. It is also forcibly evinced by the manner in which the subject is elsewhere exhibited in the Scriptures.

The violation of the marriage covenant was of such consequence in the view of the Divine mind, that it was made the subject of one of the commands in the decalogue.

In the laws concerning this subject given to the Israelites, curses were pronounced in form against the direct violations of the marriage vow, and the violators were punished with death.

Of adulterers, and all other transgressors of the seventh command, it is declared in the New Testament, that 'they shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone.'—'None of those who go in to the strange woman,' says Solomon, 'turn again; neither take they hold of the paths of life.'

The relation between Christ and his church, is throughout the Scriptures, exhibited as a marriage. God says to his church, 'Thy Maker is thy husband: Jehovah of Hosts is his name.' The angel in the Revelation styles the church, 'The bride, the Lamb's wife.'

From these, and other similar exhibitions of this subject in the Scriptures, it must necessarily be supposed, that God regarded marriage as pre-eminently important and beneficial to mankind.

The benefits of marriage, however, like those of every other practical concern, are chiefly to be learned from facts. I shall therefore apply directly to that extensive source of information; and exhibit, with a brief survey, such of these benefits, unfolded by human experience, as the present opportunity will permit.

1. Marriage is extensively the means of comfort to the married pair.

This was originally proposed by God as an important end of the institution. 'And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone: I will make him an help meet for him.' Accordingly, this end has been regularly accomplished from the beginning.

Licentious men, both of ancient and modern times, have carried on a course of open and incessant hostility against this institution; as they have, indeed, against all the real interests of mankind. In the progress of this warfare, they have arraigned the wisdom, and denied the benefits of it; charged upon it evils which it does not produce, and enhanced those which are incident to the marriage state. The unhappy marriages which have been contracted in violation of the law of our nature and of the Scriptures, comparatively few in number, and only exceptions to the general truth under discussion, they have multiplied without consideration or integrity; and have brought them up to public view as just exhibitions of the marriage state in general. In a word, they have treated this subject as they customarily treat others of a serious nature; they have misstated facts, they have sophisticated arguments, and, where neither would answer their purpose, they have

endeavoured to accomplish it by contempt, sneers, and ridicule.

This conduct, censurable and mischievous as it is, is perhaps not to be wondered at, in men of such a character. But it is to be wondered at, that men of a far better character should have followed their steps. A man of even moderate reflection must be equally surprised and wounded, to see how many otherwise respectable writers in the peculiarly enlightened kingdom of Great Britain have, in a greater or a less degree, lent their names to foster the wretched calumnies and falsehoods heaped so undeservedly upon this subject.

That there are unhappy marriages, and that the number of them is considerable, I am not disposed to question. There are many persons whose passions are too violent, or whose temper is too sordid, to permit them to be happy in any situation. Persons marry at times whose dispositions are wholly incompatible with each other. There are vicious persons, who will neither be happy themselves, nor suffer others to be happy. All these, it is readily conceded, will find little happiness in the marriage state.

The propensities, inwrought into our nature as a law, and the declarations of Scripture, teach us alike, and irresistibly, that this union is to be formed only on the ground of affection, regulated by prudence. On this plan, and on this only, can marriage be reasonably expected to be happy. We are not therefore to wonder, that persons who marry for the purpose of allying themselves to families of distinction, acquiring or repairing fortunes, obtaining rank, or gratifying in any manner ambition, avarice, or sensuality, should afterward find themselves unhappy. These persons do not intentionally marry either husbands or wives. They marry distinction, fortunes, titles, villas, luxury, and grandeur. The objects to which they intentionally unite themselves they acquire. It cannot be wondered at, that they do not gain those which they never sought; nor that they do not find the blessings of marriage following plans and actions which, unless incidentally, have no relation to marriage. These persons, it is true, find the objects to which they are really wedded, encumbered by beings who stand in the places of husbands and wives. Still, they cannot form even a pretence for complaining; since, with their eyes open, they voluntarily subject themselves, for the sake of such gratifications, to all the evils arising out of the encumbrance. The person who wishes to obtain the blessings designed by this or any other institution of God, must intentionally conform to the nature and spirit of the institution itself, and to all the precepts concerning it by which he has manifested his own pleasure.

I have lived in very many families, and those often in plain as well as polished life. With very many more, extensively diversified in character and circumstances, I have been intimately acquainted. By the evidence arising from these facts, I am convinced, that the great body of married persons are rendered more happy by this union, and are as happy as their character and their circumstances could permit us to expect. Poverty cannot, whether in the married or single state, enjoy the pleasures of wealth; avarice, those of generosity; ambition, those of moderation; ignorance, those of knowledge; vulgarity, those of refinement; passion, those of gentleness; nor vice, in whatever form, those of virtue. The evils here specified, marriage, it is true, cannot remove. Nor are they removable by celibacy; and where these evils exist, neither celibacy nor marriage can confer the contrary blessings. 'Grapes, here, will not grow upon thorns, nor figs upon thistles.' Nothing but folly can lead us to expect that this institution will change the whole nature of those who enter into it; and, like a magical spell, confer knowledge, virtue, and loveliness upon beings who have neither.

2. Another end of this institution, is the preservation and comfort of children.

The experience of all ages and countries, so far as it has extended to this subject, has uniformly shown, that the offspring of illicit concubinage suffer innumerable evils to which those born in wedlock are not subjected. In a prodigious multitude of instances they perish before, or immediately after, they are born. In a vast multitude of others, they die in the early periods of childhood. They suffer from hunger, cold, nakedness, negligence, the want of nursing, watching, medicine, and every other comfort of life. The peculiar affection of married parents, and the peculiar efforts to which it gives birth, have ever been indispensable to the preservation of children from these evils, the establishment of their health, and the continuance of their lives. Children need ten thousand supplies, cares, and tendernesses, which nothing but this affection will ever furnish; and without which, they either die suddenly or waste away with a lingering dissolution.

This work of raising up children from infancy to manhood, is the most laborious of all our worldly concerns; and requires more efforts of both body and mind, more toil, care, patience, and perseverance than any other. To most men, indeed, it is a great part of all which ordinarily they find to do in their secular business.

For this great work, God, with wisdom which can never be sufficiently admired, has made effectual provision by the parental tenderness, always existing and flourishing in married parents with so few exceptions as to demand no attention here; but always withered, and commonly destroyed, by promiscuous concubinage. This tenderness neither time nor toil, neither care nor anxiety, neither trouble nor disappointment, neither filial ingratitude nor filial profligacy, can overcome, exhaust, or discourage. Other affections become cold, wearied, and disheartened; and are often converted into negligence, or hatred. But this, like the celestial fire in the Jewish temple, burns by night and by day; and is, through this world, an everlasting flame, which cannot be extinguished. Without it, what would become of children in poverty, in their rebellion, and in their profligacy? Who would watch over them; who relieve, supply, endure, and forgive?

In promiscuous concubinage children would be left to the mercy of the world, to the supplies of accident, to the charity of the street, to the bleak and desolate waste, to the frozen hospital, and to the inclemencies of the sky, to pine with hunger, to chill with nakedness, to shrivel with unkindness, to consume with premature disease, to die an untimely death, and, denied a grave, now the privilege even of beggars, to feed the beasts of the field, and the fowls of heaven.

3. This institution is the source of all the natural relations of mankind.

By these I mean the relations of husband and wife

(which in a subordinate sense may be called natural), those of parents and children, of brothers and sisters, together with many others, which are of considerable, although of inferior importance. These relations are immensely more interesting and useful to the world than any, nay, than all others. They connect mankind by bonds far more intimate, delightful, and enduring; resist incomparably more the irregular, evil, and stormy passions of man; soften his rugged nature, overthrow his violent purposes, and spread through the world a degree of peace and moderation which, without them, would be impossible.

4. This institution is the source of all the gentle and useful natural affections.

These are conjugal tenderness, parental love, filial piety, and brotherly and sisterly attachment; far the most amiable, endearing, permanent, and useful, native affections of man. No other affections have originally any softness, sweetness, or loveliness; but all owe to these every thing which is of this nature. All our native amiableness is awakened by the presence of those whom we love; and we originally love those only who form the domestic circle within which we were born; those from whom we early received the offices of tenderness. Here natural affection first springs; here also it grows and flourishes; and from its stem, deeply rooted here, sends abroad its boughs and branches, its blossoms and fruits. The mind here strengthened and refined, begins to wander abroad into the neighbourhood, to find new objects for attachment in other families. Relations, less near, easily slide into affection, and are enrolled by it in the list of those whom it loves. To these succeed, in their turns, a train of friends, neighbours, and countrymen; until the sphere swells beyond the limits of its comprehension. What would this world be without these affections, and without the conduct to which they give birth? Nothing good would ever be begun, much less be carried on, and conducted to a prosperous conclusion. But these affections commence, are cherished, and confirmed in families only; and without them would either never exist at all, or be mere abortions.

5. This institution is the source of all industry and economy.

Industry is the source, and economy the preservation of all the comfortable subsistence of man. But industry, as is proverbially observed, is not natural to the human race. On the contrary, it is the result of education and habit only. Accordingly, the savages of all countries, being uneducated to industrious exertion, are lazy in the extreme, and are roused to toil only by the calls of hunger. This habit cannot even be begun, as the education whence it is derived cannot exist to any considerable extent, but in families; nor by any other persons, except parents; nor at any other period, beside childhood. Without families, indeed, industry would not exist; and without industry the world would be a desert.

Economy is not less necessary to human comfort than industry, and is still more unnatural to man. It demands the attention of every day to those things which we are to preserve; and this attention is more irksome than labour itself. Fewer persons overcome their reluctance to it. Savages are always squanderers. Exposed as they perpetually are to want and famine, and frequently and distressingly as they suffer from these evils, such is their reluctance to this employment, that they go on from age to age, wasting, suffering, and perishing.

Early, watchful, and long-continued education will alone establish a habit either of industry, or economy. The attention, the authority, and the example of parents are all equally and indispensably necessary to the creation of this habit; and without them all, it cannot in any extensive manner exist. Savages, indeed, have families; and are married parents. It may, therefore, be asked, why their children are not educated to these habits? The answer I have already given. Neither the attention, authority, nor example of savage parents are at all exerted for this end, so far as their male children are concerned; and very imperfectly with respect to those of the other sex. Of these, however, both the industry and economy fully answer to the degree of education which they receive, and to the opportunities which they enjoy of exercising them. My position is, that, without a domestic education, these things would never exist; not that that education, be it what it may, or that a mere domestic existence, will give them birth. Besides, savage parents neither understand nor perform the great body of duties created by this institution. Yet even they, in these, as well as in other important particulars, derive real and considerable advantages from the domestic state.

Without industry and economy, what would become of mankind? Their enjoyments, their improvements, their virtues, and their hopes, would all vanish at once: nay, their very subsistence would disappear. The earth within a few years would be emptied of ninty-nine hundredths of its inhabitants. Europe would be changed into a Lapland waste; and these states into a Patagonian forest.

6. This institution is the source of all education in useful knowledge, and to civility and sweetness of manners.

Parents are the only persons who love children sufficiently well to be anxious about their education in any thing. Nor would any others support them, while obtaining their education. No others would teach them those indispensable things which they learn at home. By whom are schools built? By a collection of families. By whom are the instructors supported? By a collection of families assembled in a neighbourhood. By whom are colleges erected, instructors sustained, libraries furnished, and other means of superior education supplied? By large collections of families; such collections as have actually raised these buildings, stocked them with all their furniture, and sent hither the youths who are now before me, for education.

Education occupies a great part of childhood and youth; and is a long-continued, laborious, expensive, and often a discouraging concern. Ordinary feelings would supply neither the labour, nor the expense. Parents only experience the necessary affection. Families only could sustain the necessary expense.

Much of the education of children is furnished by example, and is dependent on the propensity to imitation. This principle operates powerfully upon children in the early periods of life, because it is stronger at that than at any future age; and because they are continually in the midst of those whose example they are most disposed to follow, both from peculiar affection, and from the fact, that it is always before them.

But the efficacy of this principle operates powerfully also in another way. Parents love to be like other pa-

rents, and to have their children like other children. When, therefore, the children of one family are furnished with the advantages of education, the parents of other children in the neighbourhood are prompted to educate them also; not only by ambition, but by the general disposition which we have to be like others.

At the same time, and under the same authority of parents, civility and softness of manners are begun and established in families. Here only arise the affections out of which this ornamental part of the human character, springs. In no other place, among no other persons, and in no other circumstances, can these affections find their proper objects, or their proper motives. Of course, in no other place can they begin to exist. Much less can they elsewhere find room for that continual exercise, that delightful interchange, which is absolutely necessary to their strength and permanency. From families only, therefore, can the world derive the innumerable blessings flowing from these sources.

7. This institution is the source of all subordination and government; and, consequently, of all order, peace, and safety in the world.

In a family children are taught, as soon as they are taught any thing, to obey; and to obey those who, loving them tenderly, are the fit, and the only fit, persons to govern them, and to teach them submission and obedience. Others would rule them only with the rod of power; with a despotism, from which they would think it a privilege to escape; a dominion, from which, as soon as possible, they would revolt; an authority, which they would hate; and submission to which would be such an evil, as naturally to make them hate all other authority.

But parents rule with tenderness and love; and usually engage the strong affection of children to the authority which they exercise, and to themselves while exercising it. The children learn to obey from choice, and are pleased with the very employment of obeying.

Obedience is also taught here in that early period of life, at which it is impressed so deeply as never to be effaced. Impressions of every kind made at this period are, it is well known, indelible, and survive all others; especially, when made by those in whom tenderness and authority are united, and to whom reverence and affection are rendered in the highest degree. This, however, is not all. These impressions are daily and hourly repeated; and by this repetition are gradually wrought into an immovable habit. In this manner they become the only visible nature of the child, and constitute his chief, and often his only character.

In this manner, and only in this manner, are children effectually prepared to submit to all other lawful authority. In this manner they become peaceful and orderly through life, imbibe a spirit of respect and kindness towards others, are formed into good members of society, and fitted to sustain the character of good neighbours and good friends. Equally necessary is this discipline to make them good subjects, and good magistrates. Few persons are good subjects of civil government, who have not been trained to this character by a wise domestic administration: and not one of these would sustain this character, but for the example of those who have been thus trained. It is proverbially true also, that none are qualified to govern, except those who have early learned to obey.

In hardly any thing is the institution of marriage, and the consequent formation of families, exhibited as more necessary, or more wise, than in this origination and establishment of good order in the world. 'Order,' as Mr Pope has justly observed, 'is heaven's first law.' The great task of establishing it among such beings as we are—selfish, revolting, and refractory—God has assigned to an innumerable multitude of hands; a multitude sufficiently great to receive it in portions, so small and so circumstanced as to insure both the ability and the inclination to accomplish it effectually. These portions are so small, as to involve only the children of a single family. To this little flock are given regularly two rulers, better disposed and better qualified, in almost all instances, than any other persons found in the world. The circumstances in which those are placed who are to be governed, are more favourable to the accomplishment of this great end, than any others can be. Their infancy, childhood, and youth, in succession; their ignorance, feebleness, dependence; the affection, superiority, care, and kindness of the parents; and the instinctive love and reverence of the children; together with their necessary and long-continued residence in the parental mansion; present to the contemplative eye a combination of things evidencing, by their supreme and singular adaptation to this important purpose, a glorious work of the wisdom of God. Fewer hands could not possibly accomplish this mighty task. All the wisdom of legislation, all the energy of despotism, would be spent upon it in vain. Millions of minds, and tongues, and hands are indispensable to it, even in a single country. It is, beyond calculation, a greater and more arduous work than all the labours of all rulers, legislative, executive, and judicial, united. Nor could those to whom it is intrusted accomplish it in any other circumstances. Children, grown up to manhood without government, could never be governed. A generation of such children would set at defiance all the laws and magistrates in the universe; and would never yield to any control, but that of the sword. Were parents to intermit their labours during a single generation, no government could thenceforth exist in that country, until terrible necessity should force upon it a military despotism. Anarchy, until that period, would rear its wild misrule, ravage every human interest, and rase every human dwelling. In this very land, flourishing and wantoning in all the blessings of liberty, the musket, the dungeon, and the gibbet would be the only means of public peace, order, and safety.

8. Marriage is the source of all the religion which exists in the world.

This important truth is completely evident from the following particulars:

(1.) Persons living in promiscuous concubinage are never themselves religious.

There never was a single instance of this nature since the world began. The very first step towards religion whenever they have ultimately become religious, has invariably been repentance, and reformation of this enormous sin. Such persons can, therefore, never teach their children religion, either by precept or example. Therefore,

(2.) Their children grow up, of course, in irreligion.

There are two primary means of grace: the preaching of the gospel, and the religious education of children. Of these, Baxter supposes religious education to be probably the principal, as to its efficacy, wherever

the gospel is regularly established. But, whatever be their comparative importance, it is sufficient to say, what cannot be denied, that children who are not educated religiously, rarely become religious, even in the midst of those who are thus educated; and that a generation of such children would, of course, be a generation of profligates. But married persons only ever educate their children religiously; or present to them that example, without which their instructions would be given to no purpose.

(3.) None but married persons build churches, support ministers, or frequent the worship of God.

That the irreligion of persons living in promiscuous concubinage would never give birth to these things, nor to any of them, needs no proof. But without all these things, religion, as the world is constituted, cannot exist. The loss of the sabbath alone soon becomes, everywhere, the loss of religion. The preaching of the gospel, united with the ordinances of public worship, is the only effectual means of keeping religious education alive in the world. Religious education, in its turn, gives existence and life to public worship; and both united are the great and efficacious means of continuing the kingdom of God, and producing the salvation of man.

Such, in a summary view, are the origin, the nature, and the benefits of marriage. No man of common sobriety can hesitate to acknowledge that these benefits are inestimable and immense. Of course, the institution whence they were derived, and without which they would not exist, is of incomprehensible importance to mankind. How worthy of the wisdom of the Infinite Mind is the erection of so vast and so glorious a fabric, upon a foundation so simple, apparently so inadequate, and yet proved by all the experience of man to be sufficiently extensive, solid, and enduring! How small a cause to the human eye is here seen to produce effects, innumerable in their multitude, and supreme in their importance. What serious mind can hesitate to acknowledge, that such a work is wrought by the counsel of God!

SERMON CXX.

THE LAW OF GOD.—THE DECALOGUE.—THE SEVENTH COMMANDMENT.—LEWDNESS.

Thou shalt not commit adultery.—Exod. xx. 14.

Having in the preceding Discourse considered the origin, nature, and benefits of marriage; the institution, which is the basis of the prohibition in the text; I shall now proceed to examine the prohibition itself.

The thing, which is here universally prohibited, is lewdness; lewdness in every form; in thought, word, and action. This is unanswerably evident from our Saviour's comment on this precept; 'He that looketh on a woman, to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.'

Before I begin the immediate discussion of this subject, I shall premise a few general observations.

It is universally known, that there is, and for a great length of time has been, a rivetted prejudice against the introduction of this subject into the desk. When the peculiar delicacy attending it is considered, it cannot be thought strange, that such a prejudice should in some degree exist. Even the most chaste and correct observations concerning it are apt to give pain, or at least to excite an alarm in a refined and apprehensive mind. What nature itself, perhaps, dictates, custom and manners have not a little enhanced. The opinions and feelings to which I have referred, have been carried to a length unwarranted either by the Scriptures, or common sense. The subject seems, in fact, to have been banished from the desk; and ministers, by their general and profound silence concerning it, appear to have sanctioned the conclusion, that there is one, and that not a small part of Scripture, which, so far as preaching is concerned, is not 'profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, nor for instruction in righteousness.'

But let me solemnly ask every religious man, whether this conduct can be justified. The 'rejoicing' of St Paul, at the close of his life, was 'the testimony of a good conscience, that not by fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, he had his conversation in the world;' the testimony of a good conscience, that he was 'pure from the blood of all men,' because 'he had not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God.' Is it not a plain and prominent part of the counsel of God, to forbid, to discourage, to prevent this profligate conduct of mankind? Why else was this precept inserted in the decalogue, and promulgated amid the lightnings of Sinai? Why else is it throughout the Scriptures made the subject of such forcible prohibitions, and the object of such awful threatenings?

What reason can be given why it should not be introduced into the desk? Can common sense either prove or discern the usefulness of excluding it? Is it fit, is it safe, is it not preposterous, is it not ruinous to the best interests of mankind, to leave the whole management of it to loose and abandoned men; and to suffer them from year to year, and from century to century, to go on in a course of corruption, seducing and destroying thousands and millions, especially of the young, the gay, and the giddy; while we, ministers of Christ, divinely appointed to watch for the souls of men, quietly sit by, and see them hurried on to perdition? Shall we be awed by the cry of indelicacy, originally raised by the most indelicate of mankind, only to keep the field open for its own malignant occupancy? Shall we not infinitely rather lay hold on

every opportunity, and all the means furnished here, as well as elsewhere, to rescue our fellow creatures from destruction?

And shall not the house of God, and this sacred day, both divinely consecrated, not only to his worship at large, but to this very end, that 'the wicked' may be 'warned of the error of his way, that he turn from it, and save his soul alive,' shelter this subject, a solemn, prominent subject of his own express commands, awful exhortations, and terrible threatenings, from misconception, sport, and sneer? Shall not the known presence of this tremendous Being in his house, silence every unscriptural complaint, check every wayward thought, forbid every roving of an unhallowed imagination, and appall every light-minded sinner, however prone he may be to forget the presence of his Maker, or unwilling to remember, that this great Being is, at the very time, 'searching his heart, and trying his reins,' to 'reward him according to his works?'

But why, it may be asked, may not the evil be left to other correctives? Why is it necessary that ministers of the gospel should make it the theme of their public discourses? Why may not the business of reformation be intrusted to the satirist, the poet, and the moralist; to private conversation, and to the religious instruction of parents? The answer to these questions is at hand. God has required ministers to 'cry aloud and spare not; to lift up their voices as a trumpet; and to show his people their transgressions.' He has declared to ministers, that 'if they warn not the wicked of his way, the wicked shall die in his sins; but his blood he will require at their hands.' The point in debate must, I think, be allowed to be here finally settled; unless some argument can be devised to show, that a minister is bound to make himself answerable for the blood of those sinners to whom he preaches. Besides, the satirist, the poet, and the moralist, in a multitude of instances, have been enlisted on the side of vice, and have endeavoured to stimulate, rather than repress, the evil under examination. Where they are not, how few persons read their books compared with the number of those who are present at the preaching of the gospel! Probably two-thirds of a million of persons hear the gospel preached weekly in New England. Not one in a thousand of these, perhaps, has ever read a book seriously exposing this unhappy part of the human character. Even where their books are read, and read with attention, they are little regarded, and produce little effect. The desk possesses means of appalling and overthrowing vice, and upholding morality, which nothing else can boast. The day, the place, the circumstances of the assembly, the purposes for which they are gathered, and the solemn commission of Jehovah, furnish ministers with advantages for this great end, unrivalled and unexampled. Accordingly, their office has been more efficacious in producing real reformation, than all the other means employed by man. 'The pulpit,' says a poet of distinguished excellence and wisdom,

> 'The pulpit,—when the sat'rist has at last,
> Strutting and vap'ring in an empty school,
> Spent all his force, and made no proselyte,
> I say, the pulpit, in the sober use
> Of its legitimate, peculiar powers,
> Must stand acknowledged, while the world shall stand,
> The most important and effectual guard,
> Support, and ornament, of virtue's cause.'

With these things in view, I consider it as my own duty to bring this subject into the desk without hesitation, and to treat it in the same definite and earnest manner which is demanded by the precepts of the gospel. I shall make it my business, however, to treat it in such a manner, that if any of my audience shall entertain thoughts concerning it, forbidden by their Creator, it shall be their own fault, and not mine.

With these preliminary remarks, I proceed to observe,

I. *That this command forbids all impure thoughts.*

The proof of this I have already given in our Saviour's comment on this precept.

Impure thoughts are the immediate and only sources of impure conversation, and an impure life. If the thoughts be cleansed, the man will be clean of course.

There is scarcely a more dangerous employment, than the indulgence of a licentious imagination. This is an evil to which youths are peculiarly exposed. The peculiar strength of every passion, and the peculiar want of watchfulness and self-restraint, render them an easy prey to every vice which solicits admission. Still greater is the danger, when vice approaches under a form especially alluring; and, at the same time, steals gradually, and therefore insensibly, upon the mind. By all these evils is the sin under consideration accompanied. It rises in the minds of the young instinctively, surrounded with many allurements, and unaccompanied by that loathing and horror with which the mind naturally regards vice of many other kinds. At the same time, the mind is prone to be utterly unconscious of any transgression, and of any danger. The imagination, thoughtless and unrestrained, wanders over the forbidden ground, often without thinking that it is forbidden; and has already been guilty of many and perilous transgressions, when it is scarcely aware of having transgressed at all. In this manner its attachment to these excursions continually gains strength. Continually are they repeated with more eagerness, and with more frequency. At length they become habitual; and scarcely any habit is stronger, or with less difficulty overcome. In every leisure season, the mind, if it will watch its own movements, will find itself roving without restraint, and often without being aware that it has begun to rove, on this interdicted ground; and will be astonished to perceive, after a sober computation, how great a part of all its thinking is made up of these licentious thoughts.

Most unhappily, aids and allurements to this licentious indulgence are never wanting. Genius, in every age, and in every country, has to a great extent prostituted its elevated powers for the deplorable purpose of seducing thoughtless minds to this sin. The unsuspecting imagination, ignorant of the dangers which are spread before it, has, by this gay and fiery serpent, glittering with spots of gold, and painted with colours of enchantment, been allured to pluck the fruit of this forbidden tree, and hazard the death denounced against the transgression. The numbers of the poet, the delightful melody of song, the fascination of the chisel, and the spell of the pencil, have been all volunteered in the service of Satan, for the moral destruction of unhappy man. To finish this work of malignity, the stage has lent all its splendid apparatus of mischief, the shop been converted into a show-box of temptations, and its owner into a pander of iniquity. Feeble, erratic, and giddy, as the mind of man is in its nature; prepared to

welcome temptation, and to hail every passing sin; can we wonder that it should yield to this formidable train of seducers?

To a virtuous mind scarcely any possession is of more value, or more productive of enjoyment or safety, than a chastened imagination, regularly subjected to the control of the conscience. Wherever this faculty is under this control, the mind has achieved a power of keeping temptation at a distance, of resisting it when approaching, and of overcoming it when invading, attainable in no other manner. Its path towards heaven becomes therefore comparatively unobstructed, easy, and secure. Sin does not easily beset it; and its moral improvement, while it is on the one hand undisturbed, is on the other rapid and delightful.

II. *This command forbids all licentious words of the same nature.*

Impure thoughts beget impure words; and impure words, in their turn, generate, enhance, and multiply impure thoughts. This retro-active influence of the tongue upon the heart, by means of which sinful conversation becomes the means of producing sinful thoughts, I have had occasion to explain at large in a former Discourse. It will therefore be unnecessary to dwell upon it here. No serious observer of human life can doubt, that by our own language, as well as that of others, whenever it is impure, impure thoughts are awakened; a licentious imagination set on fire: and licentious designs, which otherwise would never have entered the mind, called up into existence and execution.

In this employment also our fellow men unite with us in the strange and melancholy purpose of mutual corruption. All the dangers and mischiefs, all the temptations and sins, presented to each other by evil companions, are to be found here. Here 'wicked men and seducers wax worse and worse; deceiving, and being deceived;' mutually seducing, and being seduced.

The only safety, with respect to this part of the subject in hand, is found in exact conformity to the very forcible precept of St Paul: 'But filthiness, foolish talking, and jesting, let it not be so much as named among you.' The original words are *αισχροτης, obscenity; μωρολογια, impure scurrility*, and *ευτραπελια*, when used in a bad sense, as here, answering to *double entendres*, or seemingly decent speeches with double meanings. Of all these the apostle says not, 'Let them not be used;' but, 'Let them not be so much as named among you, as becometh saints.' Let no foundation be furnished by your conversation even for mentioning it as a fact, that such language has ever been uttered by you. For no conversation beside that which is thus pure, can become your character as Christians. See Eph. v. 3, 4. Strict and virtuous delicacy in our language is not only indispensable to decency and dignity of character, but to all purity of heart, and all excellency of life.

III. *This command forbids all licentious conduct of this nature.*

As this position will not be questioned, and as this conduct, in every form, is prohibited elsewhere, in a multitude of scriptural passages, I shall spare myself the labour of proof; and shall proceed to suggest several reasons for our obedience to this precept; or, what is the same thing, to mention several evils arising from disobedience.

1. The licentious conduct forbidden by this precept, discourages and prevents marriage.

This discouragement and prevention regularly take place in exact proportion to the prevalence of the conduct; and are therefore chargeable upon it, whenever, and wherever, and however it exists.

The innumerable and immense blessings of the marriage institution have been summarily recited in the preceding Discourse. They are the blessings which keep the moral world in being, and secure it from an untimely and most terrible dissolution. They are the blessings, without which life, in instances literally innumerable, would be blasted in the bud; without which, when it escaped this premature destruction, its continuance would prove a curse; without which, natural affection and amiableness would not exist; without which, domestic education would be extinct, industry and economy never begin, and man be left to the precarious subsistence of a savage. But for this institution, learning, knowledge, and refinement would expire; government sink in the gulf of anarchy; and religion, hunted from the habitations of men, hasten back to her native heavens. Man, in the mean time, stripped of all that is respectable, amiable, or hopeful in his character, and degraded to all that is odious, brutal, and desperate, would prowl in solitudes and deserts, to satisfy his rage and hunger. The correspondence between heaven and earth would cease; and the celestial inhabitants would no longer expect, nor find, new accessions to their happy society from this miserable world.

To all these evils every lewd man directly contributes. Were his principles and practices adopted universally by his fellow men, all these evils would universally prevail. That they do not actually thus prevail, is in no sense owing to him. To the utmost of his power he labours to introduce them all.

2. This conduct in almost all cases, presupposes seduction.

Seduction, in its very nature, involves fraud of the worst kind. It is probably always accomplished by means of the most solemn promises, and often with oaths still more solemn. Both the promises and oaths, however, are violated in a manner supremely profligate and shameful. The object to which they are directed is base, malignant, and treacherous in the extreme; and the manner in which it is prosecuted is marked with the same treachery and baseness. He who can coolly adopt it has put off the character of a man, and put on that of a fiend; and, with the spirit of a fiend alone, he pursues and accomplishes the infernal purpose. The ruin sought and achieved is immense. It is not the filching of property. It is not the burning of a house. It is not the deprivation of liberty. It is not the destruction of life. The seducer plunders the wretched victim of character, morals, happiness, hope, and hea ven; enthrals her in the eternal bondage of sin, consumes her beyond the grave in endless fire, and murders her soul with an ever-living death. With the same comprehensive and terrible malignity, he destroys himself; calls down upon his own head the vengeance of that almighty hand, which will suffer no sinner to escape; and awakens the terrors of that undying conscience, which will enhance even the agonies of perdition. All this is perpetrated, in the mean time, under strong professions of peculiar affection, with the per-

suasive language of tenderness, and with the smiles of gentleness and complacency. For, the seducer

'Can smile, and smile, and be a villain.'

3. It brings incomprehensible wretchedness upon the devoted object.

No human being can support the pressure of infamy, a degradation below the level of mankind, and the envenomed stings of reproach, sharpened by a guilty conscience. I well know, that philosophy prates and vapours on topics of this nature with a proud self-complacency, and an ostentatious display of patience, fortitude, and serenity. But I also well know, that philosophy is in these respects a mere pretender, a bully, and not a hero. Philosophy never furnished, and never will furnish, its catalogue of martyrs. All its votaries, like Voltaire, intend only to rule and triumph; not to suffer, nor even to submit. As cool and parading reflections on subjects of a calamitous nature are uttered in the peace of the closet, the possession of ease and safety, the conviction of acknowledged reputation, and the enjoyment of friends, comforts, and hopes; philosophy rarely encounters real sufferings. Her hardihood is all premature; and is all shown in telling the world what she would do, and what others ought to do; and not in the history of what she has done.

The excruciating anguish to which the miserable female victim is reduced, is dreadfully exemplified in the unnatural and enormous wickedness to which she is driven, in the desertion, and the consequent destruction of her helpless offspring. 'Can a woman forget her sucking child; that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb?' is a question which points out the strongest affection, the highest tenderness of human nature; the attachment which outruns, survives, and triumphs over every other. To this question, the exposure to a merciless sky, the drowning, the strangling, the smothering of illegitimate children, returns a terrible and excruciating answer. What must be the agonies of despondence and degradation which can force the susceptible heart of a female parent to the contrivance and execution of a design like this? Yet such is the dreadful catastrophe of the wickedness in question. It is worse than trifling, for the author of all these evils to allege, that this catastrophe is neither contrived nor accomplished by himself. They are all, and are known by him to be, the frequent as well as natural consequences of this iniquity. They are chargeable to him therefore as the legitimate results of his own conduct; results, which by every obligation, human and divine, he was bound to foresee and prevent. Both the murder itself, and the miseries which gave birth to it, are stains of that crimson guilt in which he is so deeply dyed.

4. This licentious character soon becomes habitual.

To a person moderately acquainted with human conduct, an attempt to prove this assertion would be mere trifling. All transgressions of this cast soon become fixed, obstinate, and irreclaimable. The world teems with evidence of this humiliating position; and the whole progress of time has daily accumulated a mountainous mass of facts, evincing its certainty in a more and more humiliating manner.

Of these, the most humiliating and dreadful collection is found in those baleful tenements of prostitution and profligacy which deform, so far as my information extends, every populous city on the globe; and stand publicly as the gate-way to hell, opening to their miserable inhabitants a broad and beaten road to perdition. Into these deplorable mansions the polluted female, cast off by mankind as an outlaw from human society, shorn even from the side of natural affection, and parental mercy, betrayed by the villany of a second Judas, and hurried by shame, remorse, and anguish, enters—never to escape. Here, from the first moment, she closes her eyes upon friends, kindness, and compassion; takes her final farewell of earthly comfort; and sees, with a dying eye, the last glimmerings of hope go out in eternal night. Here she bids an everlasting adieu to the sabbath, the house, and the word of God. To her the calls of mercy are made no more. To her the voice of the Redeemer sounds no more. The Spirit of truth cannot be supposed to enter the haunts of sin and death; nor to shed the dew of life upon these voluntary victims of corruption by whom they are inhabited. Immortal life here becomes extinct. Hither the 'hope' of heaven 'never comes, that comes to all:' and the wretched throng, embosomed by these baleful walls, enter upon their perdition on this side of the grave.

Who, that is not lost to candour, and buried in misanthropy, could believe, unless he were forced to believe, that princes, and other rulers of mankind, have taxed and licensed these houses of ruin; and that in countries where the gospel beams, and the voice of salvation is heard in the streets? Who could believe that sin would be thus bartered in the market; and damnation be holden up as a commodity for bargain and sale; that the destruction of the human soul would be publicly announced, granted, and authorized, as a privilege; and that patents would be made out, signed, and sealed, for populating more extensively the world of woe?

In the mean time, it is ever to be remembered, that the betrayer accompanies to the same dreadful end the victim of his treachery. 'None, who go into' these outer chambers of perdition, 'turn again, neither take they hold of the paths of life.'

5. This conduct destroys all moral principle.

'However it be accounted for,' says Dr Paley, 'the criminal commerce of the sexes corrupts and depraves the mind and moral character more than any single species of vice whatsoever. That ready perception of guilt, that prompt and decisive resolution against it, which constitutes a virtuous character, is seldom found in persons addicted to these indulgences. They prepare an easy admission for every sin that seeks it; are in low life usually the first stage in men's progress to the most desperate villanies; and in high life to that lamented dissoluteness of principle, which manifests itself in a profligacy of public conduct, and a contempt of the obligations of religion and moral probity.'

What is here asserted by this very able writer, forced itself upon my mind many years before I saw the work containing these observations, as a strong and prominent feature in the character of man. These very declarations I have long since seen amply verified in living examples. This progress towards abandonment cannot be very easily described, much less thoroughly explained, except in a detailed account of the subject. Such an account cannot here be given. Yet the following observations will, if I mistake not, contribute to illustrate the point in question.

Almost all persons, perhaps all, derive from early in-

struction and habituation a greater or less degree of conscientiousness; a reverence for God, a sense of accountableness, a fixed expectation of future rewards and punishments, a veneration for truth and justice, and an established conviction of the excellence of kindness. These united constitute that temperament of mind, on which evangelical virtue is usually as well as happily grafted; and to exterminate them is to destroy what is here meant by all moral principle.

Persons who commit the crimes which form the principal subject of this Discourse always commit them in secret. After they are committed, the same secrecy is indispensable to the safety of the perpetrators. There must be, however, there are unavoidably, some persons who, at times, and in one manner and another, become acquainted with the wickedness. These must be engaged, at all events, to conceal what they know. To effectuate this purpose, the perpetrators are often driven to employ the grossest corruption, and the basest and most profligate measures. Agents are also often absolutely necessary to the successful accomplishment of the crimes themselves. None but abandoned men can become such agents; and none but abandoned measures can be employed with respect to their agency. As the principal criminal makes progress in this iniquity, such persons become more and more necessary to him, and familiar with him; and as during his progress, he renders himself an object of detestation to all decent society, these profligates soon become his only companions, and these measures his only conduct. He who devotes himself to such companions and such conduct, will always debase and corrupt his own mind faster than he is aware; and, with an unexpected rapidity in guilt, will very soon become a mere profligate.

Nor will he be less rapidly corrupted by the innumerable vile expedients, base fetches, treacherous plans, abominable briberies, and foul perjuries to which he resorts for the successful perpetration of his villanous designs. To all these must be added, the putrefactive influence of impurity itself; which, as the pestilence through the body, diffuses mortification and rottenness throughout the soul; and converts it into a mere mass of death and corruption.

Conformably to these observations, we see, in the ordinary course of things, that impurity manures and waters every other growth of sin. Wherever it prevails all crimes become gross, rank, and premature. Impiety, blasphemy, treachery, drunkenness, perjury, and murder flourish around it. How justly then, as well as how solemnly, did the divine writer declare, concerning the strange woman, 'Her house is the way to hell; going down to the chambers of death!'

6. Whenever this conduct assumes the flagrant character of adultery, it involves a numerous and dreadful train of additional evils.

It involves the most open and gross violation of the marriage covenant; and exposes the guilty person, therefore, to the peculiar wrath of that tremendous Being, invoked as a witness of it; and incomprehensibly, as well as most impudently, affronted by the violation.

It accomplishes the greatest injury which the innocent party to that covenant can receive, on this side of the grave. This injury is formed of a vast combination of sufferings, reaching every important interest in this world always, and often in the world to come; exquisitely keen and poignant, piercing the very seat of thought, and sense, and feeling, and awakening in long succession throes of agony and despair. The husband, for example, is forced to behold his wife, once and always beloved beyond expression, not less affectionate than beloved, and hitherto untarnished even with suspicion corrupted by fraud, circumvention, and villany; seduced from truth, virtue, and hope; and voluntarily consigned to irretrievable ruin. His prospects of enjoyment, and even of comfort, in the present world, are overcast with the blackness of darkness. Life to him is changed into a lingering death. His house is turned into an empty, dreary cavern. Himself is widowed. His children are orphans; not by the righteous providence of God, but by the murderous villany of man. Clouded with woe, and hung round with despair, his soul becomes a charnel-house, where life, and peace, and comfort have expired; a tomb, dark and hollow, covering the remains of departed enjoyment, and opening no more to the entrance of the living.

It involves injuries to the children which numbers cannot calculate, and which the tongue cannot describe. The hand of villany has robbed them of all their peculiar blessings; the blessings of maternal care and tenderness; the rich blessings of maternal instruction and government; the delightful and most persuasive blessings of maternal example; the exalted privilege of united parental prayers; and the exquisite enjoyments of a peaceful, harmonious, and happy fire-side; once exquisitely happy, but now to be happy no more!

To this most affecting and pitiable train of mourners, a numerous and additional train of friends unite themselves, to deplore the common woe. A singular, an agonizing procession is formed, at the funeral of departed virtue. Tears stream, which no hand can wipe away. Groans ascend, which no comforter can charm to peace. Bosoms heave with anguish, which all the balm of Gilead cannot soothe. The object of lamentation is gone for ever; and all that remains is a mass of living death, soon to be buried in the eternal grave.

7. This wickedness, when it becomes extensive, overspreads a country with final ruin.

It is the nature of this evil, not only to become greater in individuals, but to extend continually also to greater and greater numbers of individuals. The corruption of Sodom, and the neighbouring cities of the plain, was rapid and complete. Within a short period after they were built, ten righteous persons could not be found in them all. What was true of these cities is true of others in similar circumstances. To the Israelites, before they entered into Canaan, God prescribed a long series of laws, requiring absolute purity of conduct; prohibiting in the most solemn manner lewdness of every kind; and enacting against it the most dreadful penalties. 'Do not,' said Jehovah, 'prostitute thy daughter; lest the land become full of wickedness.'—'Ye shall not commit any of these abominations, that the land spue not you out also, when ye defile it, as it spued out the nations that were before you.' In the sight of God, therefore, this sin is peculiarly the source of corruption to a land; a source, whence it becomes 'full of wickedness;' and vomits out its inhabitants, as being unable to bear them. Those who practise it, and the nation in which the practice prevails, are, he declares, abhorred by him, and shall be finally destroyed. 'For whosoever,' saith he, 'shall commit any of

these abominations, that soul shall be cut off from his people.'

As crimes of this nature become less and less unfrequent, they become less and less scandalous; and by all who are inclined to perpetrate them are esteemed less and less sinful. Of course they are regarded with decreasing reluctance and horror. The father practises them, and with his example corrupts his son. The husband in the same manner corrupts his wife, the brother his brother, the friend his friend, and the neighbour his neighbour. Soon the brothel raises its polluted walls; and becomes a seminary of Satan, where crimes are provided, taught, perpetrated, multiplied without number, and beyond degree, and to a great extent concealed from the public eye. To one of these caverns of darkness and death another succeeds, and another, until the city, and ultimately the whole land, becomes one vast Sodom. Lost to every thought of reformation, and to every feeling of conscience, 'an astonishment, and a hissing, to mankind,' a reprobate of heaven, it invokes upon the heads of its putrid inhabitants a new tempest of fire and brimstone. Morals, life, and hope to such a community have expired. They breathe indeed, and move, and act, and to the careless eye appear as living beings. But the life is merely a counterfeit. They are only a host of moving corpses; an assembly of the dead, destined to no future resurrection. Disturbed and restless spectres, they haunt the surface of the earth in material forms, filling the sober and contemplative mind with alarm and horror, until they finally disappear, and hurry through the gloomy mansions of the grave to everlasting woe.

SERMON CXXI.

THE LAW OF GOD.—THE DECALOGUE.—THE SEVENTH COMMANDMENT.—POLYGAMY—DIVORCE.

The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning, made them male and female; and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What, therefore, God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. They say unto him, Why did Moses, then, command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away? He saith unto them, Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, suffered you to put away your wives; but from the beginning it was not so. And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery. His disciples say unto him, If the case of the man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry. But he said unto them, All men cannot receive this saying; save they to whom it is given.—Matt. xix. 3—14.

The next violation of the seventh command which I shall think it necessary to examine at large in this system, is divorce. Were I delivering a formal course of ethical lectures, I should feel myself obliged to extend the same examination to polygamy. As a practical subject in this country, it demands indeed little consideration. But from its inherent importance, and its extensive prevalence in the world; and still more from the fact, that it has been either partially, or wholly, defended by some grave men, it deserves to become a subject of serious consideration. Thinking men ought on such a subject to have their opinions settled. For these reasons, although I cannot expatiate, I feel myself bound to make a few observations upon it in a summary manner.

Polygamy is unlawful, because God in the original institution of marriage confines it to the union of one man with one woman. 'For this cause,' said he, who created them male and female, 'shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife, and they twain shall be one flesh. Whom God, therefore, hath joined together, let not man put asunder.' God hath joined two. This is the only authority under which marriage lawfully exists. Polygamy is, therefore, a violation of the institution of God.

Polygamy appears to be directly forbidden in the Mosaic law. Lev. xviii. 18; 'Thou shalt not take a wife to her sister, to vex her, in her lifetime:' or, as it is in the margin, 'Thou shalt not take one wife to another.' The words, 'a wife to her sister,' Dr Edwards observes, are found in the Hebrew, if I remember right, eight times. In every other passage, except that just quoted, they refer to inanimate objects: such as the wings of the cherubim, tenons, mortices, &c. They seem to denote, principally, the exact likeness of one thing to another; and here forbid, as the margin expresses it, 'the taking of one wife to another in her lifetime.'

Polygamy is forbidden in the Prophecy of Malachi. 'The Lord hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou has dealt treacherously; yet is she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant. And did not he make one? Yet had he the residue of the spirit. And wherefore one? That he might seek a godly seed,' Mal. ii. 14, 15.

The prophet, in this passage, although speaking of all the wives in the nation of Israel, yet mentions the word in the singular number only. Of the union of one husband with one wife he declares God to have been witness; and thus plainly indicates, that this union lawfully extended to no more. In the second verse quoted he asks, 'Did he not make one?' That is, one wife, when 'he had the residue of the spirit,' and,

could with the same ease have created many, if he had pleased. 'And wherefore one?' To this question he answers, 'That he might seek a godly seed.' In other words, he created one man and one woman, and united them, and them only, in the marriage institution, because one husband and one wife thus united, would, by religious education and example, promote piety in their offspring. This is an implicit, but clear and decisive declaration, that in a state of polygamy pious children would very rarely be found. Polygamy therefore cannot be lawful; as being hostile to the design of God in this institution, and to the highest interests of mankind.

Polygamy is expressly forbidden in the text. Here the man who puts away his wife, and marries another, is declared to commit adultery. In what does this adultery consist? Certainly not in putting away the former wife. A man may obviously leave his wife, or a woman her husband, and yet neither of them be at all guilty of this sin. The adultery, then, consists in the fact, that the man marries a second wife while the first is living. But this is always done in polygamy. Polygamy is therefore a continual state of adultery.

There is not a passage in the Scriptures, in which the institution of marriage, or the relation which it creates, is spoken of in the form either of doctrine or precept, which gives even a remote hint of the lawful union of more than two persons. Husband and wife are the terms invariably used in every case of this nature.

A bishop and a deacon, in an age when polygamy was common, are expressly required each to be a husband of one wife. Yet 'marriage is' declared to be 'honourable in all.' If polygamy, then, were at all the marriage spoken of, or the scriptural marriage, it would be honourable; and therefore becoming and proper in bishops and deacons; and no reason appears for this restriction on them, any more than on other men.

The only instance of polygamy recorded in the Scriptures, during the first two thousand years after the institution of marriage, was that of Lamech; and this appears to have been considered by himself, and those around him, as sinful. Noah and his three sons had but one wife each.

All the instances of polygamy, of which the history is given in the Scriptures to any extent, were sources of many and bitter calamities, both to the parents and the children.

Equally hostile to this practice is the state of facts.

The numbers of the sexes born, and living to adult years, in all nations and ages, have been so nearly equal, as to indicate plainly the will of the Author of our being, that one man and one woman, only, were to be united as parties in marriage. This equality is, indeed, denied by Mr Bruce, with respect to Syria and Arabia; and with no small appearance of being founded on evidence. But when I remember that it is a contradiction to the law of our nature in all ages, and in all other places; that the fact is mentioned by no ancient or modern historian; that Mr Bruce, so far as my information extends, is the only traveller who has mentioned it; particularly, that it escaped the observations of Shaw, Russel, Maundrel, and especially Niebuhr; I cannot help believing that this respectable writer was misled in his apprehensions. It ought to be added, that the knowledge in question must, if attained at all, be, from the existing state of society in those countries, attained with extreme difficulty, and accompanied with not a little uncertainty. This story is also expressly contradicted by Lord Valentia, who has lately travelled in Arabia.

Polygamy is unfriendly to population.

When the world was to be replenished, under an immediate command of God, with human beings, a single pair was chosen to be the means of accomplishing this design.

When the same design was, under the same command, to be accomplished anew; God chose the three sons of Noah, and their three wives, as the proper means of fulfilling it.

The Turks are polygamists. They possess all the power, almost all the wealth, and therefore almost all the means of subsistence, found in their empire. Yet they are few in number compared with the Greeks, who marry but one wife, and who, subjected to iron bondage under the despotism of these hard masters, are continually impoverished, and plundered of a precarious subsistence by their rapacious hands.

Polygamy degrades from their proper rank, privileges, and enjoyments, to an almost animal level, one half of the human race. This enormous injustice no consideration can excuse or palliate.

Polygamy has regularly introduced domestic broils of the most bitter kind, terminating in the most fatal manner, and involving in their deplorable consequences both the parents and the children. Of this truth, complete proofs are found in the few historical accounts which have reached us of the Turkish and Persian royal families.

These considerations, if I mistake not, amply prove, that polygamy is unlawful, and a direct violation of the seventh command.

I shall now proceed to consider the proper subject of the text. This I shall introduce under the following general observation, as directly expressing the principal doctrine in the text:

That divorces, for any other cause except incontinence, are unlawful.

This important scriptural truth I shall endeavour to support by arguments, derived both from Scripture and reason.

From the Scriptures, I allege,

1. That marriage is a divine institution; and is therefore unalterable by man.

That marriage is a divine institution, has, I apprehend, been made abundantly evident from various parts of this passage, examined in the Discourse on the origin of marriage. It was there proved, if I mistake not, that God has really joined together every lawfully married pair among the children of Adam. That 'what God hath' thus 'joined' by his infinite authority, 'men cannot' lawfully 'put asunder,' needs no illustration. God has made the twain one. Man cannot make them twain again, unless with the evident permission of God.

It is to be observed here, that the translation exactly expresses the meaning of the original in this part of the text: 'Let no man put asunder.' The Greek word is ανθρωπος, without the article: the most absolute and unlimited expression in that language, to denote *man universally*, without any respect to age, sex, or condition. The prohibition, therefore, is not, that the hus-

band, as among the Jews, Greeks, and others; nor that a judicial tribunal, as among ourselves; nor that a legislature, as in some other communities, may not sunder this union; but that man, in no condition, place, or time—man possessed of no authority whatever—may sunder this union, without an express permission from God.

2. I allege as a decisive argument, the guilt which is directly charged by Christ upon all the parties in the divorce, and the consequent marriages.

In the text Christ declares, that the man who divorces his wife, and marries another, and the man who marries the divorced wife, are both guilty of adultery in this transaction. The same crime, in Matt. v. 32, is charged upon the divorced woman. It will not be questioned, that the woman who marries the divorced husband is guilty in exactly the same manner. Neither of these marriages, therefore, can possibly take place, without involving the crime of adultery in both the married parties. Consequently, a divorce, except for incontinence, is here for ever barred. A divorce professedly sets the parties free, so that they may lawfully marry again. But it is plain from these observations, that they cannot be thus set free, and can never lawfully marry again. Whatever husbands, judges, or legislators may think, or declare, or do, all these parties will by their subsequent marriages become guilty of adultery. Thus Christ has pronounced; and thus he certainly will pronounce at the final day.

It is here to be remarked, that this decision of Christ was totally contrary to the views entertained by his apostles. This they directly declare in the following words; 'If the case of the man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry.' Christ, however, does not qualify, nor soften the decision at all. On the contrary, he leaves it exactly where he had left it before. 'All men,' he replies, 'cannot receive this saying, save they to whom it is given;' and again, 'He that is able to receive it, let him receive it.'

3. St Paul has determined the same point anew; and in the most explicit manner conceivable.

'Unto the married I command; yet not I, but the Lord; Let not the wife depart,' χωρισθηναι, *be separated*, that is, by a divorce, voluntarily accomplished by herself, 'from her husband;' this being the only command which could be addressed to the wife with any meaning. 'But, and if she depart;' Εαν δε και χωρισθη; but even if she be separated (that is, by means of a divorce accomplished by him), 'let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband; and let not the husband put away his wife:' και ανδρα γυναικα μη αφιεναι, 'and I also command the husband not to put away his wife.' This also is a part of the command given by Christ in the text; and is quoted, not as I apprehend from the text itself, which it is very possible St Paul at this time may not have seen; but from that immediate revelation which this apostle received of the gospel from the mouth of Christ.

We have here the decision of Christ concerning this subject recited, and declared to be his decision by St Paul; and therefore know the manner in which this command of our Saviour was understood by an inspired commentator. The same precept is here given in all its latitude. A divorce, on both sides, is absolutely prohibited; and, in case of a divorce, the injured party, the person divorced, is forbidden expressly and absolutely to marry again.

The apostle then goes on, 'But to the rest;' that is, to those whose cases were not contemplated by the command of Christ, because they had not existed when that command was given; 'But to the rest I command, not the Lord. If any brother (that is a Christian), hath a wife, who is an infidel, and she be well pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away: and, if any woman (that is, any Christian woman) hath a husband, who is an infidel, and he be well pleased to dwell with her, let her not put him away.'

The case here mentioned by the apostle was a new one. While Christ was on earth, there were no Christians who had infidel (that is, heathen) husbands, or wives. For the peculiar circumstances of persons thus situated, Christ had therefore made no direct, or explicit provision. Doubts, concerning the proper conduct of such persons, with regard to the duties of the married state, appear evidently to have arisen in the church of Corinth. The great evil felt by these Christians, concerning which they clearly appear to me to have written to St Paul for his direction, seems to have consisted in these two things: the difficulties to which they were subjected by their infidel husbands and wives, with respect to their attendance on the ordinances of the gospel; and their fears, lest their children, having one infidel parent, should on account of this fact, be excluded from the Christian church, and denied the ordinance of baptism. The latter of these evils the apostle removes, together with the apprehensions of it, in the following verse. 'For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife: and the unbelieving wife by the husband; else were your children unclean; but now are they holy,' That is, the unbelieving party in the marriage-state is, by means of this connexion with the believing party, sanctified, in such a sense, that the children are not put out of the covenant, but may be offered up to God in baptism.

The former of these difficulties the apostle obviates in the verse, next succeeding. 'But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart.' Ει δε απιστος χωριζεται, χωριζεσθω; If the infidel separate himself, let him separate himself. 'A brother, or a sister, is not in bondage in such things. But God hath called us to peace.' The apostle, it is to be remembered, had no control over the heathen. He says, therefore, 'If the infidel separate himself, let him separate himself.' This is a case over which I have no control, in which you can obtain no relief, and to which you are therefore bound to submit with patience and resignation. But a brother or sister is under no obligation to follow the infidel party, whatever may be thought concerning the extent of the marriage vow; nor to forsake the worship of God, or its ordinances; nor to consent that his or her children should be withdrawn from the privileges of religion. Such a case involves the deepest bondage; and to this bondage no Christian brother or sister is subjected. The verb, here rendered 'is in bondage,' is δεδουλωται; literally rendered, 'hath been reduced to the deepest servitude.' The servitude intended by the apostle is, in my apprehension, unquestionably the submission of a Christian to an infidel husband, or wife, so hostile to the Christian religion, as to refuse to continue in the marriage relation, and perform the duties involved in it, unless the Christian partner will consent to give up the privileges of the gospel. This would indeed, be a deplorable bondage; and deserving of be-

ing expressed by the strong term which St Paul has selected.

Some very respectable commentators, and among them Poole, Doddridge, and Macknight, have, I am aware, supposed this bondage to consist in the obligation under which the Christian party might be imagined to lie, to continue still unmarried. I acknowledge myself surprised at this explanation, and at the reasons by which it is professedly supported. Dr Macknight, after alleging that this is the apostle's meaning, declares that his decision is just; 'because there is no reason why the innocent party, through the fault of the guilty party, should be exposed to the danger of committing adultery.'

Poole says, 'Such a person hath broken the bond of marriage; and Christians are not under bondage by the laws of God, to keep themselves unmarried, on account of the perverseness of such parties to the marriage covenant.'

To this opinion, and these reasons, I answer, that, Christ has expressly forbidden the divorced wife, however innocent, to marry again; and has declared, that, if she does marry, she will be an adulteress. Certainly, the divorced wife may be, and often is, as innocent as the deserted wife; and in the nature of the case is as probably innocent. With equal justice, then, may it be said in this case, as in the case of the deserted wife, that 'there is no reason why the innocent party, through the fault of the guilty party, should be exposed to commit adultery.'

Again: The divorced wife is more injured than the deserted wife. She is not only deprived of all the privileges and blessings lost by the deserted wife, but of many more. She is forced by violence from her husband, her children, and her home. She is turned out with disgrace; as a woman with whom her husband could not continue to live; and usually with little provision made for her subsistence. The wife who is deserted is, on the contrary, almost always left in the possession of her house, her children, her character, and tolerable means of subsistence for herself and her family. She may be, and most usually is, deserted for reasons involving no disgrace to her. Her husband may have contracted an unwarrantable attachment for another object; indulged a spirit of roving and adventure; disgraced himself by his previous conduct; or fled from some exposure to punishment, for some crime, or from creditors, whom he cannot, or will not pay. Accordingly, deserted wives are probably as generally persons of good reputation, as others of their sex. On all these accounts the case of the divorced wife is incomparably harder than that of the deserted wife. Can it be possible, that Christ has rescued the deserted wife from this deepest bondage, as these writers understand it; and have left the divorced wife, amid so many more and severer hardships, yet equally innocent, to suffer the whole extent of this thraldom?

Mr Poole says, 'The deserter hath broken the bond of marriage and thus released the deserted party from the laws of God concerning it; so far as they require abstinence from marriage.'

I answer: The divorcer has broken this bond still more violently; and made the infraction more complete. Of course, he has, according to this scheme, in a higher degree made it lawful for the divorced wife to marry again. This reasoning, therefore, equally with that of Dr Macknight, makes the decision of Christ both unwise and unjust.

Besides this scheme renders the precept concerning divorce entirely fruitless. The man who wishes to divorce his wife is by this scheme entirely released from all the trouble and expense, and generally also from the scandal, usually attendant upon this iniquitous proceeding. He cannot indeed free himself from the sin of deserting his wife, and all those sins which are involved in it. But he may give his wife the opportunity of marrying innocently another husband. When this is done, he himself may, for aught that appears, marry innocently another wife. Thus, by undergoing an absence of three years, the time here limited for this object, he may without any peculiar scandal, and without the sin of adultery, accomplish the very object aimed at in cases of this nature by licentious men, viz., a second marriage.

St Paul, in the mean time, has in this very chapter determined the point in question against these commentators. 'Unto the married I command; yet not I, but the Lord; Let not the wife be separated from her husband. But, even if she be *separated*, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband.' The word, here translated *separated*, is the same which is used in the 15th verse; the subject of this inquiry. Is it credible, that an inspired man should at all, or that any man of sober sense should, within the compass of five sentences give two contradictory precepts concerning any subject, especially a subject of this importance? Peculiarly it is incredible, that St Paul, immediately after reciting a solemn command of Christ, and declaring it to be his, should subjoin a contradictory command.

To me it appears equally incredible, that an apostle should designate the situation in which Christ had placed an innocently divorced woman, innocently, I mean, on her part, by the word δεδουλωται, and thus style it, 'the deepest bondage.' It is, I think, impossible, that the Spirit of God should call any state produced by obedience to the commands of Christ, by the name of bondage; and still more evidently impossible, that he should denote it by a name, expressing the most suffering and disgraceful bondage. How can such an appellation consist with that phraseology, in which the whole situation of Christians is by the same Spirit styled, 'the glorious liberty of the sons of God?' If the deserted wife is brought under this bondage, by being denied the liberty of marrying again; the divorced wife is, by the same denial, brought under this bondage in a still more distressing degree. Yet to this situation she is reduced by the express command of Christ.

Finally: St Paul himself has clearly shown, that this was not his meaning, by the words immediately following the passage in question. 'But God hath called us to peace. For how knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? Or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?' Surely the second marriage contended for cannot ordinarily be the means of 'the peace' here mentioned; that is, peace or concord between the divorced pair. Much more is it improbable, that a husband, or a wife, should by means of second marriages become instruments of salvation to each other. This desirable event may be fairly hoped for, if they continue unmarried, from their future reconciliation to each other; but cannot be even remotely

hoped for from their divorce, and their consequent final separation.

Should it be said, that the case of the deserted wife is a hard one: I acknowledge it. The sins, both of ourselves and others, create none but hard cases. That of the divorced wife is still harder. The reason why this law is established is undoubtedly found in the immense importance of the marriage institution. It is incomparably better that individuals should suffer, than that an institution, which is the basis of all human good should be shaken or endangered.

I have dwelt thus minutely on this abused passage, because it is the strong-hold of those with whom I am contending. If they cannot find support for their opinions here, they can find it nowhere. That they cannot find it here has, I trust, been shown beyond a reasonable doubt.

What the Scriptures teach us, concerning the subject of divorce is abundantly established by reason. This I shall attempt to evince in the following observations.

It is acknowledged by the advocates for this system, that the Scriptures do indeed forbid a divorce for any other reason, beside incontinence, or something equivalent. The things which they consider as equivalent are obstinate desertion, gross personal abuse, incompatibility of temper, confirmed madness, &c. I do not intend, that they are all agreed with respect to this class of things; but that some or other of these they actually propose as reasons for divorce equivalent to incontinence.

Concerning this subject I observe,

1. That there is no such thing as an equivalent in this case.

No crime, no injury, affects the happiness of wedlock, or wounds so deeply every domestic interest. None so entirely terminates every enjoyment, and every hope, as the crime mentioned by our Saviour. As this is sufficiently evident from the preceding Discourse, it would be useless to spend time in considering it any farther. I shall only observe, therefore, that incontinence not only destroys connubial happiness and hopes, but annihilates, so far as it extends, the very institution from which they spring.

2. What is at least equally important, the Scriptures have nowhere mentioned anything as an equivalent.

It must, I think, be admitted without a question, that if the Divine lawgiver had intended that anything should be considered in the case in hand, as an equivalent to incontinence, he certainly would have expressly mentioned it. Certainly, he must, at least, be supposed to have hinted it, or alluded to it, in some manner or other. But this he has not done. Unanswerably, then, it was no part of his intentions. It cannot therefore be assumed as such by us. We are here, as well as in other cases, bound absolutely to see, that we 'add not to his words, lest he reprove us, and we be found liars.' I know of no pretence, that there is any thing of this nature found in the Scriptures, except the desertion, mentioned in the passage which has been so long the theme of discussion; and this, it is believed, has been clearly shown to have not even the remotest reference to the subject now under consideration. But,

3. It is urged that the evils involved in the things here mentioned as equivalents are intolerable, and demand relief from human jurisprudence.

To this I answer,

(1.) That although these evils were much greater than they are in fact; and I acknowledge them to be very great; yet, if God has not thought proper to allow us, and still more if he has forbidden us, to escape from them in the manner proposed, they must be alleged in vain as arguments for divorce.

The government of his creatures belongs only to God; and nothing but impiety can induce us to interfere with either the modes or the principles of his administration. If he has permitted divorce on either of these grounds, it is lawful. If he has not, however numerous or great may be the evils which we suffer, they will not contribute at all towards rendering it lawful.

(2.) All these evils may be relieved more perfectly than by divorce; and as perfectly as human governments can relieve them, by the separation *a mensa et thoro.*

In this process the parties, though not released from the bonds of marriage, are separated from each other so far, that the innocent party is no longer bound to live with the guilty. The common property is so disposed of also, as to furnish provision for the wants of both. The children, at the same time, are distributed by public justice in the best manner which the case will admit. Here all the means are furnished which can be furnished for the relief and future safety of the aggrieved party; and incomparably better means than any which divorce can offer.

(3.) Divorce, instead of remedying, enhances these evils beyond comprehension.

A law, permitting divorces, except where personal worth and wisdom prevent, produces an immediate separation of interests among all the married persons in a community. With a complete conviction of their liability to divorce for the causes alleged, every married pair begin their connexion. For this event, then, common prudence requires them to make such provision as may be in their power. The wife, the feebler and more dependent party, strongly realizing from the beginning her danger of being left to precarious means of subsistence, at a time always uncertain, and therefore always felt to be near, will be driven by common prudence and powerful necessity to lay up something in store against the evil day. The husband, aware of this state of things from the beginning, will be irresistibly led to oppose it in every part of its progress. This he will do by placing his property, so far as it may be in his power, beyond the reach of his wife; and by contending strenuously for the preservation of the remainder.

A separation of interests is, in all intelligent beings, necessarily a separation of affections. Heaven itself would cease to be a world of love were its inhabitants no longer to feel a common interest. Oneness of interests makes their oneness of mind, life, and labours. Separate the interests of a married pair, and you separate at once all their affections. Show them the probability, or even the possibility of a future divorce; and you show them its certainty. From this moment a separation of interests is begun. From this period, however affectionate they may originally have been, their affection will cease. The consciousness, that their interests are opposed, will immediately beget coldness, alienation, jealousy, and, in the end, riveted hatred.

Between persons living together causes of dispute can never fail frequently to arise. Among persons whose interests generally harmonize, and who are governed by principle and moderation, such causes produce little effect. But, between persons in the situation which I have described, they never fail to operate with their fullest efficacy. Their minds are ready to take fire on every occasion, and to construe in the worst manner every real or supposed provocation, every seeming neglect, every slight word, every unpleasant look. They are dissatisfied with almost every thing that is done, or left undone. A spark will kindle such combustible materials into a flame.

Among persons thus circumstanced, dispositions, naturally kind, soon become unkind; tempers, before sufficiently compatible, soon become utterly incompatible. Where offices of kindness would have naturally multiplied and flourished, jars are multiplied, bitterness flourishes, disputes are generated, personal violence follows, and, not unnaturally, murder itself. Thus the very evils which divorce professes to relieve, it only creates; and creates them in millions of instances, where it designs to relieve them in one. Thus plain it is, to use the language of Dryden, that

'God never made his work for man to mend.'

Were a divorce impossible, the interests of every married pair would be one, through life. This fact would so far unite their affections, as to prevent a great part of the debates of which I have been speaking; and in most cases to terminate the rest without any serious difficulty. Persons who know that their contentions are hopeless, and that, however desirable their separation might seem, it is impossible to effect it, will almost always so far make the best of their circumstances, as to sit down in a tolerable state of content. The absolute union of their interests cannot fail to recur unceasingly to their minds, nor to operate on them with powerful efficacy. Their affection, though occasionally intermitted, will return with its former strength. The necessity which each feels of the other's good offices, will daily be realized. The superior happiness of former harmony will be remembered. Their children also, for whom their cares have been so often kindly mingled, will plead in the most interesting manner for the continuance of their mutual good-will. Thus life, although not without its alternations of disquiet, will in the main go on pleasantly, where, in millions of instances, the knowledge that divorce was attainable, would have produced discord, hatred, separation, and ruin.

It is well known to every observer of human nature, that a prominent part of this nature is the love of novelty and variety, in all its pursuits. In no case is this propensity more predominant, than in the case in hand. Polygamists have endeavoured to satisfy this propensity by replenishing their harams with a multitude of wives. Profligates have attempted to compass the same object by a promiscuous concubinage. The endeavours of both, however, have been equally fruitless. David by this disposition was seduced to adultery. Solomon, in the multiplication of wives and concubines, has shown, that it knows no limits; and that its effects are nothing but corruption and ruin. By divorce this disposition is let loose; and the spirit of licentiousness has the sign given to roam and ravage without control. The family, which all the causes of wretchedness already mentioned would not have made unhappy, will be ruined by this cause; a cause sufficiently powerful, and sufficiently malignant, to ruin a world.

To the children such a state of things is a regular source of absolute destruction. During the contentions of the parents, which will usually be generated by the mere attainableness of a divorce, and which become ultimately the occasion of granting it, the children will either be forgotten, or forced to take sides with the parents. In both cases their whole education to useful purposes will be neglected. Particularly, they will never be 'trained up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.' Jarring parents (and there will be millions of such parents wherever divorce prevails, to one where it does not) can never teach their children religion, either by precept or example. Amid their own irreligious contentions, the farce would be too gross for impudence itself to act, and too ridiculous to be received seriously even by children. They would be left therefore to grow up Atheists, or Nihilists, without religion, without a God, without a hope.

In the former case, all their other interests, their support, their comfort, their preparation for business, and their hopes of future usefulness, reputation, and enjoyment, would be neglected. Parents, whose minds were in a continual state of irritation and hostility, could never unite in anything of this nature; and nothing of this nature in which they did not unite, would ever be done to any purpose.

In the latter case, the children would be taught to join one parent in contending against the other. Here, they would be taught, some to dishonour their father, and some to dishonour their mother; in direct opposition to the moral law; and taught by those whom God had appointed to teach them this law. Filial impiety is the most unnatural and monstrous wickedness of which children are ordinarily guilty. We cannot wonder, therefore, that it should conduct them to every other wickedness; that it should end in impiety to God, or injustice to mankind. The children here are directly taught by one parent to hate and despise the other. Their contentions and calumnies, their mutual scorn and hatred, will force the children to despise both. Children who regard their parents with habitual disrespect, will soon respect neither man, nor God, Devoid of principle, destitute of every good habit, trained up to insubordination and rebellion, and witnesses from their infancy of discord only, malignity, abuse, and slander, they are prepared to be mere villains, nuisances, and pests in the world.

I have all along supposed the parents to continue together until the children have grown up to some degree of maturity and reflection. This, however, would by no means be the common case; and would exist less and less frequently as divorces multiplied. The consequences of an earlier separation, such as would generally take place, would be still more dreadful. Such of the children as followed the mother, however affectionate might be her disposition would share in all the calamities necessarily springing from her unprotected suffering condition. Women are constitutionally unfitted to encounter the rude, toilsome, and discouraging scenes everywhere presented by this unkind, untoward world, and allotted by the Creator only to the robust hardihood of man. A divorced female is almost neces-

sarily an outcast. Her children who follow her fortunes, must be outcasts also. Defenceless herself, she cannot defend them. Unable to support herself, she will be still more unable to support them. Even the spirit of moderation will regard her as unworthy and disgraced. The common feelings of the world will mark her as the mere butt of scorn and infamy. Why was she divorced? 'Because she was unfit to sustain the character of a wife,' will be the answer, everywhere hissed out by the tongue of contempt. In all this contempt, and in all the evils which this wolfish spirit draws in its train, the children will necessarily share; and will be regarded like the spurious offspring of beggars, born under a hedge, and buried in a ditch.

Such of them as survived their multiplied sufferings, and these would be comparatively few, would be solitary, deserted beings, without a home, without a father, without education, without industry, without employment, without comforts, and without hopes; residing nowhere, and related to nobody. Like the wild men, said to be found at times in the forests of Germany and Poland, and supposed to be nursed by bears, they would sustain the character of mere animals. At war with everything, and by everything warred upon; when out of sight, forgotten; and when seen, regarded only with horror; they would live without a friend, without a name; nay, sunk beneath the cattle wandering in the same deserts, without a mark to denote to whom they belonged. Thus they would prowl through life, and putrefy on the spot where they were seized by death.

Nor would the children who followed the father, in most instances, be at all more comfortable. The cold-hearted cruelty of stepmothers is proverbial. Palpable injustice has, I doubt not, been extensively done by the unkind opinions of the public to persons of this denomination. I myself have known multitudes of persons fill this station with great integrity, tenderness, and excellence. Yet, even in this enlightened, refined, and Christianized country, I believe there are few mothers who leave the world while their families are young without very serious anxieties concerning the treatment which their children will receive from their future stepmothers. This, and every thing else dreaded or complained of, with respect to the class of persons in question, exists in the midst of a community made up of parents married according to the laws of God. Their families also live in the midst of civilization, gentleness of manners, and the mild influence of religion; where the whole tide of things flows favourably to humanity, justice, kindness, and all the interests of the unprotected.

Far different would be the situation of children under this superintendence, in regions where divorce prevailed. The father, having released himself from one wife, and married another, would soon forsake the second for a third; this for a fourth; this for a fifth; and thus onward without any known limit. A French soldier lately declared before a judicial tribunal in Paris, that he had married eleven wives in eleven years; and boasted of this fact as honourable and meritorious. The scandal would soon vanish; and mere convenience, whim, or passion control the conduct. What then would become of those children of the first wife, who fell under the management of such a succession of stepmothers; absolute strangers to their family, their interests, and even their legitimacy; their mothers only for a year, a month, or a day; mothers before whom they would only pass in review, rather than with whom they would live; mothers, distracted in their affections, if they had any; certainly in their thoughts, cares, and labours, distributed to so many children of so many sorts, having so many interests, and distracted themselves by so many contentions? Who does not see with a glance, that, even where humanity and principle reigned, these friendless beings would soon be neglected by the stepmother in favour of her own offspring? What must be their fate, where lewdness had succeeded to principle, and humanity had already been frozen out of the heart? Soon, very soon, must they become mere and miserable outcasts; like those who wandered away from their father's house with their divorced mother.

Divorces, once authorized, would soon become numerous, and in most countries would, in a moderate period of time, control the whole state of society. Even in this State, where the tide of manners and morals is entirely against them, and where, for somewhat more than a century, they have blackened the public character with a strange and solitary but dreadful spot, they were indeed for a long time rare. The deformity of the object was so great, the prevalence of vital religion was so general, and the power of conscience and of public opinion so efficacious, that few, very few comparatively, had sufficient hardihood to apply. The law also allowed of less latitude to applications. At the present time, the progress of this evil is alarming and terrible. In this town, * within five years, more than fifty divorces have been granted; at an average calculation, more than four hundred in the whole State during this period: that is, one out of every hundred married pairs. What a flaming proof is here of the baleful influence of this corruption on the people, otherwise remarkably distinguished for their intelligence, morals, and religion! Happily, a strenuous opposition is begun to this anti-scriptural law, which it may be fairly hoped, will soon terminate in its final revocation.

In France, within three months after the law permitting divorces was enacted by the National Assembly, there were in the city of Paris almost as many divorces registered as marriages. In the whole kingdom there were, as reported by the Abbe Gregoire, chairman of a committee of the National Assembly on that subject, upwards of twenty thousand divorces registered within about a year and a half. 'This law,' added the Abbe, 'will ruin the whole nation.'

From these facts, as well as from the nature of the case, it is clearly evident, that the progress of divorce, though different in different countries will in all be dreadful beyond conception. Within a moderate period, the whole community will be thrown, by laws made in open opposition to the laws of God, into a general prostitution. No difference exists between this prostitution, and that which customarily bears the name, except that the one is licensed, the other is unlicensed, by man. To the eye of God, those who are polluted in each of these modes are alike, and equally impure, loathsome, and abandoned wretches; the offspring of Sodom and Gomorrah. They are, divorced and undivorced, adulterers, and adulteresses; of whom the Spirit of truth has said, that not one of them 'shall enter into

* New Haven

the kingdom of God.' Over such a country, a virtuous man, if such a one be found, will search in vain to find a virtuous wife. Wherever he wanders, nothing will meet his eye but stalking, bare-faced pollution. The realm around him has become one vast brothel; one great province of the world of perdition. To that dreadful world the only passage out of it leads; and all its inhabitants, thronging this broad and crooked way, hasten with one consent to that 'blackness of darkness,' which envelops it for ever.

SERMON CXXII.

THE LAW OF GOD.—THE DECALOGUE.—THE EIGHTH COMMANDMENT. IDLENESS—PRODIGALITY.

Thou shalt not steal.—Exod. xx. 15.

The preceding command prohibits all trespasses against purity; this against property.

To steal, is to take privately the property of others, with an intention to convert it to our own use. To rob, is to take the same property, for the same purpose, openly, and with violence. There can be little necessity of expatiating upon a crime so well understood, and so universally infamous, as stealing, before an assembly whose education, principles, and habits, furnish so strong a barrier against it. It may, however, be useful to observe, that this crime has its origin in that spirit of covetousness which prompts us to wish inordinately for the enjoyments and possessions of others. This spirit, when indulged, continually acquires strength; and in many instances, becomes ultimately so powerful, as to break over every bound of right and reputation. The object in contemplation is seen to be desirable. As we continue to contemplate it, it becomes more and more desirable. While the attention of the mind is fixed upon it, it will be turned, comparatively, very little to other objects; particularly to those moral restraints which hinder us from acquiring what we thus covet. The importance and obligation of these restraints gradually fade from before the eye. The man, engaged only in the business of obtaining the intended gratification, naturally finds little leisure or inclination to dwell upon the danger, shame, or sin, of seizing on his neighbour's possessions. Thus he becomes unhappily prepared to put forth a bold and rash hand, and to pluck the tempting enjoyment, in spite of the awful prohibitions of his Maker. He who does not covet will never steal. He who indulges covetousness, will find himself in danger wherever there is a temptation.

In examining this precept, it will be my principal design to consider the subject of fraud.

That fraud is implicitly forbidden in this precept will not, I suppose, be questioned. The Catechism of the Westminster Assembly of Divines explains the command in this manner; 'It requires,' say they, the 'lawful procuring and furthering, the wealth and outward estate of ourselves and others;' and 'forbids whatsoever doth, or may, unjustly hinder our own, or our neighbour's wealth, or outward estate.'

In the Catechism of king Edward it is thus explained: 'It commandeth us to beguile no man; to occupy no unlawful wares; to envy no man his wealth; and to think nothing profitable, that either is not just, or differeth from right and honesty.' In this manner we are abundantly warranted to understand it by our Saviour's commentary on the other commands, in his sermon on the mount. Accordingly, it has been generally understood in the same comprehensive manner by divines. To this interpretation the nature of the subject gives the fullest warrant. All that which is sinful in theft is the taking of our neighbour's property, without his knowledge or consent, and converting it to our own use. In every fraud we do exactly the same thing, although in a different manner. Every fraud therefore, whatever be the form in which it is practised, partakes of the very same sinful nature which is found in theft.

Fraud is in all instances a violation of what is commonly called honesty, or commutative justice. Honesty, in the scriptural sense, is a disposition to render, or the actual rendering of, an equivalent for what we receive, in our dealings with others. This equivalent may consist either of property or of services; honesty being equally concerned with both. At the same time, there is such a thing as defrauding one's self. 'Whatsoever doth or may, unjustly hinder our own outward estate,' or in other words, that comfort and benefit which we might derive from our property, or from our opportunities of acquiring it, is of this nature; and is accordingly forbidden by this commandment.

With these introductory observations, I shall now proceed to consider the prohibition in the text under the following heads:—

I. *The fraudulent conduct which respects ourselves and our families.*

II. *That which respects others.*

I. I shall mention *several kinds of fraudulent conduct which most immediately respect ourselves and our families.*

All the members of a family have a common interest; and are so intimately united in every domestic concern that 'if one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or if one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.' Whatever affects the head must affect the whole body. If a man defraud himself, either directly or indirectly, he cannot fail therefore of defrauding his family. For this reason I have thought it pro-

per to consider the family of a man as united with himself in this part of my subject.

The first specimen of fraud which I shall mention under this head, is *idleness.*

That idleness hinders our own wealth or outward estate, will not be questioned. 'I went by the field of the slothful,' says Solomon, 'and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding; and lo! it was all grown over with thorns; and nettles had covered the face thereof; and the stone-wall thereof was broken down. Then I saw and considered it well. I looked upon it, and received instruction. Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep. So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man.'

Idleness at the same time, is obviously a fraud. The lazy man cheats himself of good which God hath given to him; of enjoyments put into his hands by the bounty of his Creator. These blessings he barters for the love of ease. The price which he pays is very great: that which he gets in return is 'dross and dung.'

The mischiefs of idleness are numerous and important.

(1.) Idleness is a sinful waste of our time.

Our time is a possession of inestimable value. The best employment of it, that is, such an employment of it as the Scriptures require, involves all which is meant by our duty. The loss or waste of it is, therefore, no other than the loss or omission of all our duty; the frustration of the purpose for which we were created.

(2.) Idleness is a sinful waste of our talents.

By these I mean all the powers of body and mind, and the means which God hath furnished us in his providence of employing them for valuable ends. Our time and talents united, constitute our whole capacity of being useful, our worth, our all. The idle man wastes them both; 'wraps them up in a napkin, and buries them in the earth.' In this manner he robs God of the end for which he was made, and becomes a burden upon the shoulders of his fellow men. He eats what others provide: and while they are industriously engaged in labour, his business is only to devour. Thus he is carried by mankind as a load, from the cradle to the grave; is despised, loathed and execrated, while he lives; and when he dies, is buried like the carcass of an animal, to fulfill the demands of decency, and merely to get rid of a nuisance.

In the mean time, 'his drowsiness clothes' himself and his family 'with rags;' prevents them from the enjoyments common to all around them; disappoints, without a reason perceivable by them, all their just expectations; and, as was formerly observed concerning the drunkenness of a parent, sinks them below the common level of mankind. Want in every form, and all the miseries of want, arrest them daily, and through life. Their food is poor and scanty; their clothes are rags; they are pinched with cold, through the destitution of fuel; and deprived of refreshing sleep, because their bed is the earth, and because their dwelling, a mere sieve, admits without obstruction snow and rain, the frost and the storm. Thus, while they see almost all others around them possessed in abundance, not of the necessaries only, but of all the comforts, and most of the conveniences of life; they themselves are forced to look on, and thirst, and pine, for the tempting enjoyments; while, like Tantalus, they are forbidden by an iron-handed necessity to taste the good.

At the same time, the man is forced to feel, while his family also are compelled by him to feel, that he, their husband and their father, is the subject of supreme folly and insignificance, and of gross, unremitted, and hopeless sin; of folly which is causeless; insignificance, voluntarily assumed; sin, unnecessarily and wanton; and that he is an object of general and extreme contempt. The contempt, directed immediately to him, is of course extended to his family also; and they are compelled at their first entrance into the world, to encounter the eye of scorn, and the tongue of derision. All these evils are sustained, also, only that the man may lead the life of a sluggard, be assimilated to the sloth in his character, and rival the swine in his favourite mode of life, and his most coveted enjoyments.

(3.) Idleness exposes a man to many temptations, and many sins.

A lazy man is, of course, without any useful engagement; his mind is therefore vacant, and ready for the admission of any sin which seeks admission. To such a man temptations may be said to be always welcome. They are guests, for which he is regularly prepared; and he has neither company nor business to hinder him from yielding to them, whatever attention or entertainment they may demand. The proverbial adage, that 'Satan will employ him who does not find employment for himself,' is founded in experience and good sense. The mind even of the idlest man will be busy; and the mind which is not busied in its duty, will be busied in sin. On such a mind every temptation is secure of a powerful influence; entices without opposition, and conquers without even a struggle, or a sigh. Hence we find such a man devoted, not only to the general sin of idleness, but to all the other sins which he can conveniently practise.

'The sluggard,' says Solomon, 'is wiser in his own conceit than seven men that can render a reason.' From this miserable vanity, of which their deplorable mismanagement of their own affairs ought to cure them at a glance, it arises, that sluggards so commonly become the professed counsellors of mankind. Hence it arises, that so many of them are politicians, pettifoggers, and separatical preachers. They know nothing, it is true, except what an abecedarian knows of either divinity, law, or government. Still they feel and declare themselves to be abundantly able to teach the way to heaven, which they have never learned; and to explain laws, which they never studied. The affairs of a nation, so numerous, so complicated, and so extensive, as to be comprehended only by minds peculiarly capacious, and to demand the laborious study of a life, these men understand instinctively; without inquiry, information, or thought. Their own affairs, it is true, they manage in such a manner as to conduct them only to ruin. Yet they feel perfectly competent to manage the affairs of a nation with pre-eminent skill, and certain success. Every thing in the concerns of the public, if you will believe them, goes wrong; and will never be set right, if you will believe them a little farther, by anybody but themselves. These men are 'smoke to the eyes and vinegar to the teeth,' of persons possessing real understanding. To the public they are mere nuisances, living on the earnings of others; fomentors of discontent, active agents in riots and broils, incendiaries, who consume the peace and comfort of all around them, and who well deserve to be 'the bye-word and

the hissing' of every upright and benevolent citizen. Such were the men whom the Jews of Thessalonica gathered into a company against Paul; who 'set all the city in an uproar;' and attempted to destroy the apostle and his religion by the violence of a mob. They were αγοραιοι; translated 'lewd fellows of the baser sort;' literally, 'idle, lounging haunters of market-places.'

It ought particularly to be remembered, that persons of this character rarely become converts to Christianity. Among all those who within my knowledge have appeared to become sincerely penitent and reformed, I recollect only a single lazy man; and this man became industrious from the moment of his apparent, and I doubt not, real conversion. The sinful prostitution of his time and talents by idleness, and his ready admission of temptations to his heart, fix the idler in a regular hostility against all the promises and threatenings of religion; while his self-conceit makes him too wise willingly to receive wisdom even from God. Few cases in human life, are, in this respect, more desperate than that of the idler. A preacher destined to address an assembly of such men might, with nearly the same hope of success, exchange his desk for the churchyard, and waste his eloquence upon the tenants of the grave.

In the mean time, every lazy man ought steadily to remember, that his very subsistence is founded on fraud. 'If any man will not work,' saith the Proprietor of all things, 'neither let him eat.' For him to eat is to rob; to rob his Maker of his property, and his fellow men of theirs.

2. *Prodigality* is another fraud of the same general nature.

There are various modes of prodigality. Property may be wasted by negligence, by foolish bargains, by the injudicious management of business, by bold adventures, and by direct profusion. The guilt in the different cases may vary somewhat. The general nature of the conduct, its folly, and its end, are substantially the same. There will therefore, be no necessity of distinguishing it here with any particular attention.

The effects of prodigality are, in many respects, exactly the same with those of idleness. By both these vices property is effectually wasted. The negligent waster of property is influenced by the same motives which govern the idler; and shuns the labour of preserving it, as the idler the labour of acquiring it, from the mere love of ease. The spendthrift squanders it, from a foolish fondness for the several enjoyments of which he makes it the price; from the love of show, the indulgence of whim, and the relish for luxurious and voluptuous gratification. The objects of his expense are, either in their degree or their kind, always unnecessary to his true interest, and his real comfort. Passions which ought not to be indulged, whims which ought not to exist, much less to be cherished, govern his mind with despotic sway, and make him their absolute and miserable slave. Unsatisfied with what he is, and what he has, he pines incessantly with a sickly taste for some new gratification; for objects in which he supposes happiness to lie, and in which he expects to satisfy a relish too restless, craving, and capricious ever to be satisfied. His appetite is canine; not merely eating and drinking, but devouring; and, although daily crammed, is still hungry.

Vanity and pride are also perpetual prompters to the prodigal; vanity, which cries with an unceasing voice, 'Give, give;' pride, which never saith, 'It is enough.' Goaded by these passions, he struggles with unceasing anxiety to outrun those around him in the splendour of dress, equipage, houses, gardens, and other objects of expense. The contest of one with many is almost necessarily unequal. It is scarcely possible, that some of his competitors should not excel him in one thing, and some in another; or that, whenever he is excelled, he should not be unhappy. In its nature, the strife is unwise and fruitless; because neither the spirit nor the efforts of rivalry ever made any man happy. In its progress, it necessarily disappoints all his eager wishes and fond hopes. When he succeeds, the expected enjoyment expires in the very moment of success: when he fails, the disappointment makes him miserable. With all this he is preparing himself insensibly for more accumulated misery. No prodigal ever looks into his affairs, nor conjectures the extent of his expenses. Of course, no prodigal ever perceives the rapidity with which his property declines. To men of this sort ruin is always nearer than they mistrust; and hastens with a celerity of which they never dreamed. While the means of expense are supposed to last, the whole host of sharpers fasten on him as their prey. The jockey cheats him in a bargain. The swindler borrows and runs away with his money. The usurer furnishes him with loans at an enormous interest. Heedless of expense, and greedy of the enjoyments which it procures, every manufacturer of frippery, every owner of a toy-shop, selects him as his own best customer, and exchanges the merchandise of Vanity-fair for his money and his lands.

Such a career, providence never suffers to last long. Unsuspected by himself, but foreseen by all around him, ruin, hastening with rapid steps, knocks at his door in an evil hour. The host of wretches who pamper themselves on his extravagance while they secretly laugh at his folly, startled at the sound, are out of sight in a moment. They have indeed rioted at his expense, and might be expected to be grateful for what he has given. But gratitude is rarely created by profusion, and the hearts of such men were never susceptible of gratitude. They have feasted on enjoyments which he furnished; but they came only to feast, not to sympathize. They have encouraged his expense, praised his generosity, admired his taste, and professed a deep interest in his happiness. But their whole business terminated in enjoying, praising, admiring, and professing. They are harpies, who gathered around him to revel on his profusion; and sycophants, who flattered him, that they might be admitted to the revel. For him, for any other human being, they never exercised a generous thought, a sympathizing feeling, an honest good-will. The house of suffering has no charms for them. They came only to get; and when they can get no longer, they come no more.

When they have taken their flight, instead of being grateful to him for the enjoyments on which they have so long and so riotously feasted at his expense, they are among the first, most incessant, and most clamorous of those who load him with censure. Instead of pitying his calamities, calamities into which they have persuaded, urged, and flattered him; they make both him and them the butt of ridicule a mark for scorn to shoot at; and persuade the world to forget that they have

been eminently the causes of his destruction, by vociferating their contempt of his folly.

In the mean time, his door is thronged by a mob of duns, and a host of bailiffs. His houses and lands pass away to the sharpers, who have been long fattening upon his spoils. His equipage, his furniture, even the very bed on which he has slept, is struck off to the highest bidder. The sprightly sound of the viol and the harpsichord is succeeded by the rude hammer of the auctioneer. Broken in fortune, and broken in heart, the miserable squanderer and his miserable family quit their luxurious mansion, and shelter themselves in a solitary hovel.

This wretched career is rendered more sinful, and more unhappy, by the avarice which regularly haunts the prodigal. Addison, in a beautiful allegory, informs us, that luxury and avarice were formerly at war; that, after various vicissitudes of fortune, they agreed at length to a permanent peace, on the condition that luxury should dismiss plenty from his service, and avarice, poverty, their ministers of state; and that avarice should become the minister of luxury, and luxury of avarice, by turns. Since that period, he informs us, luxury ministers to avarice, and avarice to luxury. Every prodigal is, in intention at least, a luxurious man. Every prodigal almost is avaricious. He grasps at money eagerly, that he may find the means of continuing his darling profusion; and covets with as craving an appetite, that he may spend; as the miser, that he may hoard. Like the miserable sufferers described by Isaiah, he 'will not spare even his own brother;' but 'will snatch on the right hand, and still be hungry; and devour on the left, and will not be satisfied.'

Equally exposed is he to the sin of fraud, as perpetrated upon his fellow men. Peculiarly is he of the number of those 'wicked who borrow and never pay.' No man is more lavish of promises, notes, and bonds; and no man more stinted in discharging his honest debts. The farmer, mechanic, and manufacturer, are peculiarly the objects of his fraud. The debts which he pays at all, are those which he is pleased to style debts of honour, the debts of luxury; debts contracted to furnish the means of splendour and voluptuousness. The necessaries of life are objects too humble to be ranked in the list of his enjoyments. Insignificant in themselves, that is, as he estimates them, they are not felt to be deserving of his attention. Those who furnish them also are too modest and too quiet to compel his regard. Those who gratify the demands of show and pleasure, are, in his view, persons of higher consequence; and are usually too clamorous and too persevering in their demands, to suffer them to be turned away by a mere succession of empty promises. Their claims are of course first satisfied. Not the rich, but the poor and the hungry, are here sent away empty.

The same necessity which drives him to promise-breaking urges him also into its twin vice of lying. He wants money daily; and, as the ordinary means of obtaining it fail, he resorts to every art, and fetch, and falsehood, to supply his pressing necessities. A true account of his circumstances and designs would prevent every supply. To falsehood, therefore, and to trick he betakes himself, as the most obvious means of relieving his immediate wants. In this manner he becomes, within a moderate period, a common cheat, and a common liar.

Nor is the prodigal much less in danger from drunkenness. The peculiar distress which attends the consciousness of embarrassed affairs, made up of the strong pressure of wants without the means of relieving them, a continual apprehension of approaching ruin, united with an insurmountable reluctance to make any efforts towards preventing it, edged and pointed by a succession of duns, mortified pride, vanishing pleasures, and clamorous appetites; this peculiar distress is a powerful and frequent cause of habitual intoxication. The unhappy being who is the subject of such distress, instinctively hunts, but hunts in vain, for relief, and even for consolation. Despair meets him at every corner. Often the only alleviation which presents itself to his afflicted eye, is the terrible resort to the transient stupefaction of strong drink. Thus the forlorn wretch, with a varied, indeed, but always downward course, makes his situation worse and worse; and hurries himself to final ruin by the very means on which he fastens for relief.

Nor is the prodigal in small danger of becoming a suicide. He has lived for a length of time in the gratification of pride, the enjoyment of conscious superiority, and an uninterrupted course of voluptuous indulgence. When the dreams of greatness are over, and the riot of pleasure has ceased, the change to want and degradation is often too sudden, and almost always too great to be borne with equanimity. In the earlier moments of desperation, it is not uncommon to see the prodigal betake himself, for refuge from the load of humiliation and despair, to poison, the pistol, or the halter. Among those who become suicides in the possession of their reason, a more numerous list is nowhere found, than that which is composed of ruined prodigals. For men have sufficient fortitude to sustain without shrinking, the excruciating evils to which persons of this description regularly hurry themselves; excruciating, I mean, to such men. We do indeed, meet at times, beings who, like disturbed ghosts, haunt places of public resort; and labour to keep in the remembrance of mankind the shadows, shreds, and tatters of their former gayety and splendour; and serve as way-marks to warn the traveller of his approach to a quagmire, or a precipice. But far more commonly they shrink from the public eye, and from the neglect and contempt which they are conscious of having merited; and not unfrequently hide themselves for ever from the sight, by hurrying into the future world!

The prodigal is also dreadfully exposed to hardness of heart. Should he continue to live, should he become neither a suicide nor a drunkard, still the love of expense and pleasure, grown by indulgence into an obstinate habit, the long continued forgetfulness of God, the total negligence of religion and all its duties, the entire absorption in the present, and the absolute disregard of the future, universally attendant on this mode of life, naturally render the heart callous to every divine impression. A man who thus eagerly forgets God, ought certainly to expect that God will forget him. For, no man says to the Almighty more frequently or more uniformly, 'Depart from me, for I desire not the knowledge of thy ways.' From the house of God, from the Scriptures, nay, even from prayer, the last hope of miserable man, he voluntarily

cuts himself off. What prospects must he then form concerning his future being!

The family of the prodigal share necessarily in most of his calamities, and almost necessarily in many of his sins. A great part of the same temptations arrest them, of course. A great part of the sins are provided for them and regularly served up. Should they escape from moral ruin, the event would be little short of a miracle, unless it should be accomplished by an early and timely failure of the means of sin. The sufferings to which they are exposed are numberless. The prodigal, fascinated by show and pleasure, cannot attend to the education of his children. He cannot spare from his own enjoyments, in his view indispensable, the means of education abroad; particularly an education at all suited to their original circumstances, the expectations which he has forced them to form, and the wishes which they have reasonably as well as naturally cherished. Religious instruction, admonition, and reproof, a prodigal never can give. He who does not pray for himself, cannot be expected to pray for his family. The parent who does not frequent the house of God, will soon see it forsaken by his children. Thus the education of his children will be deserted by the prodigal. The invaluable season of childhood and youth will be lost, and those early impressions, both economical and religious, those important habits, on which the good of this life, and of the life to come, is in a great measure founded, are never established in their minds.

To their comfortable settlement, whatever may be his wishes, he has voluntarily lost the power to contribute. Before the period arrives at which this important object is to be accomplished, his wife (if she has not died of a broken heart) and her children usually see him a beggar; and follow him to the hovel, which has become his only shelter. Hence, if they survive the ruin of their hopes, the children are soon turned into the world, to make their way through all the thorns and briars which regularly embarrass the path of persons in such a situation. The hand which feeds the young ravens when they cry, does, indeed, usually feed them. Earthly friends, at times also, they may find and sometimes may be regarded by strangers with compassion and tenderness, which they never experienced from him who gave them birth.

REMARKS.

1. By these considerations, parents are taught the incalculable importance of educating their children to industry and economy.

Revolve for a moment the miserable character, circumstances, and end of those who have been the subject of this Discourse. Who would be willing, who would not shudder at the thought, that such would be the character, such the circumstances, and such the end, of his own children? How shall this dreadful catastrophe be prevented? Under God, only by a faithful education of children to industry and economy; by habituation to some useful, active business; or some diligent, sedentary employment; by thorough instructions, and a persuasive example. These are the fountains of sustenance to human life. A fortune bequeathed to children, or provided for them at an earlier period, instead of being a secure provision for their future wants, is commonly a mere incitement to ruin; a bounty given to idleness; a watch-word to begin the career of profusion.

The Jews are said, during some periods at least of their existence as a people, to have educated their children universally in active business; and to have adopted proverbially this aphorism, 'He who does not bring up his child to useful industry, brings him up to be a beggar and a nuisance.' It is to be fervently wished, that all Christian parents would adopt the same maxim, and thus prepare their children to become blessings both to themselves and mankind. It has been repeatedly observed in these discourses, that industry and economy are not natural to man, and can only be established by habituation. These habits must both be begun in the morning of life, or there is danger that they will never be begun successfully. As no man, consistently with this plain duty, can be excused from being industrious and economical himself, so no man can be justified for a moment, who does not effectually communicate both industry and economy to his children. He who at the first made labour the employment of mankind, and who afterward commanded to 'gather up the fragments, that nothing might be lost;' will admit no excuse for the neglect of these duties, whether they respect ourselves, or our offspring. In this subject, parents and children of both sexes are equally concerned. Both parents are bound to teach their children; and their children, of both sexes, are bound to learn to be industrious, and to be economical; to fill up their time with useful employments; to methodize it, that it may be thus filled up; and to feel that the loss of time, the neglect of talents, and the waste of property, are all serious violations of their duty to God. The parents are bound to inspire, and the children to imbibe, a contempt, an abhorrence, for that silly, worthless frivolity, to which so many children of fashionable parents, especially, are trained; that sinful waste of the golden hours of life, that sickly devotion to amusement, that shameful, pitiable dependence on trifling, to help them along, even tolerably, through their present tedious, dragging existence. Few persons are more to be pitied, as certainly few are more to be blamed, than those who find their enjoyments only in diversions: and cling to a ride, a dance, a visit, a play, or a novel, to keep them from sinking into gloom and despondence. Industrious persons, who spend their time in useful pursuits, are the only persons whose minds are serene, contented, and cheerful. If we wish happiness for our children, then, we shall carefully educate them to an industrious life.

Let no parent, at the same time, forget what alarming temptations and what gross sins surround idleness and profusion. This consideration will, if any thing will, compel parents to educate their children in this manner. The parent's fortune is here of no significance. The heir of a fortune is far more exposed to all these evils than he who has none. If he is to go through life with a fortune, he is to be taught to earn and to preserve property. Without this instruction, he will probably, ere long, be beggared, tempted without any defence to multiplied sins, and become a liar, a cheat, a drunkard, and perhaps a suicide. What parent would not tremble at the thought, that his own negligence would entail these evils upon his offspring?

2. Young persons, whatever may have been their education, are here forcibly taught to pursue an industrious and economical life.

The children of wealthy parents are generally prone to believe that they are destined, not to usefulness but to enjoyment; and that they may be idle therefore without a crime. No opinion is more groundless, and very few are more fatal. God made all mankind to be useful. This character he requires of them without conditions. He who does not assume it, will be found inexcusable at the final day. Every human ear ought to tingle and every heart to shudder, at the doom of the unprofitable servant in the gospel.

Still more prone are youths to believe, that profusion is honourable, and to shrink from the imputation of niggardly conduct. There is no more absolute absurdity than the supposition, that prodigality and generosity are the same thing. They are not even allied. Generosity consists in giving freely, when a valuable purpose demands it; and with a disposition benevolently inclined to promote that purpose. Prodigality is the squandering of property, not for valuable, but base and contemptible purposes; for the mere gratification of voluptuousness, vanity, and pride. All these gratifications are mean, selfish, and despicable. The generous man feels the value of property. The prodigal has no sense of this value. The generous man gives, because what he gives will do real good to the recipient; the prodigal, because he cares nothing about property, except as it enables him to acquire reputation, to gratify his pride, to make an ostentatious display of wealth, or to outstrip and mortify a rival. In all this there is not an approach towards generosity. On the contrary, the motives are grovelling and contemptible; and the manner in which they are exhibited to the eye is disingenuous and hypocritical; a gaudy dress upon a loathsome skeleton. But the prodigal fails of the very reward which he proposes as the chief object of his expense. In spite of all his wishes and efforts, even weak men perceive that he is totally destitute of generosity; and those who most flatter, are the first to forsake him, while, to shelter their own meanness and treachery, they proclaim, more loudly than any others, his weakness, faults, and miseries to mankind.

Let every youth then fasten his eye on this wretched character, this pernicious conduct, and this deplorable end. His own exposure let him strongly feel. Let him realize with solemn emotions of mind, that idleness and profusion are broad and beaten roads to ruin, both in this world and that which is to come. With these views, let him devote all his time to some useful and upright employment; and thus make every day yield its blessings. What he acquires by a commendable industry, let him faithfully preserve by prudent, watchful care. In this manner he will become honourable in the sight of wise and good men, a blessing to himself, to his family, and to mankind; while he will at the same time, fulfill one important end of his being.

SERMON CXXIII.

THE LAW OF GOD.—THE DECALOGUE.—THE EIGHTH COMMANDMENT.—FRAUD.

Thou shalt not steal—Exod. xx. 15.

Having considered the frauds which men practise upon themselves, and their families, I shall now proceed to examine the

II. Head of discourse, proposed at that time; viz. *The frauds which we practise upon others.*

Of these, the first class which I shall mention is, those which respect borrowing the property of others.

Frauds of this kind are so numerous, that it is impossible here to mention them all; and so common, that most persons practise them, without even suspecting themselves to be criminal. Still they are frauds and crimes which admit of no excuse.

Of this transgression persons are guilty, whenever they suffer that which has been loaned to them to be injured through their own negligence. This evil is extremely common; and by a great part of mankind is scarcely regarded, unless when the injury is considerable, as being censurable at all. Still it is obviously a violation of confidence; a falsification of the terms upon which the loan was given and received. No man ever lent any thing of any value with an agreement on his part, that it should be injured unnecessarily by the borrower. No man ever received a loan with a profession on his part, that he expected to injure the thing lent unless in cases where the nature of the transaction obviously involved the injury, and a consequent compensation. This, it will be observed, is a case properly arranged under the head of bargains, and not of loans. Persons are guilty of this kind of fraud also, when they return, instead of a consumable or perishable article which they have borrowed, what is of inferior value. We often borrow those things which perish in the use. In this case, not a small number of individuals satisfy their consciences, if they return the same thing in kind and quantity, although plainly inferior in its value. A scrupulous spirit of integrity would induce us rather to return somewhat more in value than we have received, that we may make due satisfaction for the property loaned, and for the particular convenience which it has furnished us.

Another fraud of the same nature is practised, whenever we unreasonably detain in our possession whatever has been loaned to us. Most persons probably are in a greater or less degree chargeable with this fault. A want of punctuality in this respect is a serious evil, extending very far, and often intruding not a little upon

the peace and comfort of good neighbourhood. But there are persons who go through life, borrowing without thinking of returning that which they borrow; and who thus doubly tax the good nature of those around them. This conduct is totally contrary to good faith and to plain justice. Every borrower, in his application for every loan is understood, and knows that he is understood, by the lender to engage, not only to return that which he borrows, but to return it within a reasonable time. It is unjust and unkind to retain the property of the lender beyond his consent, to use it beyond his permission, and thus to reward his kindness with injury.

Of a similar fraud we are guilty, when we employ that which is lent for purposes and in modes not contemplated by the lender. Multitudes of mankind are guilty of this crime, and in ways almost innumerable. All our right to the use of the loan, not only as to the fact, but also, as to the manner and degree, is derived solely from the consent of the owner. To that which he has not given, we have not, and cannot have, any right. We are bound therefore scrupulously to use what we borrow within the limits of his permission. When we transgress these limits, we obviously violate the plain dictates of common justice, and are therefore inexcusable.

There is, perhaps, no fraud of which youths, sent abroad for their education, are so frequently guilty, or to which they are so strongly solicited by temptation as one strongly resembling this, which I have described. They are, of course, intrusted by their parents with property, necessary or supposed to be necessary, to defray the expenses of their education. Every parent has his own views concerning the manner in which this property is to be expended. This manner the parent usually prescribes to his child, and has an absolute right to prescribe it. The property is his own; the child is his own. Both the manner, therefore, and the expense, of the child's education he has an absolute right to control. The parent's prescription then the child cannot escape without fraud, nor can he violate it without filial impiety.

When such a youth expends the property intrusted to him by his parents in any manner, or to any degree, beyond his parent's choice, so far as that choice is made known to him, he is guilty of fraud, and violates the command which I am discussing. Nay, if he is reasonably satisfied concerning what his parent's choice would be, although it has not been explicitly declared, he is bound scrupulously to regard it in all his conduct; and to expend no more, and for no other purposes, than those which are involved in his parent's pleasure. Nor can he, consistently with his plain duty, pursue different objects, and conduct himself in a different manner, from what his parent has prescribed, without being guilty of similar fraud.

The parent may not indeed, and probably will not often punish his child for these transgressions. Often he may quietly acquiesce in the wrong. Still the conduct is not the less sinful, nor the child the less guilty. Human tribunals fail of punishing many crimes; but they do not for this reason cease to be crimes. If a child would avoid sin, if he would in this respect be blameless in the sight of God, he must direct all his expenses, and regulate all his conduct conscientiously, according to the will and prescription of his parents. To this end, he must limit his wants to the allowed measure of his expenses; and act scrupulously, as he would act if his parents were continually present.

2. Another species of frauds is practised in what is called trespassing on the property of others.

Frauds of this nature are very numerous, and greatly diversified. Many persons, without being sensible of doing any injustice, walk through the enclosures of others, and tread down their grass, grain, and other valuable productions of their labour. Others leave open the entrances to their enclosures; and thus expose the fruits of the earth to damage, and often to destruction. Others, still, plunder their gardens, orchards, and fields, of such fruits particularly as are delicious. Others plunder their forests of wood, both for their own consumption and for the market. Both these acts are, however, falsely called trespasses. No actions of man are more obviously thefts, in the full sense. Accordingly, they are spoken of in the language of common sense and common custom, only under the name of stealing. Others suffer their cattle, accustomed to break through enclosures, to go at large in their own fields; and thus, in reality, turn them into the fields of their neighbours. To dwell no longer on this part of the subject, multitudes habitually neglect to repair their own walls and fences; and in this manner leave a continual passage for their cattle into the fields of their neighbours.

A very different set of trespasses (I do not mean in the legal sense, for I know not what name law would give them), and undertaken with very different views, is found in the operations of that spirit of vulgar mischief, which, through envy, or some other base passion, cherishes a contemptible hostility against the improvement and beauty of building, fencing, and planting, formed by its prosperous neighbours. This spirit prompts the unworthy minds in which it dwells, to mar and deface handsome buildings and fences; to root up, or cut down trees and shrubs planted for shade and for ornament. The spirit is no other than that of the dog in the manger. It will neither enjoy the good itself, nor suffer any others to enjoy it. One would think that, in the view of such minds, beauty and elegance were public nuisances; and that to have contributed to adorn one's country with the delightful productions of nature and art is a trespass upon the common good.

Another class of frauds, possessing the same nature, is seen in most places, at least in this country, in the abuses of public property. Public buildings are almost everywhere injured and defaced; the windows are broken; the doors, wainscoting, pillars, and other appurtenances formed of wood, are shamefully carved, and hacked; the courts, balustrades, and other vulnerable articles, are mangled and destroyed. In a word, injuries of this nature are endless; and all of them are scandalous frauds, useless to the perpetrators, wounding to every man of integrity and taste, discouragements to public improvement, and sources of public deformity and disgrace.

Another class of these frauds is denoted by the general name, *peculation*.

It will be useless for me to dwell on what nations have so long and so loudly complained of— the plunder of the public by statesmen, commissioners, and contractors; men, who appear to feel a prescriptive right to fatten themselves on the spoils of the community. There are, I fear but few men, comparatively, who feel

themselves bound to deal with the public, or with any body of their fellow men, agreeably to the same strict and equitable principles which most persons acknowledge to be indispensable in dealing with individuals. For services rendered to public bodies, almost all men demand a greater reward than they would dare to claim from individuals. For commodities sold to them they charge a higher price. In settling accounts with them they claim greater allowances; and in every transaction plainly intend to get more than custom and equity have permitted in the private business of mankind. The single article of perquisites is a gulf of voracity which has no bottom. The only rule by which this undefined class of demands seems to be controlled, is, to claim whatever the person indebted can be expected to give.

The common doctrine among all the claimants to whom I have referred, appears to be, that there is no wrong in demanding more of public bodies for the same service, or the same commodity, than of individuals, because public bodies are more able to pay. Justice, on the contrary, affixes the same value to the same thing. This value will be affixed by every honest man; and will be his only rule of compensation for his commodities or his labours, whoever may be the purchaser, or the employer.

In every one of the cases which I have specified, the persons concerned defraud their fellow men of their property, and cheat themselves out of their duty and their salvation. But they cannot cheat their Maker. The all-searching eye surveys, with a terrible inspection, those workers of iniquity; and at the final day, will be found to have traced every secret winding, every snaky path, every false pretence, and every flattering self-justification of fraud. At that awful period, how many persons will be found to be cheats, who, in this world, sustained the character of fair dealers, and were regarded by all around them as honest men.

3. Another class of frauds is attendant upon bargains.

These, like the former classes, are very numerous; and are varied continually by the circumstances of the bargain, and the ingenuity, negligence, and dishonesty of the parties.

An honest bargain is that, and that only, in which an equivalent is given, and received; in which the value of the commodities in each case being supposed to be known, the fair market price is mutually allowed. The market price is, in all ordinary circumstances, the equitable price; and wherever it is known, will be cheerfully paid by an honest man. Where it cannot be known, such men will settle their contracts as equitably as they can; each designing faithfully to render an equivalent for what he receives. Every bargain not formed on these principles is unjust; and, if thus formed intentionally, is dishonest. But how different from these are the principles upon which bargains are very extensively made in this country, and but too probably in others also.

Among the innumerable frauds practised in this vast field of human business, I shall specify the following:

Multitudes of persons, when forming bargains, misrepresent or conceal the state of the markets. Most men profess to be willing to be governed in their dealings by the market price. But great numbers of these very men intend to buy for less, and sell for more. Hence they carefully conceal this price from those with whom they deal; and thus buy at diminished, and sell at enhanced prices. This conduct is plain dishonesty; and would not deceive even the subject of it, were he not blinded by his own avarice. He perfectly knows that his neighbour would not buy nor sell on these terms except from his ignorance; and that the advantage which he gains, is gained only from his neighbour's misapprehension of the commodities in question. Can an honest man take this advantage? Would any man of reputation justify himself in taking it of a child? Why not of a child, as well as of a man? Because, it will be answered, the child knows not the worth of what he buys or sells. Neither, in the case specified, does the man. Would he who takes this advantage be willing that his neighbour should take it of him? The answer to this question needs not to be given. It is plain, then, that the conduct referred to is unjust and fraudulent.

There are many other persons who directly misrepresent the market price. These men feel satisfied, if they do not palpably lie; if, for example, they report what this price has lately been; what they have heard somebody declare it to be; or what price has been given by an individual, who has sold at a high, or bought at a low price; both, very different from the general one. All these are mere fetches, used by a dishonest mind to deceive itself, and to defraud others.

Another palpable fraud of this class is the use of false weights and measures. These are often used when they are known, and often when they are suspected, to be false; and more frequently still when they are suffered to become defective through inattention. In this, the man is apt to feel himself excused, because he is not intentionally fraudulent; not remembering, that, whenever it is in his power, God has required him to do justly, and not merely not to design to do unjustly. He has given him no permission to sin through negligence. Weights and measures are often formed of such materials as to ensure decay and diminution. Whenever this is known to be the case, the proprietor is unpardonable, if he does not by frequent examinations prevent the injustice. The wrong he cannot but foresee; and the remedy is always and entirely in his power. If we love justice as we ought, we shall take all those measures which are necessary to accomplish it. He who is resolved to 'do to others what he would that others should do to him,' will never suffer it to remain undone for want of exertions which demand so little self-denial.

Whenever a man begins to do wrong through negligence, he will soon do it through design. Indifference to sin is the next step to the love of it. The only safety in this case, and all others of the like nature, is to 'resist the beginnings of evil.' If our opposition to it b not begun here, it will never be begun. Every smaller transgression prepares the way for a greater. Every gross villain has become such by small beginnings. 'No man,' says the Latin proverb, 'becomes abandoned at once.' He who begins to backslide without compunction, will find his remaining course only downward; and will descend with continually increasing velocity to the bottom.

Another prominent iniquity of this class is selling commodities which are unsound and defective, under direct professions that they are sound and good. This is sometimes done with palpable lying, sometimes with

indefinite and hypocritical insinuations. Agents and men who buy to sell again, often assert their wares to be good, because those of whom they received them have declared them to be good. These declarations are often believed, because the agent professes, or at least appears, to believe them; while, in truth, he does not give them the least credit.

One of the grossest impositions of this nature is practised upon the public in advertising and selling nostrums as safe and valuable medicines. These are ushered into newspapers with a long train of pompous declarations, almost always false, and always delusive. The silly purchaser buys and uses the medicine, chiefly or only because it is sold by a respectable man, and under the sanction of a splendid advertisement, to which that respectable man lends his countenance. Were such men to decline this unfortunate and indefensible employment, the medicines would probably fall into absolute discredit; and health, and limbs, and life would in many instances be preserved from unnecessary destruction.

Another specimen of similar fraud is practised in concealing the defects of what we sell. This is the general art and villany of that class of men who are customarily styled jockeys; a class unhappily comprehending multitudes who would receive the appellation with astonishment and disdain. The common subterfuge of these men is this, 'that they give no false accounts concerning their commodities; that the purchaser has eyes of his own, and must judge for himself. No defence can be more lame and wretched; and scarcely any more impudent. A great proportion of vendibles are subject to defects which no purchaser can descry. Every purchaser is therefore obliged to depend on the seller for information concerning them. All this the seller perfectly knows; and, if he be an honest man, will certainly give the information to the purchaser; because in the same situation he would wish it to be done to himself. At the same time, no purchaser would buy these articles if he knew their defects, unless at a diminished price. The actual purchaser is therefore, in colloquial language, taken in; and taken in by palpable villany.

Another specimen of the same nature is furnished by the practice of depreciating the value of such commodities, as we wish to buy. 'It is naught, it is naught, saith the buyer; but when he hath gone his way, he boasteth.' Such was the conduct of men in the days of Solomon. We have ample proof that human nature now, is not in this respect altered for the better. The ignorant, the modest, and the necessitous, persons who should be the last to suffer from fraud, are in this way often made its victims. A decisive tone and confident air, in men better dressed, and supposed to know better than themselves, easily bear down persons so circumstanced, and persuade them to sell their commodities for less than they are plainly worth. The purchaser, in the mean time, as soon as they are out of hearing boasts of his gainful bargain; and trumpets without a blush, the value of the articles which he had before lecried.

4. Another class of frauds is connected with the contraction and payment of debts.

The first transgression of this nature which I shall mention, is, the contraction of debts, with clear conviction, that we possess no means of discharging them; and that we shall, in all probability, possess no such means hereafter; at least, within any reasonable period of payment.

Multitudes of persons covet enjoyments in the possession of others, to such a degree, that they are willing to acquire them, if they can, without troubling themselves about paying for them. Such persons are often professed cheats, and triumph in the success of their impositions. But there are others, who regard themselves as honest men, and would be not a little surprised, as well as wounded, at the suspicion of fraudulent designs in their conduct. Most or all of these men form some loose, indefinite design of paying their debts; but, instead of providing the necessary means for this purpose, trust to some future casualty. They will tell the creditor who charges them with dishonest conduct, that although they did indeed know themselves to be destitute of property, and of any rational expectations of future property when the debt was contracted, yet they hoped that in the course of events they should, in some manner or other, become able to discharge it. In this case, they will add, they should have discharged it, both willingly and faithfully. What they thus allege is probably, in many instances, true. The persons in question do not form a direct intention to defraud their creditors. Thus far their honesty goes. But here it stops. They form no design, direct or indirect, to take effectual measures to do their creditors justice. They do not conscientiously abstain from contracting debts until they know that they shall be able to cancel them by fair payment. On the contrary, they contract them when they know themselves to be unable, and to be unpossessed of any fair probable means of being able at a future time. In all this they are, although often without suspecting it, grossly dishonest.

Another sin, very nearly akin to this, is contracting debts, without perceiving any means of payment to be in our power. Those who transgress in this manner feel satisfied if they do not know themselves to be unable to pay. Were they evangelically honest, they would take effectual care to see whether they were able, or not. Often, by overrating their property, their efforts, or the markets, they feel a loose conviction, that they shall possess this power; but take no pains to render the fact certain, or even probable. Such morality can result only from absolute insensibility of mind to the great duty of doing justly, an entire ignorance of what it demands, and a total forgetfulness of exposure to the divine indignation. We are bound, before we receive, before we become willing to receive, our neighbour's property, to know that we have means clearly probable of paying him; otherwise, we wantonly subject him to the loss of it; and differ very little, as moral beings, from thieves and robbers. If we are in doubt concerning either the probability or the sufficiency of these means, it is our duty to detail them fairly to the person with whom we are dealing. If, in this case, he is disposed to intrust us with his property, and we afterward make faithful efforts to cancel the debt, I do not see, that we are chargeable with fraud, although we should fail. He who contracts a debt, without discerning that he has probable means of discharging it, differs in no material respect from a swindler. He plunders his neighbour from indifference to justice; the swindler from contempt of it. In the view of common sense, in the sight of God, the moral character of both is essentially the same

Another transgression, of the same general nature, is neglecting to pay our debts at the time. There are many persons, whose general character, as honest men, is fair; who yet, in this respect, are extremely deserving of censure. They contract debts, which they engage to discharge within a given time. This time is therefore a part of the contract; a ground on which the bargain is made; a condition, on which the price was calculated. This obvious truth is understood by all men, and makes a part of the language of every bargain in which credit is given. To the expectation formed by the creditor of receiving his debt at the time specified, the debtor has voluntarily given birth. It is an expectation therefore which he is bound to fulfill. If he does not take every lawful measure in his power, to enable himself to fulfill it, or if he does not fulfill it when it is in his power, he is guilty of fraud; of depriving his neighbour, not perhaps of design, but by a guilty negligence, of a part of his property.

The delay of payment beyond the appointed time is in almost all instances injurious, and in some almost as injurious to the creditor, as an absolute refusal to pay would originally have been. The real value of a debt, where the security is sufficient, is, among men of business, estimated according to the time when the payment is reasonably expected. Thus notes, bonds, and other obligations for money, when given by men known to be punctual in the discharge of their debts, pass in the market for their nominal value; and are received in payments with no other discount than that which arises from the distance of the period when they become due. Those given by negligent men are, on the contrary, considered as depreciated from the beginning; and that, exactly in proportion to the negligence of the signer. Of this sum, be it what it may, the negligent man defrauds his creditor.

The law of God required, in accordance with the doctrine which I am urging, that the sun should not be suffered to go down upon the hire of the labourer. The spirit of punctuality here enjoined ought to be found in all men. The engagements which we make, we are bound, as honest men to fulfill. The expectations which we knowingly excite in the minds of those with whom we deal, we are required to satisfy; and when we fail, either voluntarily or negligently, we are inexcusable.

The last iniquity of this species which I shall mention is the payment of debts with something of less value than that which we possess.

It has been doubtless observed, that I have, all along throughout this Discourse, chiefly passed over in silence those gross frauds which are the direct objects of criminal prosecution. Such is my intention here. I shall pass by the gross iniquities of passing counterfeit currency; forging obligations and indorsements, and others of the like nature. To reprove these crimes cannot be necessary in this place. I have therefore confined, and shall still confine myself to those which are esteemed smaller transgressions, and are less observed, and less dreaded by mankind.

There are some kinds of currency, whose real value is inferior to that which is nominal. Coin is in some countries, and at some times, alloyed below the common standard. It is also very often worn down below the standard weight. Paper currency is also in many instances subjected to a discount, wherever its true value is understood. Debts are very often paid with this depreciated currency, without any notice given by the debtor of its depreciation.

Debts are paid also to a considerable extent in commodities. In these there are often defects, in kind or quantity, not readily perceivable by the creditor, and what is much more unhappy, concealed, or not disclosed by the debtor.

Often debts are paid by labour and services. These, not unfrequently, are stinted with respect to the time through which the labour ought to extend; the skill, and thorough execution which ought to be employed; the care which ought to be used; and, universally, the completeness of the service engaged, and therefore justly expected by the creditor. In every case of this nature, it is the design of the debtor to gain something by the means and mode of paying the debt, which he would not have gained, had he paid it in undebased coin; and which he would not have gained by a fair, honest fulfilment of the original terms of the contract. Whenever the debtor feels that in discharging his debts he has acquired something from the creditor, not involved in the plain terms of the contract, he may be assured, that his mode of payment has involved in it a fraud, and that he has acted the part of a cheat.

All these may, and often do, seem to the perpetrators crimes of little moment; and it will, perhaps, be no easy matter to convince them of the contrary. I wish such persons to remember the great maxim, taught by the unvarying experience of man—that he who allows himself to be dishonest in one thing, will soon be dishonest in all things. I wish them still more solemnly to remember, that God is a witness of all their fraudulent conduct, however it may be concealed from mankind; and that, although they may cheat men, they cannot cheat God.

5. Another enormous class of frauds is composed of breaches of trust.

Upon this unlimited subject my observations must be few, and summary. Frauds of this kind are found in the servant and the monarch, and in all the intervening classes of mankind. They fill with complaints every mouth, and haunt every human concern. To describe them would demand the contents of a library; to name them would be to recount most of the business of man. As they exist everywhere, so all men are familiarized to them. Of course, it is the less necessary to detail them here. There is also but one opinion concerning them, and concerning their authors. They are all by a universal voice pronounced to be frauds; and their authors to be knaves and villains.

He who assumes an employment, engages in the very assumption to discharge the duties which it obviously involves. If he fails, he fails of his duty; if he negligently or voluntarily fails, he is palpably a dishonest man. The expectations which we knowingly excite in others, we are indispensably bound to fulfill. Nothing less than this will satisfy the commands of God, or the dictates of an unwarped conscience. Nothing less will ever acquire or secure a fair reputation. I shall only add, that there is no easy or sure method of accomplishing this invaluable object, but to begin early, and to go on with inflexible perseverance.

REMARKS.

1. The subject which has been under consideration

presents us with a very humiliating and painful specimen of human corruption.

The duty of rendering justice to our neighbour, is one of the plainest dictates of the law written on the hearts of men, one of the first demands of conscience, one of the prime injunctions of God. Accordingly, no duty has been more readily, universally, or absolutely acknowledged or demanded by mankind. The bounds also which separate justice from injustice, are often defined with mathematical exactness, almost always clearly known, and rarely capable of being mistaken. Yet in how many ways, forms, and varieties is this duty violated! By how many individuals! Of how many classes! Who, however wise, honourable, or excellent, however reverenced, or beloved, is not at times the victim of fraud, and the dupe of cunning! The known instances are innumerable. What endless multitudes are probably unknown, except by the omniscient eye! How great a part of human time and talents has been employed only in fraud! One hundred and twenty thousands persons, in the city of London alone, are declared by the judicious Colquhoun to derive the whole, or the chief part, of their subsistence from fraudulent practices. Here, villany of this nature has become a science; and is pursued, not merely without remorse but with system; with a coolness, which laughs at morality; an ingenuity, which baffles detection; an industry, which would do honour to virtue; and a success, which overwhelms the mind with amazement. All these things exist in the capital of that country, which has been more distinguished than any other for knowledge, morality, and religion.

But London is not alone concerned in this iniquity. It prevails wherever rights are claimed or property exists. In our own country, so young, and distinguished beyond most others for the moral character of its inhabitants, it prevails in a manner which ought to cover us with shame and sorrow. Frauds of all the kinds which have been mentioned are not only practised, but avowed. Nay, many of them have ceased to wear the name of frauds. Oppressive bargains are customarily styled by those who make them, good bargains; and boasted of as specimens of ingenuity, skill, and success. Debts, in multiplied instances, are contracted without honesty, and withholden by more fraud. Even the settlement of estates furnishes often gross exhibitions of oppression and cheating, and the widow and the fatherless are made a prey. Why is this done? Because the deceased is gone, and cannot detect the iniquity: because those whom he has left behind are without defence, and without remedy.

A great part of the business of legislators is the prevention of fraud. To detect and punish it is the chief employment of judicial tribunals. How immense have been the labours of both; and to how vast an extent have they laboured in vain!

How frequently do we ourselves see character, safety, and the soul, all hazarded for a pittance of gain, contemptible in itself, and of no consequence to him who cheats his neighbour, and sells himself to acquire it! With what unceasing toil, and under what hard bondage does the miser wear and waste his life, to filch from those around him little gleanings of property, merely to bury it in his chest, and without daring to use it for himself or his family! How frequently do swindlers and gamblers, like the troubled ghosts of antiquity, haunt places of public resort; and stare in open day, and in circles of decent men, until the hour of darkness arrives, when they may again, like their kindred vampires, satiate themselves upon rottenness and corruption!

How often is war made, how often are oceans of blood spilt, lives destroyed in millions, and immense portions of human happiness extinguished, merely to plunder others of their property!

To all these evils, instruction, example, laws, punishments, conscience, the word of God, and the prospect of damnation, oppose their force and terror in vain. Prudence and policy contend against it with as little success. All nations have pronounced honesty to be more profitable than any other conduct. Poverty on the one hand, and infamy on the other, have ever threatened the intentional knave with a whip of scorpions. Still, he walks onward coolly and steadily, unmoved either by the remonstrances of earth and heaven, or the dangers of hell.

2. These observations show the vast importance of fixing in our own minds, and in the minds of our children, the strongest sense, and the most vigorous habits of exact, evangelical integrity.

He who wishes to live well here, and to be happy hereafter, must in all his intentional dealings ask, as an all-controlling question, What is right? and make all things bend to the answer. 'Fiat justitia: ruat cœlum!' ought to be the governing maxim of private as well as public life. Of all virtues, justice and truth are the first in order, the first in importance. To them every thing ought to give way. If they are permitted to rule, man cannot fail to be virtuous, amiable, and happy.

But every moral truth, and every moral precept, is of more consequence to children, and may be made of more use to them, than it can be to others. Good seed, sown in the spring-time of life, cannot ordinarily fail to produce a harvest; which will be vainly expected, if it be sown in the autumn. The parent who values the comfort, character, or salvation of his child, will impress on his young and tender mind, in the most affecting manner possible, the incalculable excellence and importance of integrity, and the inestimable worth of an unblemished character, and an unsullied life. At this hopeful period, the parent should inweave into the mind of his child, as a part of his constitutional thinking, a strong conviction, that property itself, according to the usual dispensations of God, is to be acquired only by uprightness of conduct; and that fraud is the highway to beggary, as well as to shame. Peace of conscience, he should be taught from the first, can never dwell in the same soul with injustice: and without peace of conscience, he should know, the soul will be poor and miserable. Habitually should he remember, that the eye of God looks always upon the heart; and that every dishonest design, word, and act is recorded in that book out of which he will be judged at the great day. Finally he should learn the unvarying fact, that one fraud generates another of course; and that thus the dishonest man corrupts unceasingly his heart and his life, and is seen by all around him to be 'a vessel of wrath,' daily 'fitting for destruction.' All these instructions example should enforce and sanction; and on them all prayer should invoke its efficacious blessings.

3. These observations teach us how greatly such as are customarily styled moral men deceive themselves.

Multitudes of men who sustain this character censure preachers for dwelling so frequently on the doctrines of the gospel, and for not introducing oftener its moral precepts into their sermons. These persons regard themselves as being moral in the proper sense, and wish preachers to inculcate just such morality as they themselves practise. They pay their debts, and wish other men to pay theirs, keep true accounts, sell at the market prices, make as good bargains as they can, and get as much money as they can in this manner. These are the things which they wish preachers to inculcate.

Such persons are yet to learn that the morality of the gospel is wonderfully different from all this. It includes whatever I have said in this and the preceding discourses concerning the law of God, whatever I shall say in the succeeding ones, and more than I have said, or can say, in both. The morality of the gospel begins in an honest and good heart, disposed to render always and exactly to our neighbour the things that are our neighbour's, and to God the things that are God's. It knows not, it disdains, it abominates, the tricks, the fetches, the disguises, the concealments, the enhancements, the delays of payment, the depreciated payments, the base gains, and the double-minded character, always found in the coarse-spun morality of this world. Worldly morality aims supremely and only at being rich; evangelical morality at doing that which is right. Every person satisfied with worldly morality who hears this sermon, will probably go away from it displeased with what he will call its rigidness, and discontented to find that what he has been accustomed to think his own stronghold furnishes him with so little either of safety or comfort. But let him remember that, whether he is pleased or displeased, no morality short of this will answer the demands of the law of God.

SERMON CXXIV.

THE LAW OF GOD.—THE DECALOGUE.—THE EIGHTH COMMANDMENT.—GAMING.

Thou shalt not steal.—Exod. xx. 15.

The frauds practised by men upon themselves and their families; and a variety of other frauds perpetrated by mankind upon each other, have occupied the two preceding Discourses.

I shall now proceed to the consideration of another fraud of the latter class; viz. *gaming.*

Multitudes of persons professedly believe gaming to be innocent; and accordingly labour not a little to justify it to others. As they aim to clear it from all imputations of criminality, it will be both proper and necessary to consider the subject generally, that its advocates may perceive, that it is not only fraudulent, but sinful in many other respects.

The observations, which I shall make on this subject will be arranged under the following heads;—

I. *The evils of gaming which immediately respect others.*

II. *Those which immediately respect ourselves.*

Among the evils which respect others, I observe.

1. That gaming is in all instances fraud.

By gaming here, I intend that only, by which property is won or lost; and this property, by which party soever acquired, I assert to be acquired invariably by fraud.

There are but two possible methods, by which we can acquire property from others honestly; viz. either by free gift; or by rendering an equivalent for what we receive. I need not say, that property won by gaming is not obtained in either of these ways. That which is acquired neither is nor is intended to be, given: and, instead of an equivalent, the gamester renders nothing for what he has received.

God, in the decalogue, has absolutely bound us 'not to covet any thing which is our neighbour's.' This sin of coveting every gamester is guilty of, when he sits down to win the property of his neighbour. Of this truth he gives unanswerable evidence in many ways. To win the property in question, is the only motive for which he spends his hours at the card-table, and the dice-box.

At the same time, he sees his companion afflicted, suffering, and even ruined by the loss of his property, without restoring, or thinking of restoring, to him any part of what he has lost. Did he not covet this property, the most vulgar humanity would induce him to relieve distresses, the relief of which would demand only the sacrifice of what he did not wish to retain. Instead of this, however, we always find him speak of his winnings, when valuable, with self-gratulation and triumph, and plainly considering them as acquisitions of no small importance to his own happiness. The gamester, therefore, sinfully covets the property of his neighbour. The design to obtain it without rendering an equivalent, is in its nature fraudulent, and will be admitted into his mind by no honest man. But this design every gamester cherishes; and in the indulgence and execution of it spends the principal part of his life. His life is therefore an almost uninterrupted course of fraud. To render this career complete, the gamester spends a great part of his time in contrivances and labours to get, and in actually getting, the property of others for nothing. This is the very crime of the cheat, the swindler, and the thief. If the thief when he stole, the cheat when he bargained, and the swindler when he borrowed his neighbour's property, voluntarily left an equivalent, how obvious is it, that his crime, though I acknowledge he might even then be in some degree criminal, would hardly be mentioned, and scarcely regarded as an immorality. The main turpitude in every

one of these cases is plainly the desiring and the taking of our neighbour's property without an equivalent. But this turpitude is entirely chargeable to the gamester.

It may, however, be said, that all the other persons mentioned take the property in question covertly; while the gamester takes it openly, and therefore, fairly. So, I answer, does the robber.

It will be farther said that these persons take the property without the consent of the owner; whereas the gamester wins it only with his consent. As I suppose this to be the stronghold of all who advocate the lawfulness of gaming, it will be proper to consider it with some attention.

In the first place, then, this consent is never given in the manner professedly alleged by those who defend the practice.

No man ever sat down to a game, with an entire consent that his antagonist should win his property. I speak of those cases only in which the property staked is considered as of some serious importance. Every person who is a party in a game of this nature intends to win the property of his antagonist, and not to lose his own. His own he stakes only because the stake is absolutely necessary to enable him to win that of his antagonist. Thus, instead of consenting to lose his own property, each of the parties intends merely to obtain that of his neighbour for nothing. This is the only real design of both; and this design is as unjust, and as fraudulent, as any which respects property can be. That such is the only real design, the loser proves, in the clearest manner, by deeply lamenting his loss; and the winner, in a manner little less clear, by exulting in his gain.

Secondly: Each of the parties expects only to win, either by superior skill, or superior good fortune.

No man ever heard of a gamester, who sat down to play with a decided expectation of losing.

Thirdly: No man has a right to yield his property to another on this condition.

The property of every man is given to him by his Creator, as to a steward, to be employed only in useful purposes. In such purposes he is indispensably bound to employ it. Every other mode of employing it is inexcusable. This doctrine I presume the gamester himself will not seriously question. The man must be lost to decency and to common sense, who can for a moment believe that his Creator has given any blessing to mankind for any purposes except those which are useful; or that himself, and every one of his fellow men, are not unconditionally required by God to promote useful purposes with all the means in their power; and with their property, equally with other means, at all times. But it will not be pretended that staking property on the issue of a game, is an employment of that property to any purpose which God will pronounce to be useful. In his sight, therefore, no man can lawfully employ his property in this manner. Of course, both parties in thus staking their money are guilty of sin; while each also invites and seduces the other to sin.

Fourthly: every man is plainly bound to devote his property to that purpose which, all things considered, appears to be the best of those which are within his reach.

By this I do not mean that which is best in the abstract, but best for him, in the sphere of action allotted to him by his Maker. In other words, every man is bound to do with his property, as well as his other talents, the most good in his power. I am well aware that this subject cannot be mathematically estimated; that in many cases the mind of a wise and good man may be at a loss to determine, and that the determination must be left to personal discretion. But, in the present case, there can be neither difficulty, nor doubt. No man will pretend that losing his money to a gamester is disposing of it in such a manner as to promote the best purpose in his power. If he needs it himself, it will be more useful to him to keep it still in his possession. If he does not need it, it will be incomparably better to give it to those who do. To impart it thus to a gamester, always a vicious man, often a profligate, and always a squanderer, a man known to employ his money for sinful purposes only, can never be useful, nor even vindicable, in any sense. The proof of this is complete. No man ever thought of making a gamester, as such, an object of alms-giving. To other prodigals, to idlers, and even to drunkards, alms at times are given. But the most enlarged charity never dreamed of finding a proper object of its bounty in a gamester. To stake money in this manner, therefore, is so far from employing it in the best manner which is in the owner's power, that it is employing it in a manner indefensible, and in every respect sinful.

From these considerations it is plain, that this argument in favour of gaming, cannot avail to the purpose for which it is adduced. On the contrary, it only contributes to exhibit the sinfulness of gaming in a new light.

It often happens, and almost always in the beginning of this practice, that the gamesters are youths; and that the property which they stake belongs to their parents. This property is never intrusted to children for the purpose of gaming. They receive, and their parents communicate it for some valuable end, in which the promotion of their comfort and welfare was concerned. In receiving it, the children engaged, either expressly or implicitly, to use it for this end. In staking it, therefore, at the gaming table, the child is guilty of a gross breach of good faith, and literally robs his parents of their property. And 'he,' says Solomon 'who robbeth his father, or his mother, and saith it is no sin, is the fit companion of a murderer.' *

2. The gamester ruins multitudes of his fellow men, and injures deeply multitudes more.

By this I intend, that he plunders them of their property, and reduces them to beggary. The whole history of gaming is a mere record of his ruin. It is also completely evinced by daily observation. The bankruptcies continually brought upon mankind in this manner are innumerable; particularly upon the young, the ignorant, the thoughtless, and the giddy. He who can coolly sit down to the ruin, or even to the serious injury of one of his fellow men, is an arrant villain, equally destitute of common good-will, and common honesty.

3. The gamester corrupts others by his example, and thus entails upon them common ruin.

'One sinner,' saith the wise man, 'destroyeth much good.' In no manner is this terrible mischief accomplished so extensively and so effectually as by an evil

* Prov. xxviii 24. (Hodgson.)

example. Gamesters are always wicked men, totally destitute of principle, and sunk far below the common level of corruption. To this degree of turpitude, every gamester reduces all those who become his companions. The ruin here accomplished is infinitely more dreadful than that mentioned under the preceding head. It is the endless ruin of the soul; the destruction of every enjoyment, and every hope. All other injuries compared with it are 'nothing, and less than nothing.' With the guilt of accomplishing this stupendous evil, the gamester is wholly chargeable, and for this guilt he will be compelled to answer at the final day. What sober man, nay, what profligate, would not tremble at the thought of assuming this reponsibility? But the gamester coolly and quietly makes himself answerable, not for the ruin of one soul, but of multitudes.

4. The gamester ruins his family.

The gamester voluntarily and causelessly exposes himself to beggary. In this conduct he sets afloat, without any security, and against every rational hope, the property on which his wife and children are to be supported, and by which his children are to be educated, and settled for life. Almost every gamester is ruined by play. By this disaster, both the comforts and the hopes of his family are destroyed, their spirits are broken and lost, and all their efforts to gain character and subsistence prevented. But 'if any man provide not for his own, especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.' What then shall be said of the man who squanders in this useless and guilty manner all that himself or his ancestors have provided? To the mere lust of gaming he sacrifices the property on which his family might subsist with comfort and reputation, by which they might be educated to usefulness and honour, and by which they might be settled advantageously in life. To this lust therefore he sacrifices their subsistence, their hopes, their all.

In the mean time, he performs few or none of the great duties of a parent. He does not instruct; he does not govern; he cannot reprove; he cannot pray with his children; he cannot pray for them!

His example is only pernicious. He keeps the worst hours, frequents the worst places, attaches himself to the worst company; and thus, taking his children by the hand, conducts them to the same certain means of destruction.

His character, therefore, contemptible and odious in itself, must be seen by them to be contemptible. Instead of the privilege and blessing always enjoyed in beholding a worthy, and pious, and venerable father, they suffer the deplorable calamity of seeing him who stands in this affecting relation, a curse to themselves, and a nuisance to mankind.

II. *I shall now consider those evils of gaming which immediately respect themselves.*

These evils are very numerous, as well as very important. The first which I shall mention, is, that

It is a waste of time.

The only light in which gaming is commonly regarded as justifiable is that of amusement. Amusements mankind certainly need; and what they need is lawful. But gaming is not rendered lawful by this consideration.

Every lawful amusement is of such a nature as to refresh and invigorate either the body or the mind. But gaming does neither. That it does not refresh the body is too obvious to demand either proof, or assertion. Equally certain is it, that it does not refresh or invigorate the mind. It furnishes no valuable information; it adds no strength to the reasoning powers. So far as it has influence at all, it wearies the intellectual faculties, and is attended with all the fatigue, but with no part of the benefit, which is experienced in severe study.

It neither sweetens nor enlivens the temper. On the contrary, it is a grave, dull, spiritless employment, at which almost all persons lose their cheerfulness, and impair their native sweetness of disposition; in which the temper is soured; and in which gloom and moroseness, and frequently envy and malice, are not only created, but strengthened into immovable habits. Gamesters, I know, herd together. But it is without good-will, or social feelings, and merely because gaming makes it necessary. Their minds are engrossed, but not invigorated. Their time is ardently and anxiously, but not cheerfully, employed. They flock to the gaming-table, just as the hermit and the thief return to their respective employments; because habit has made these employments necessary to them; although the hermit, if he would make the experiment, would be happier in society; and the thief, as an honest man.

All the real pleasure found in gaming, except that which arises from the love of sin, is found in the acquisition of money, or the pride of victory, and the superior skill, or the fortunate chance, from which it is derived. All these are base and sordid sources of pleasure. Gaming, then, is not a useful, and of course not a justifiable amusement.

In the mean while, all the time employed in it is wasted and lost. This loss is immense. No man can answer for it to his Maker; no man can repair the injury which is done to himself. It cannot be too often said, nor too strongly realized, that time is the most valuable of all things; since on the proper employment of it depends every blessing which we are capable of receiving. He who wastes it, as every gamester does, is guilty of a prodigality which cannot be estimated. All men are bound by the most solemn obligations to 'redeem their time;' that is, to make the most profitable use of every day. But gaming is profitable for nothing. For if it is useless as an amusement, it is absolutely useless.

2. Gaming is a wanton waste of our faculties and privileges.

Every faculty and every privilege was given to us, only that we might promote the glory of God, and the real good of ourselves and our fellow men. From labouring always to these ends there is no exemption and no excuse. 'Whether ye eat, or drink,' saith St Paul, 'or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.' —'To him who, by a patient continuance in well-doing, seeks for glory, honour, and immortality,' and to him only is promised 'eternal life.' Our faculties are our understanding, our affections, and our energy. Our privileges are the means of education, knowledge, virtue, usefulness, and enjoyment. But none of our faculties are benefited by gaming. The understanding is not enlarged, the affections are not improved, the energy is not invigorated; while all these privileges are at the same time abused and thrown away. How great a waste of what mighty blessings is here! How entire

a frustration of the end of our being! With a due improvement of his faculties and privileges, every man may become wise and virtuous. How incalculable is the difference between such a man and a gamester!

A glorious privilege, the result of all those which have been mentioned, is that of doing our duty. But gaming is in itself, and in its consequences, an entire omission of all duty. With industry and economy the whole life of the gamester is at war. His prime employment cherishes unceasingly gross appetites, and gross passions; and forces him to be a stranger to self-government. Into the heart of a man engrossed by schemes of acquiring the property of his neighbour, by the throwing of dice, and the shuffling of cards, it is impossible that benevolence should enter. In acts of beneficence, hands which have so long been made the instrument of covetousness and plunder can never be employed.

No gamester was ever a man of piety so long as he was a gamester.

Of no gamester can it be said, 'Behold he prayeth.' The very first step towards the assumption of this character must be deep repentance for his gross and guilty life, accompanied by an entire self-abhorrence, and followed by a vigorous reformation.

3. Gaming is a wanton and wicked waste of property.

The end for which our property was given, is the same to which our faculties and privileges are destined. To this end, to some purpose really acceptable to God, and really useful to ourselves and others, it can always be applied. There never was a situation in which, there never was a man by whom, all his property could not be devoted to some useful purpose within his reach. But squandering money at the gaming-table is of no use either to the loser or to the winner. If the loser has common sense, he can take no pleasure in his losses. If the winner has any common honesty, he can take no pleasure in his gains. Beside the suffering involved in his immediate losses, the loser forms a pernicious habit of undervaluing property; and cuts himself off both from doing and enjoying that good which the property lost might have procured. Nor is the winner more happily affected. From winning often, especially when in straitened circumstances, he soon acquires full confidence that he shall win whenever it is necessary. Hence he expends what he has gained on objects of no value. 'Male parta, male dilabuntur,' is probably a maxim in every nation; and is verified by all human experience.

With habits of this nature, we cannot wonder that gamesters, such, I mean, as devote themselves to this employment, universally become beggars. 'Wealth,' says Solomon, 'gotten by vanity, is diminished:' that is, wealth acquired by vain and dishonest courses of life. 'Drowsiness,' says the same profound observer of human life and manners, 'will clothe a man with rags.' Drowsiness here intends that course of conduct, which, in opposition to the steady energy and vigorous efforts of industry, aims at obtaining a subsistence by dishonest and low-minded arts. Such were the facts three thousand years ago: such are the facts at the present hour. In the whole list of jockeys and sharpers, it is rare in this and probably in all other countries, that we find a man possessed of even moderate property. Those who are most successful, acquire such habits of expense, such expectations of supplying their wants by playing at any time, and consequently such a contempt for economy, and even for a common prudence, that they become poor of course. The old age of a gamester is the cold and comfortless evening of a forlorn and miserable day.

4. Gaming is the destruction of character.

'A good name,' says Solomon, 'is better than great riches, and loving favour, than silver and gold.' A fair, unblemished reputation is one of the chief blessings of man; one of his prime enjoyments; one of his principal means of usefulness. Without it he can obtain neither influence, nor confidence; neither profitable employments, nor real friends. But no gamester was ever respected as such. Whatever talents or advantages he may otherwise have possessed, his character has been always sunk by his gaming. Look around the world, and judge for yourselves. You never knew, and therefore never will know a gamester, who in this character was regarded by his neighbours with esteem. Common sense steadily attaches disgrace to the name. So conscious of this fact are the whole class of gamesters, that they usually take effectual pains to carry on their wretched employment in scenes of solitude and secrecy, where they are effectually hidden from the eyes of mankind.

But who that possesses common sobriety, or even sanity of mind, who that is not a fair candidate for Bedlam, would voluntarily destroy the blessing of his own good name? The slanderer, who blasts the reputation of another, is universally and justly regarded with abhorrence. What the slanderer does for another, the gamester does for himself. The slanderer is a vile and abominable wretch. In what respect is the gamester less vile and abominable? The slanderer is an assassin; the gamester is a suicide.

5. Gaming is the direct road to many other sins.

Every gamester, with too few exceptions to deserve notice, becomes a sharper of course. High expectations of acquiring property suddenly, distressing disappointments, great gains, and great losses instantaneously experienced, strong hopes alternated with strong fears, and holding the mind habitually in a state of anxious suspense, regularly prove too powerful for the honesty of every man who has not too much virtue to be a gamester. By what is called fair play he fails of being successful. A series of ill success tempts him to play *unfairly*. Ultimately, he is charged with it. He denies it; and is thus guilty of falsehood. The charge is reiterated. He swears to the truth of his denial; and is thus guilty of perjury. His oath is doubted. He becomes angry, profane, and furious; and not unfrequently engages in a quarrel to vindicate his wounded honour. At times the dispute is terminated by a duel. In all ordinary circumstances, his affections become sour, and his mind envious at the success of his companions, and malicious towards their persons. At the same time, he is prompted to murmur at his ill success; to curse what he calls his luck, but what is in truth a dispensation of God; and to adopt a course of profane, blasphemous, and fiend-like language. To close this wretched detail, the gamester very often terminates his miserable career with drunkenness, and not unfrequently with self-murder. Who, that is not lost to every hope of virtue, who that is not lost to common sense and common feeling, can be willing to thrust himself into a course of life, or in the entrance upon a course

of life, which presents at the very gate most formidable temptations to these enormous sins? Who would be willing that a father, a husband, a brother, or a son should be guilty of these sins, or exposed to these temptations? This question will probably never be answered. Will it then be said, that men are found who love these relations better than themselves? It will not be said. But it must be said, because it is true, that multitudes of men resort to the gaming-table with an infantine giddiness of mind; a hair-brained spirit of adventure; a greedy avarice, and a treacherous confidence in their own watchfulness against temptations; in that prudent care which, always seen with microscopic eyes, they considered as abundantly sufficient to secure themselves from every danger. Thus, while 'the really prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself,' these 'simple,' self-deceived beings 'pass on, and are punished.'

From these considerations it is, if I mistake not, evident beyond debate, that gaming is a gross fraud; that, in many other points of view, it is an enormous sin; and that it is, in an alarming degree, fatal to all the real interests of man. There are, however, persons, who, because they escape some of the dangers, and avoid some of the iniquities connected with this practice, will flatter themselves that they are scarcely chargeable with the rest. They may not claim the character of virtue; but they will insist that their conduct is almost, if not entirely, innocent; and will at least believe themselves, if guilty at all, to be guilty only in a very minute degree. To these persons let me seriously address the following considerations:—

(1.) Gaming is an appearance of evil.

'Abstain from all appearance of evil,' is a command of the same God, who said, 'Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God, with all thy heart;' and is therefore armed with the same authority. But every person of piety, and almost every sober man, pronounces gaming to be an evil. It cannot therefore be denied to be an appearance of evil. By the arguments here advanced, it has been shown, unless I am deceived, to be a real and dreadful evil. That every man, therefore, is bound to abstain from it, cannot be questioned.

(2.) Every gamester feels it to be an evil.

In all the early parts of his addiction to this course of life, he will find himself frequently employed, if he has any moral principles at all, in devising arguments and excuses to quiet his own conscience, and justify himself to others. This is not the conduct of a man who feels himself innocent. No person ever sought an excuse for prayer, for honest industry, for the pious education of children, or for a faithful attendance on the public worship of God. Most persons at the gaming-table are sensibly disturbed by the unexpected presence of a wise and good man. But such persons create no disturbance in the minds of those who believe themselves to be virtuously employed. Were the Redeemer of mankind again upon earth, no person who acknowledged his character would be willing to be found by him at a gaming-table.

(3.) Gaming cannot be prayed for.

Nothing can be right or innocent for which we cannot pray. In all pursuits which he believes to be justifiable, every man can without difficulty ask for the blessing of God. But no man ever asked, no man ever will ask, that is, seriously and solemnly, or, in other words, really for the blessing of God upon the employment of gaming. But that which cannot be prayed for is sinful.

(4.) Neither gaming, nor the circumstances which regularly attend it can be recited at the day of judgment.

I call upon every gamester solemnly to consider, whether he will be able to come before 'the Judge of the quick and the dead,' and declare to him with confidence, or even with hope, that he has spent his life, or any part of it, in the business of gaming. But the conduct which cannot be rehearsed then, cannot be right now. Who can soberly approve in this world of that which will condemn him in the world to come?

There are many persons who condemn what is called gambling, or gaming for money, and who yet appear to think themselves justified in gaming for mere amusement. Let me exhort all such persons to remember, that, whatever influence this conduct may have upon themselves, it will, as an example, be pernicious to others. Multitudes will know that they game, who will never know that they do not game for money. Multitudes also will be either unable, or uninclined, to make any serious distinction between these kinds of conduct. All these will directly plead the example as a justification of themselves, or at least as a palliation of their own guilt. This will peculiarly be the fact, where the persons concerned are persons of reputation; and unfortunately, a considerable number of those who employ themselves in gaming for amusement, are of this character. The example of one such person will be pleaded by all who know it. Under the wings of one such man, a multitude of gamblers, almost all of whom are without reputation, and great numbers low, contemptible beings, will gather; and feel themselves brooded in safety, and secured from the dreaded intrusions of public censure. Were gambling unfurnished with reputable and fashionable examples, it would, I think, be easily exterminated from the world. Every person possessed of a generally fair character may therefore feel assured, that if he games for amusement, he is one of the means, and not a small one, of keeping gambling alive among mankind; and that he contributes efficaciously to the existence of all the sin and all the misery which it will produce at future periods.

To these observations it will probably be replied, 'Must I deny myself an innocent pleasure, because my neighbour is pleased to make a bad use of my example?' St Paul has long since answered this question. 'For meats destroy not the work of God. All things indeed are pure; but it is evil for that man who eateth with offence. It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak,' Rom. xiv. 20, 21. And again, 1 Cor. viii. 13, 'Wherefore, if meat make my brother to stumble, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.' However innocent gaming for amusement may be, it cannot be more innocent than 'eating flesh,' than doing that which the apostle has pronounced 'pure.' Yet the apostle, and God who inspired him, have declared, that whatever occasions our brother to stumble, or fall into sin, it is good not to do, however innocent it may be otherwise; and the apostle has declared, that he would not do this, even though 'eating flesh,' so innocent, so directly allowed by God, and so important as food for

man, were the thing in question, no, 'not while the world standeth.' Nay, he has farther declared in the verse preceding that last quoted, that when, in such cases, 'we wound the weak conscience of our brother, we sin against Christ.' All this he declares concerning eating flesh, and concerning every other innocent thing. If then our gaming for amusement be, what it cannot fail to be, a cause of inducing others to game for money, to become gamesters, and to fall into any or all of these sins; then in gaming for amusement we sin against Christ, by wounding the conscience of our weaker brethren, and becoming the direct means of tempting them to sin.

The supposition here made is, however, false. Gaming for amusement, in such as are either partially or wholly games of chance, particularly with cards and dice, is not, and cannot be, innocent. It is, almost of course, a sinful waste of time. As an amusement, it is unnecessary and useless. It refreshes neither the mind nor the body; and fails therefore essentially of being a lawful amusement. Better amusements can always be substituted for it; particularly exercise, reading, and conversation; and among amusements, as well as among employments, we are bound to select the best in our power. The controversy, the hope of victory, the reluctance to be vanquished, and universally that continual state of suspense and anxiety always experienced in gaming, have, although in a less degree, substantially the same influence on the mind, and are furnished with the same temptations, which are found in gaming for money. In addition to these things, gaming for money is almost always the consequence of an addiction to gaming for amusement. The expectation that we shall be able to withstand the allurements by which others have fallen, is a mere and ruinous presumption; the presumption of 'a man, wise in his own conceit;' of whom 'there is less hope than of a fool.' The probabilities, that we shall fall where so many have fallen, are millions to one; and the contrary opinion is only a dream of lunacy. At the same time, no man can stand up in his closet before his Maker, and thank him for the privilege of gaming to-day, or ask his blessing to enable him to game to-morrow.

But the influence of example is abundantly sufficient to prove the sinfulness of gaming for amusement. Call to mind the extent to which this evil has spread. Think what amazing multitudes have been corrupted, distressed, and ruined by it for this world, and that which is to come. Think how many families have been plunged by it in beggary, and overwhelmed by it in vice. Think how many persons have become liars at the gaming-table, how many perjured, how many drunkards, how many blasphemers, how many suicides. 'If Europe,' said Montesquieu, 'is to be ruined, it will be ruined by gaming.' Remember that, unless persons of reputution gamed for amusement, persons without reputation would soon cease to game for money. Then call to mind, that your example is one of the means which produce all these evils, and continue the practice, together with its miserable consequences, in the world. Remember, that you set the snare, spread the corruption, and effectuate the ruin; that you help to fill the world with wretchedness and sin, and both allure and lead your fellow men to final perdition. With these plain and solemn truths in full view, look up to God; and, if you can, declare that there is no sin in gaming for amusement.

SERMON CXXV.

THE LAW OF GOD.—THE DECALOGUE.—THE NINTH COMMANDMENT.—THE NATURE AND IMPORTANCE OF TRUTH AND VERACITY.

Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour—Exod. xx. 16.

The preceding command was intended to secure *justice* to mankind: this was intended to establish *truth.*

The word *truth* denotes, among other things,

1. Such declarations as are accordant with the real state of things.

2. That division of truth, which is called moral, or evangelical.

3. Veracity, or a disposition to speak truth.

4. Faithfulness, or a disposition to fulfill exactly promises, trusts, and covenants.

Under this command are properly ranged the following subjects:—

I. *Truth.*
II. *Lying.*
III. *Perjury.*
IV. *Slander.*

These I propose to consider in the order specified.

The first of them, viz. *truth*, shall occupy the present Discourse. In examining it, it is my design to consider the nature and importance of truth, and the importance of veracity.

Concerning the former of these subjects I observe,

1. That truth is an account of the real state of things.

Mathematical truth is an account of the real state of number and quantity, together with their various relations; philosophical truth, understood in the natural sense, of material bodies, and their operations; and moral truth, of intelligent beings, their relations, their duties, and their actions.

The real state of things, is that with which only we have any concern; and with this our concern is infinite. In the present world, so far as the present world only

is concerned, our whole interest is involved in the real state of ourselves, our business, and the subjects of it; our families, our country, and mankind. The collection of truths which we receive concerning these and other subjects, is what is called knowledge; our guide to all that conduct which may be useful to us, and our security against that which may be noxious. The truth that bread is wholesome food, enables us to eat it with safety. A falsehood in this case might lead us to swallow poison. A knowledge of the true state of our farms and of agriculture, enables us to cultivate our farms with profit. A knowledge of the real state of the markets, enables us to trade with safety and success. A knowledge of the real characters of men enables us to choose those who will be our real friends; and secures us from inviting to our friendship base and treacherous men. Misapprehension, in these respects, would ruin both our business and ourselves.

In the moral world, the truth concerning God, his pleasure, ourselves, the relations which we sustain to him and to each other, and the duties springing from these relations, enables us to obey him, to become blessings to each other, and to obtain the blessings of immortality. Falsehood, in these respects, would lead us infinitely astray. False apprehensions of God have led a great part of mankind to worship devils, men, beasts, trees, stocks, and stones; to mistake sin for virtue, and ruin for safety. No man ever dreamed that his interests lay in the regions of fiction, or that his sober correspondence should be carried on with fairies and genii. But the man who embraces falsehood, and is governed by it, places his interests, so far, in a world equally visionary; and corresponds not with real beings, but with creatures of fancy. As happiness can never come to us from the regions of fiction, or their imaginary inhabitants; so happiness never sprang, and never will spring, from false views of the real world, and its real inhabitants. Our only connexion with these objects is through the medium of truth, or the knowledge of their real state.

2. Truth is, in itself, a rich source of enjoyment.

By this I intend, that it is an object immediately enjoyed; and that when presented to the mind it communicates pleasure of course.

Fiction may be in this sense, and I acknowledge often is, a source of real enjoyment to the mind. God, to raise our views to a better world than that which has been ruined by our apostasy, and to awaken in us desires for a nobler happiness than any which this world supplies, has made us capable of forming many delightful objects in our imagination, many which are beautiful, many which are sublime, and many which are wonderful. On these the mind rests with pleasure during short periods, especially in youth; and, so long as they are regarded as objects of imagination merely, they are sources of pleasure which may be really enjoyed, and to a considerable extent. But when any fiction is changed into a falsehood; when it ceases to be an object of the imagination, and becomes an object of belief; it is always, sooner or later, a source of suffering, and not of enjoyment. Even in the character of fiction, it gradually loses its power to please. As we advance in years, the love of truth, considered as a source of pleasure merely, takes its place; and the mind seeks for enjoyment in knowledge, and not in the exercises of imagination.

But truth is always capable of yielding more delight to the mind than fiction; or, in other words, intellectual enjoyment is always capable of being superior to that which flows in by the fancy. The actual state of things which God has made, is in every respect more beautiful, glorious, and desirable than any which the mind can imagine. Every person who understands the modes in which the mind is actively employed in forming complex ideas, whether of the intellect or the imagination, knows that all such ideas are made out of those which it receives from objects really existing. These it can compound and compare; but can add to them nothing but what it has already perceived. New beauty, new sublimity, new loveliness, it can form, only by bringing together in new unions the perception of beauty, sublimity, and loveliness which it has derived either from the actual state of things, or from revelation. In the objects formed by the fancy, therefore, there can be nothing in degree more sublime, beautiful, or lovely than that which it has already received. In conformity with these observations, no object was ever described by the pen of man, so as to make the impression of sublimity equally with the object itself. No images in human writings were ever so sublime as those of inspiration. No character formed by the imagination was ever to be compared with that of Christ.

When I speak of the actual state of things which God has made, as in every respect more beautiful, glorious, and desirable than any which the mind can imagine, I mean the whole state of things. The universe is a single system. Everything belonging to it is a necessary, and proper part of the system; such a part as infinite wisdom thought it best to make; and therefore such as was more desirable than anything else in its place. The whole, taken together, is a perfect system; the result of the perfect views of the all-perfect mind. In such a sense is it perfect, that it is truly said, 'Jehovah shall rejoice in his works:' that is, because all, united, are such as to accomplish to the utmost, the good pleasure of his boundless wisdom. The truth concerning this system, or the knowledge of its real state, will for ever delight, as well as enlarge the minds of virtuous and immortal beings.

In the present world, imperfect, prejudiced, and narrow as our minds are, the exhibitions of truth concerning this subject in the Scriptures are not only superior to everything conceived by the human imagination, but more delightful to every virtuous being; more delightful beyond comparison, as well as superior beyond degree. The character of God, the mediation of the Redeemer, the agency of the divine Spirit, the dispensations of infinite mercy, the restoration of sinners to virtue and happiness, the consummation of all things, the blessings of immortality, the glory of heaven, and the future union of sanctified minds in that delightful world, leave out of sight and out of remembrance all the creations of poetry, all the splendid excursions of imagination. 'Into these things, angels desire to look.' All those whose minds are attuned to the disposition of angels, love to follow them in this divine employment. Nay, God himself, regards this combination of wonderful objects as a glorious picture, an illustrious emanation of his own wisdom, which he beholds for ever with the smiles of infinite complacency.

3. That great division of truth, which is called moral

or evangelical truth, is, in an important sense, the foundation of all virtue.

'Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth,' said our Saviour, in his intercessory prayer; John xvii. 17.—'Of his own will begat he us, with the word of truth,' James i. 17.—'The truth,' said Christ to the Jews, 'shall make you free.' From these declarations it is completely evident, that evangelical truth is the means of that mighty change in the human soul, by which, according to the strong language of the Scriptures, it is 'turned from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God.'

'The law of the Lord,' says David, 'is perfect, converting the soul,' but the law of God is nothing but truth communicated in the preceptive form. All its influence on the soul is derived from this fact; and, were it not conformed to truth, or were it, in other words, founded on falsehood, its moral influence would cease. Particularly, its influence to produce this conversion would be annihilated. Truth then is, in this point of view, of just as much importance to the happiness of mankind, and to the glory of God, as the salvation of all the millions who have been or will be saved.

Falsehood, or error, has in the mean time never had the least influence towards the accomplishment of this glorious purpose. From the erroneous moral systems of men, no individual ever gained the least tendency towards real virtue. Truths, indeed, these systems have always involved; and the influence of these truths has so far been felt by mankind, as to prompt them to many commendable actions, and to prevent them from becoming as abandoned as they would otherwise have been. The errors which they contained have, so far as they were believed, been the means of sin only. Of cordial and thorough reformation they have been absolutely barren. Truth and falsehood have been blended in them with such confusion, as to be inseparable by the men who embraced them, without very different efforts from those which they have been inclined, and, in most cases, able to make. They have therefore been swallowed whole; and have produced such effects as a mind enlightened by revelation could not fail to foresee. Error became the predominating rule of action to all their votaries; and the truth was chiefly lost and forgotten.

But moral truth is not merely a rule to teach us what virtue is, and to guide us ultimately to this glorious attainment. To discern it with the understanding, and to welcome it to the heart, is virtue itself as existing in the soul; and, when carried out into action, conformity also to its dictates, is all which is included in the name of virtue. In other words, virtue is nothing but voluntary obedience to truth.

Error, on the contrary, is the foundation of all iniquity. It leads the soul only away from duty, from virtue, from salvation, and from God. To the divine kingdom it is only hostile. To the reformation and happiness of man it is ruinous. It promotes no cause, but that of Satan; it forms no character, but that of sin. All the just definitions of sin are involved in this; that it is nothing but voluntary obedience to error.

In the mean time, all the motives to virtue are found in the general system of truth; as all the motives to sin are found in systems of error. Error contains nothing in it to prompt us to obey God, to perform our duty, or to seek the salvation of ourselves and others. As a motive or combination of motives, error contains nothing but inducements to sin; and truth nothing but inducements to holiness. In all these important particulars, truth is the basis of virtue.

It cannot be thought strange, then, that 'love,' or evangelical excellence, or, in other words, real virtue, should 'rejoice in the truth;' that holiness should be styled by St Paul, 'holiness of truth;' or that 'those who know not God, and obey not the gospel,' or truth, 'of our Lord Jesus Christ,' should be classed together in the ruin of the final day.

By these views of the importance of truth, we are naturally led to the second subject of discourse, viz., *veracity*.

The importance of veracity will sufficiently appear from the following considerations:—

1. Almost all the truth which we know, we derive from communication; and, of course, almost all the benefits of truth which we enjoy.

A man deprived of the communication of others, and left wholly to his own observation, would possess little more knowledge than a brute. It would be no easy matter to explain how he could subsist. If we suppose him to subsist through the ordinary period of human life, it is certain that he would know nothing besides his own feelings, and the little number of objects which fell under his observation. Even of these he would rather form ideas, than possess knowledge. Of the relations between them he must remain almost absolutely ignorant. Nor would he easily acquire the skill necessary to construct even the simplest propositions. Still less would he be able to reason, to illustrate, and to prove. In a word, his mind would rise in very few things above that of a dog, or an elephant; while, in almost all, he would fall far below them.

As he would know scarcely any thing concerning the present world, so it is plain, he would know nothing of the world to come. Of God, of duty, of virtue, and of immortality, he would not form a single idea. Nor could he, without manifest impropriety, be styled a rational being. How could such a man enjoy the benefits of truth at all?

The difference between this man, as an intelligent being, and Newton, Berkeley, or Locke, is made by communication. The mass of ideas accumulated by an individual is communicated to others; and those of a preceding generation, to the generation which follows. By the labours of many individuals, and in the progress of successive generations, the knowledge formed out of these ideas has increased to that height and extent which exist at the present period. Every kind of business, art, and science has been thus brought to the perfection in which we possess it; and all the benefits which these things confer upon the present race of mankind are derived solely from communication. For our knowledge of the future world we are indebted wholly to communications from God. To the same source we are indebted for the chief knowledge which we possess concerning the moral system. All this knowledge is indeed contained in the Scriptures; yet a part of it may be, and has been, acquired without their assistance. To this knowledge we are indebted for the direction, comfort, and hope which we enjoy in the character of moral beings; as we are to natural knowledge for the necessaries and conveniences of the present life. To communication, therefore, we owe almost every-

thing, whether present or future, which can be called desirable.

But the whole value, the whole usefulness, of communication, is derived solely from the truths which it conveys. False information can be of no use to us. As our own concern lies with the real state of things, and the good or evil which we are to enjoy or suffer, is dependent on our knowledge of that state, and the conduct dictated by this knowledge, it is evident that the information which leads us to conceive erroneously of the things with which we are connected, will both hinder us from the acquisition of good, and expose us to the sufferance of evil. The measures by which we design to acquire good, and to avoid evil, will in both cases fail of their effect; because, being founded on erroneous apprehensions, they will be unsuited to the existing state of things, and therefore to the accomplishment of the intended purpose. If we are falsely informed of business, we shall conduct it unhappily; if of the markets, we shall buy and sell with loss; if of our duty, we shall perform it amiss, or not at all; if of the means of salvation, we shall fail of it; if of the character and pleasure of God, we shall offend him in all our attempted services. Thus it is plain, that all the benefits of communication are dependent on its truth; and that almost every benefit of truth, experienced by rational beings, is derived form their mutual veracity.

2. Veracity is the only foundation of confidence.

Confidence is the great bond of society among intelligent beings. Intelligent creatures are supremely dependent on their Creator, and, to a vast extent, on each other. From him, ultimately, they derive all the good which they enjoy; and without his perpetual protection and blessing, they must not only be miserable, but must perish. A great part of these blessings he has been pleased to communicate to us through the instrumentality and agency of his rational creatures. To them immediately we are indebted for blessings innumerable in their multitude, incalculable in their importance, and indispensable to our daily safety, peace, and comfort, and not unfrequently to the continuance of our lives. So numerous and so continual are these blessings, that they are generally regarded as things of course; and pass by as unnoticed and unseen.

Originally, all these blessings are unpossessed by us; all of them from time to time being future. It is necessary, therefore, that we should provide for the acquisition of them by such means as are in our power. As for almost all of them we must be indebted to the agency of others; we are compelled, unavoidably, to rely on their engagements to supply them. Here the field opens in which confidence is to be exercised; and almost at our very entrance into life, it becomes boundless. We are obliged to trust to parents and others for protection, food, raiment, and innumerable other things, indispensable to our subsistence, as well as our comfort, from infancy to manhood. The offices for which we rely are necessary, and are rendered; the benefits are indispensable, and are communicated, every day, hour, and moment. Confidence is thus diffused everywhere, and at all times. We trust as naturally and unceasingly as we breathe, and with as little consciousness of the fact. In the same manner is the same confidence extended through life, exercised every moment, placed, in a greater or less degree, on every person with whom we correspond; and employed about every object with which we have any concern. If we could not confide, we should, in a sense, know nothing, acquire nothing, and do nothing to any valuable purpose.

Equally indebted are we to confidence for almost the whole of our happiness. The emotion is delightful in itself, and indispensable to every other delightful emotion. It is equally pleasant to trust, and to be trusted. No supposable union of esteem and good-will is more pleasing, more elevated, or more refined. Accordingly, it is thus regarded by those who exercise it, and by those towards whom it is exercised. Parents are never more delighted than in the entire confidence of their children. Children are never more happy than when they entirely confide in their parents.

Equally necessary is confidence to the existence and operations of government. Indeed, government without it would be a nullity. Even the despot himself must rely on a numerous train of agents for the accomplishment of his purposes. Without their co-operation, he could do nothing towards the control of his subjects beyond what he could accomplish by his own physical strength. Accordingly, he is always compelled to buy the assistance of such agents with extensive gratuities of wealth and honour, as well as to force it by terror.

Virtuous rulers, who govern a free people by laws, and by influence, stand only on the mutual confidence of themselves and their subjects. Withdraw this confidence, and the government is annihilated at once: the rulers become powerless, and the society is lost in anarchy.

A state of absolute distrust is a state of absolute misery. Like the cold hand of death, distrust would dissolve the whole frame and texture of the social body; the joints and the ligaments, the energy and the life. A country could no longer contain its inhabitants, nor even the den its banditti. Such a state of things in this world has hitherto never existed in the absolute sense.

Without confidence, God himself would cease to be the moral governor of intelligent creatures. As I have elsewhere considered this subject, it will be the less necessary to insist upon it here. Still a few observations concerning it cannot be improper.

It is clear, even to a very limited and obtuse apprehension, that without confidence in a ruler, voluntary obedience can never exist; that without voluntary obedience God can never be pleased with his intelligent creatures, since no other can be honourable to him; and that without the same obedience, those creatures can never be amiable in his sight, since no other can render them virtuous. Distrust is an absolute separation of those beings in whom it exists, from those towards whom it is exercised. A being distrusted can never be loved, reverenced, nor voluntarily obeyed. Of such obedience, confidence is the commencement the soul, and the substance. But where there is no truth in the ruler, there can be no confidence in the subject. However great, however knowing, the divine ruler might be supposed or perceived to be, his greatness and knowledge would, unless accompanied by veracity, only inspire suspense and terror; suspense and terror pervading the intelligent universe, distracting every heart, and filling every world with agitation and anguish. Omnipotence would indeed enable him to compel an external conformity to his pleasure; but the obedience rendered, would be the obedience of slaves, and not of children. It is a plain and moral

impossibility, that a being without veracity should be respected or loved. However great and splendid an earthly ruler may be, however successful in his designs, however magnificent in his mode of living, however distinguished for his talents, and however liberal in his largesses; he would, if a liar, be still a base and contemptible being. Falsehood in an infinite Being would render him infinitely contemptible. Even the benevolence of the gospel, without truth (if it were possible to separate them), would be changed into a kind of amiable weakness, a silly, wavering, good nature, and would cease to command respect.

A ruler without truth could offer no motives to his subjects, which could induce them to obey. Should he enact laws, promise rewards, and threaten penalties; it would be very uncertain whether the law prescribed the conduct which would be agreeable to him; whether the rewards would be given to such as faithfully obeyed; or whether the penalties would be inflicted on such as disobeyed. Whatever he promised, whatever he threatened, no reliance could be placed on his declarations; and they could therefore hold out no motives to obedience. But a moral government is a government operating by motives; and without motives cannot exist.

Thus it is completely evident, that the kingdom of God, or his government of the intelligent universe, rests upon truth, as its foundation.

3. Veracity is the source of inestimable personal good.

Veracity is the first constituent of an honourable, and even of a fair reputation. A bad man, who is known always to speak truth, will always command a considerable share of respect; but a liar is despised of course. So contemptible is falsehood, that to charge any man with this vice is universally regarded as the last affront which scorn and ill-nature are able to offer; as an injury for which an atonement can scarcely be made.

Without veracity, virtue, as has been heretofore remarked, can in no sense exist. To the existence of virtue then in our own minds, veracity is indispensable.

Equally indispensable is it to self-approbation. Conscience, like God, always delights in truth, and always approves of speaking truth. This approbation it faithfully and invariably whispers to the soul. Few enjoyments can be compared with self-approbation. It is delightful; it is full of peace, comfort, and hope; it is independent of time and accident, of friends and enemies. The world cannot give it: the world cannot take it away.

Conscience, on the other hand, abhors a lie, and solemnly and dreadfully reproaches the liar. Wherever falsehood is loved and uttered, conscience pierces the soul with stings of agony; and holds up to the culprit a dreadful mirror, by which all his deformity and guilt are forced upon his view. The terrible likeness he is compelled to own. At the sight of this awful image he trembles, falters, and reluctantly, but irresistibly sinks beneath the proper level of his nature.

Veracity is the source also of all personal dignity. There is no dignity without consistency of character. A merely fickle, changeable man, although intentionally sincere, is at the best but a mere trifler; and can never be the subject of real respectability. Moral inconsistency is still more hostile to dignity. The subject of it is to every eye, not only contemptible, but odious. To himself particularly he appears of necessity base and despicable; and is forced to feel, that by his own crimes he has sunk himself below the proper character and rank of man.

Veracity makes us like to God. This glorious Being styles himself 'a God of truth,' and declares it to be impossible that he should lie. Truth is the moral immutability of his character, and the moral consistency of finite intelligences. Him truth surrounds with dignity infinite; them it exalts to a resemblance of him which is divine and eternal; an image of supreme excellence and beauty.

Veracity is no less the source of usefulness. Men never voluntarily employ those in whom they do not place confidence. 'As vinegar to the teeth, and as smoke to the eyes, so is the loiterer to him that sendeth him.' The fear of being deceived, the suspense and anxiety which we necessarily feel, when our affairs are in the hands of unfaithful men, soon forbid a repetition of the same experiment. Equally unwilling are we in all ordinary cases, to be employed by men of this character. Such men demand from us services, expect from us compliances, and propose to us terms, inconsistent both with comfort and integrity; and, when our services are performed, they will usually, so far as safety will permit, and their own convenience may require, defraud us of our proper reward. I know of but one exception to these remarks. Bad men do, I acknowledge, employ bad men to promote a bad cause: but even they confide useful, honourable employment only to persons of integrity. Equally necessary is this attribute to the production and establishment of that influence which constitutes a great part of the usefulness of every useful man. A liar can neither convince others, nor persuade others. Others cannot engage with him in any serious, useful design. They cannot enter into his service, nor employ him in theirs, with safety or hope. His falsehood is a blast upon his character and upon his interests alike. He who is connected with him lives in continual fear of being betrayed; and he only who shuns him is either happy or safe.

Finally: Veracity is indispensable to our acceptance with God. The psalmist, when he inquires, 'Who shall ascend into the tabernacle of the Highest?' solemnly answers, 'He that speaketh truth in his heart; he that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not.' Such is the universal language of the Scriptures. 'Lying lips,' saith the wise man, 'are an abomination unto the Lord.' —'There shall in nowise enter into the city any thing that defileth; nor he that loveth and maketh a lie.' Every liar, therefore, knows that he is in a state of condemnation; that hitherto he has no title to endless life, nor a single hope of final acceptance with God. Before these blessings can be begun, his ruling character must be renounced. He, who 'requireth truth in the inward parts,' can turn no eye but that of indignation and abhorrence upon a soul polluted with falsehood, and instamped with the foul image of him who 'was a liar from the beginning, and the father of it.' In heaven a liar would be a gazing-stock, a spot on the beautiful and glorious aspect of that glorious world, a curse to himself, and a nuisance to its exalted inhabitants!

There is one world in the universe, and, so far as we are informed, but one, in which truth is unknown, and falsehood reigns and ravages. Here 'all liars have their part; and all who dwell here are liars. Here to deceive, and to be deceived, is the base employment,

and the wretched lot. Truth here is never spoken, unless to deceive; and confidence is never exercised. Friendship, sociality, the union of hearts, and the interchange of affections, are never found in this dreary and dreadful region. In the midst of millions every individual is alone. A gloomy and terrible solitude broods over the desolate vast; and the eye of suffering and sorrow stretching its look of anguish above, around, beneath, finds no friend in whom it may confide; no bosom on which it may repose with comfort, peace, or hope.

How different is that delightful residence, where all who love and speak truth are, by the boundless goodness of the Creator, united in a divine and blissful assembly! Here truth by every member of this vast and happy family is loved, studied, embraced, and spoken, for ever. Confidence here enters the soul, and takes up in this unsullied mansion its eternal residence. Friendship, the twin-sister of confidence, dwells and smiles by her side, and sheds upon the purified mind her immortal enjoyments; while God with infinite complacency beholds this illustrious work of his own hands, and showers around it with eternal profusion the ever-growing blessings of his unchangeable love.

SERMON CXXVI

THE LAW OF GOD.—THE DECALOGUE.—THE NINTH COMMANDMENT.—THE NATURE AND CAUSES OF LYING.

Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.—Exod. xx. 16.

In the preceding Discourse I considered, at some length, the nature and importance of truth and veracity. These are the basis of the precept in the text. I shall now go on to examine the immediate subject of the text, viz., falsehood, under the two following heads:—

I. *Lying.*

II. *Slander.*

Under the former of these heads I shall include promise-breaking and perjury.

In discoursing on this subject, I propose to consider,

The nature,

The causes,

The mischiefs, and

The preventives of lying.

Concerning the first of these subjects, viz., the nature of lying, I observe generally, that a lie is a false declaration of facts, wilfully made, or made, as is sometimes the case, from indifference to truth.

A false promise is a crime substantially of the same nature with a lie in the proper sense. A lie is a false declaration of existing facts: a false promise is a false declaration of future facts.

Perjury is a false declaration either of present or future facts, wilfully made, accompanied by an oath. Perjury in evidence, is a false declaration, under oath, of existing facts. Perjury under an oath of office or trust, is a false declaration of future facts. The future facts here referred to are universally such as are supposed to be under our own control, and are chiefly such as are involved in our own conduct. Such at least is the case, when the oath or promise is lawfully made.

Mankind are guilty of lying, that is, substantially guilty, in the following ways—

1. In voluntary declarations of facts which are known to be false.

For example: every narration known to be false is a lie. Equally such is every description of a similar nature.

2. In declaring that to be true, which we believe to be otherwise; although, in the end, it should be found that the truth was really declared.

To our minds that is true, or false, which after careful examination we believe to be so. Before we make our declarations, we are bound to examine as impartially and as thoroughly as we can. After such an examination, if we declare agreeably to the best knowledge which we are able thus to obtain, and with no more confidence than such an examination warrants, our veracity is, I apprehend, unimpeachable. We may indeed mistake; but are in no sense guilty of lying. But if we declare that which is contrary to our belief, although the declaration should be exactly true, we are still intentionally, and therefore in the criminal sense, liars.

3. In rashly asserting what is not true, when the assertion springs from a sinful neglect of examining.

Inconsiderate and rash men assert roundly, although they do not know that which they assert to be true, and have no sufficient reasons for believing it to be true. This conduct is derived only from the want of a just sense of the importance of truth, and the value of veracity. Such a sense will prompt every man who possesses it to examine before he asserts; to assert with watchfulness and caution; and, where he does not feel himself warranted to make unqualified declarations, to express his belief, his opinion, or his apprehension.

No excuse can be given for this indifference to truth. To mankind its importance is infinite. The sacrifice of it is, in all instances, an injury which can neither be repaired nor recalled. Every man is bound to regard it in this manner, to enable himself to speak truth only, whenever he speaks at all. He, therefore, who by a voluntary negligence is led rashly to make false assertions, is without excuse.

4. In professing to declare the whole truth, and yet concealing a part of it, with an intention to deceive.

A wilful deception is here intended, and accom-

plished; the very thing which constitutes the essence of lying. The means, indeed, differ; but the spirit, the guilt, and the purpose are the same.

There is, I acknowledge, a prudent and justifiable concealment, as well as a guilty one. What others have not a right to know, we are not bound to declare. Nor are we, of course, bound to disclose the whole of a subject, in many cases, where we may be willing to communicate a part. But in every case our disclosures and our concealments must be exactly accordant with our professions. The writer who professes to record the whole of a story, is inexcusable if he narrate only a part; although everything which he actually declares may be true. The witness who, under the oath of evidence, withholds any thing which he knows pertaining to the subject in debate, is perjured.

5. In colouring the subject of our declaration so as to give it a different aspect from the true one.

This is an extensive field of falsehood; too extensive, indeed, to be thoroughly explored at the present time.

A common mode of transgressing in the way here generally described, is to represent the conduct of others truly, perhaps, as to the principal facts, and to surround it with such circumstances, annex to it such appendages, and attribute it to such motives, as, taken together, will give it an appearance either partially or wholly false; and, as is common in instances of this nature, very injurious to them.

Another mode of transgressing in this way is to exhibit the opinions and doctrines of others, not in language which they would acknowledge, but in language of our own choice; selected for the purpose of rendering such opinions or doctrines absurd and deformed, and of rendering those who hold them odious to others. This is, almost of course, accompanied with, what is exactly of the same nature, charging upon them consequences which we make, and they disclaim.

The doctrines of the Reformation have in a very remarkable manner, been followed and persecuted with this species of falsehood. It is at least extraordinary, if not singular, that these doctrines are never or very rarely, if ever, represented by those who oppose them in such terms as are used by those who profess them; but in terms which materially vary the nature of the doctrines. In this manner it is plainly intended to make them objects of alarm and abhorrence to others; and to engage by this obliquity of representation the passions of mankind in a course of hostility against their defenders. Every class of men have undoubtedly a right to express their own opinions in their own terms; and to admit or reject such consequences of their opinions as they think proper. The doctrines may indeed be fairly impeached, and by argument shown to be absurd, if it can be done; and any consequences may, so far as it can be shown by reason, be proved to follow from them. But to vary the terms in which the doctrine is exhibited from those in which it is declared by its defenders, and to charge them with holding it in such a manner as we are pleased to express it; to draw consequences from it at our own pleasure, and exhibit them as the opinions of those with whom we contend, although disclaimed by them; is plainly disingenuous, false, and criminal.

Another example of the same nature is presented to us by constructive narration.

By this I intend that narration, in which the writer or speaker construes events, together with the actions, motives, and characters of those concerned in them, in such a manner as he pleases; that is, in a manner accordant with his own views, interest, passions, and prejudices; and interweaves his construction in the recital, without giving any notice of this fact, so as to make them an inseparable part of the narrative. The reader here is unable to tell what is fact, and what is construction; and of course, unless preserved from it by superior discernment, is betrayed into a belief of all his errors, created by the prejudices of the writer. A great part of modern history is, if I mistake not, written in this unfortunate manner; and in this respect differs essentially and unhappily from the ancient manner of narration. Falsehood is here taught in a mode which seems often to defy detection, and which, at least in my view, is inexcusable.

The ridicule of what is true, just, good, honourable, or sacred, is an evil of the same nature. The things represented by him who uses the ridicule, are commonly real; and, were they represented in their own native and true colours, would not be, and could not be, made ridiculous. But they are falsely coloured; are violently connected with appendages, with which they have naturally no connexion; are distorted, maimed, and forced into every unnatural and monstrous attitude. The ridiculousness and absurdity which cannot be found in the things themselves, are fastened upon them. When presented to the eye once in this association, created by the hand of ill-natured ingenuity, it will be difficult for the mind to disjoin them afterward. In this manner things of the most important, solemn, and venerable nature, having been once seen in the light of absurdity through an artificial association, are often regarded as absurd and contemptible through life. No excuse can be pleaded for this unworthy and disingenuous conduct.

Of the same nature are also what are called marvellous stories. Persons of a lively imagination are prone greatly to admire almost everything which they see or hear, and to find an excessive pleasure in whatever is really wonderful. With this disposition they are led to represent almost all things which they relate as extraordinary and surprising. Were we to give full credit to what they say, we should be ready to believe that their lives had passed only through scenes of a marvellous kind, and that they had hardly ever met with ordinary beings, or ordinary events. The language of these persons is, to a great extent, made up of superlatives only; and their images are drawn only in the strongest and most glowing colours.

Such persons have, I acknowledge, as little intention to deceive in many, perhaps in most, instances, as other men. Still, through an eagerness to enhance everything which they relate, the representations which they give are continually untrue; and the apprehensions which they excite are regularly erroneous. There may be, there often is, no intentional deception in their thoughts. Still, they continually deceive, and that of choice, that they may enjoy the pleasure found in the indulgence of an eager imagination.

6. In flattery and censure.

Flattery is the ascription of good qualities to others which they do not possess, or in greater degrees than they possess them. Sometimes this ascription is the

result of the mere warmth of affection; and is then, though not wholly undeserving of censure, undoubtedly less criminal than in other cases. No warmth of affection, and no worth in the object of it, will, however, justify us in speaking that which is not true. Usually, it is dictated by sinister views, and intended to be the means of accomplishing unworthy purposes. In this case the author of it is a palpable, though a very pleasing, liar. The purpose which he has in view is a sinful one; and the means which he adopts to compass it are always sinful and contemptible. Accordingly, mankind have proverbially declared the flatterer to be an odious and despicable wretch.

Censure is often just and vindicable, often a duty, and not unfrequently a proof of superior worth. This, however, invariably supposes that the censure is deserved; that it is demanded by the nature of the case; and that it is administered solely to promote the good of the censured, and not to gratify the pride or ill-nature of the censurer. But as the word is used above, it is intended to denote a false denial of good qualities, or a false ascription of bad ones, adopted to gratify our own unworthy feelings, and to wound those of another. Falsehood of this nature is too well understood, and too generally detested, to need any comment.

7. In alleging, to support a doctrine or a cause, arguments which in our own view are unsound; or alleging those which have some degree of soundness and weight, as having more weight than we believe; or alleging them with more confidence than we really experience in our minds.

Veracity, as it respect arguments, demands that we allege such as in our view are really sound; that we attribute to them exactly the weight which we believe them to possess; and that we advance them with expressions of no more confidence in them than we actually feel. No reason can be alleged why we may wilfully deceive in our arguments, any more than in our declarations; or why sophistry is less guilty than what is appropriately called lying. The conduct in both cases is the same; viz., a wilful deception. The design is the same. The mischiefs also are as great in the former case, and often greater, than in the latter. Nor can any reason be alleged to prove the guilt less.

Of the same nature is the concealment of such arguments as we possess, when the support of truth and justice demands them, or the overthrow of falsehood and injustice.

8. In promise-breaking.

A promise is an engagement to do, or abstain from, something, either absolutely or conditionally. When this engagement is made to God, it is termed a vow; when to our fellow men, a promise. The laws of morality, which regulate both, are in substance the same. When a promise is made absolutely, or when the conditions on which it is made are performed, we are bound to fulfill it exactly, according to its tenor. Nor can we be released from this obligation, unless the performance is either impossible or unlawful; or unless by the consent of him to whom the promise is made. In every other case, the violation of the promise is a lie; at least as criminal, base, and detestable as any other.

Our obligations to veracity are greatly enhanced by an oath; one of the most solemn and affecting transactions in which man is ever concerned. In this transaction, God our Creator, Judge, and Rewarder; God, who 'requireth truth in the inward parts;' God, who 'seeth not as man seeth,' but who 'looketh on the heart;' is invoked as an awful witness of the manner in which we speak. If we speak truth, we declare our hope of his mercy; if we speak falsely, we imprecate his vengeance. What rational being, hitherto ignorant of the perjuries which deform this guilty world, could believe that any man, thus situated, would fail to speak truth with the deepest solicitude, and the most perfect exactness! Yet perjury is in the list of human crimes, and forms no inconsiderable part of that dreadful catalogue.

The guilt of every species of lying, when perpetrated under the solemnities of an oath, is enhanced by these considerations. The sin in almost all cases is more deliberately committed. The person to whom an oath is administered has every opportunity which he can wish, for summoning up to the view of his mind every motive to the performance of his duty, and every inducement to abstain from falsehood. These inducements also are the strongest conceivable. God in a peculiar manner is present to his thoughts: the 'God of truth,' who has declared, that 'all liars shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone.' His soul is put at hazard on his utterance of truth or falsehood. If he speaks falsehood, he voluntarily consigns himself to perdition. If he is guilty of perjury, he is ruined also for this world. The stain is too deep ever to be wiped away. At the same time, he does what is in his power to cut up confidence by the roots. 'An oath for confirmation,' says St Paul, 'is to men the end of all controversy,' Heb. vi. 16. If the confidence reposed in an oath could be reposed no more, human disputes must either be unsettled, or terminated by the strength of the arm: and to this end he who perjures himself does all in his power to conduct them.

At the same time, it is ever to be remembered, that God himself has been pleased on various occasions to confirm his own word by an oath. In this manner he has testified to us, that in his view an oath adds a peculiar sanction to that which has been said even by himself. Universally, he who utters a falsehood under the solemn obligation to speak truth, sins against all the motives which can be conceived to influence him to the performance of his duty.

The causes of lying, the second thing proposed in the scheme of this Discourse, are, generally, all the temptations which men feel to this unhappy practice. Men utter falsehood extensively for the acquisition of wealth, honour, power, and pleasure; to advance the purposes of party; to ensure success in a controversy; to gain a favourite point; to mortify a rival, or an enemy; and for innumerable other purposes. In the Discourse which I delivered on the subject of frauds practised on our fellow men, numerous specimens of this nature were either alluded to, or expressly mentioned. Similar specimens, perhaps equally numerous, are attendant upon the eager pursuit of all those worldly gratifications which men ardently covet. I know of no case in which lying more abounds, than that of vehement party contention. Universally, men, embarked in worthy designs, as I shall have occasion to mention more particularly hereafter, find falsehood exceedingly convenient, if not indispensable to their success. Depraved as mankind are, a bad cause cannot be car-

ried on with success, without the aid either of falsehood or the sword.

All these are immediate causes of lying. Those to which I have originally referred, are more remote. They are such as subvert the original tendency to speak truth, which we regularly find in the earliest ages of life. The influence of these causes is peculiarly exerted upon the minds of such as are young; and they are led into habits of lying, before they are capable of understanding either their guilt or their danger. These causes are principally the following:

1. Children are often taught to lie by example.

Few persons of adult years are perhaps sufficiently sensible, how soon children begin to understand the nature of those things which they see and hear, especially the nature of human conduct. From this, as well as from other causes, it frequently happens, that many things are done and said before very young children, which would not be said or done, if it were well understood that the children would clearly comprehend, and regularly copy them. By this misapprehension the members of many a family, and unhappily the parents also, are often induced to make their children witnesses of palpable falsehoods, when, bad as themselves are, they would not corrupt their children in this manner, were they aware that their conduct would thus become the means of corruption. Often these falsehoods are uttered in earnest; often they are uttered in jest. In both cases their influence is alike pernicious.

The power of all example is great, especially of evil example; but perhaps in no case greater than in that of falsehood. Here the falsehood is brought home to the child with an influence wholly peculiar. It is uttered by those whom he loves; by those whom he venerates; by those of whom he has never formed a disadvantageous suspicion. It is calmly and coolly told to others in his presence, without a doubt expressed of its rectitude; and is at times accompanied by a direct explanation of the advantages which are hoped from it. At other times, it is uttered in the zeal of dispute, and the warmth of passion. At other times, a multitude of falsehoods are combined together in a marvellous story, and, in many families, such stories form no small part of the domestic conversation. At other times still, and in instances innumerable, the private history of persons and families in the neighbourhood furnishes an almost endless tissue of interwoven truth and falsehood, and constitutes the chief entertainment of the house. Families, composed of sprightly members, make also innumerable assertions in jest, which are untrue; which the child who hears them perceives to be untrue; and for the falsehood of which he does not perceive the sport to yield any justification.

All these even very young children will usually discern to be falsehoods. No person can wonder that they should be induced to adopt this conduct, when he remembers that it is set before them continually, in so many modes, by those who are so much the objects of affection and reverence. That children derive this turpitude, in very many instances, originally and chiefly from such an example, they themselves abundantly prove. The reason which they almost always give, and first give, for the commission of this crime, is, that others have done the same thing.

In multiplied instances, falsehoods are directly told to children, particularly very young children, to persuade them to acquiesce cheerfully in things which are disagreeable. Children, like older persons, have many wishes, the gratification of which is in their view important to their happiness; but which others know to be fraught with danger and mischief. To persuade them quietly to give up such gratifications, parents and others frequently adopt the easy and convenient method of deceiving them. Thus parents, who wish to go abroad, and to persuade their young children to remain at home, often declare, that they are going out to return immediately, while the children clearly discern that the declaration is false. When parents also, or others are abroad, whose absence is very painful to children; servants, and others, to quiet them, declare often that the parents are returning, are in sight, or will return within a very short time. To persuade them to take medicines, the children are assured, that they are sweet and pleasant; when, in truth, they are bitter and loathsome. To conceal from them designs also, and facts, which it is undesirable that they should know, many artful and insidious declarations are made to them; which, together with all those mentioned above, the children, in spite of the address employed to prevent it, discern to be false. Thus, to quiet them for a moment, they are often taught to become liars through life.

In a similar manner, children are deceived, and corrupted, by false promises. They are sick, are reluctant to take medicines, are peevish and fretful, are wished by their parents to make little efforts to display their talents and accomplishments for the entertainment of visitors, and the gratification also of parental pride. To overcome their reluctance to these efforts, to soothe their sufferings, and to quiet their fretfulness, they are promised money, new clothes, the possession of toys and privileges, and particularly the privilege of going abroad. But the performance of such promises will usually occasion either trouble or expense. Very often, therefore, they are not performed. In this work of falsehood, parents, brothers, sisters, friends, and servants, frequently all unite; and the unfortunate children, who perfectly comprehend the deceit, find sometimes the whole, and sometimes a part of the family thus combined for their destruction.

Equally unhappy are they in the examples which they find abroad. Children thus corrupted carry the miserable contagion to school. All their companions who have been educated with happier care, and under better examples, are here exposed to the disease; and in many instances become infected and leprous through life.

At the same time, children are often permitted to frequent places to which vile and unprincipled persons resort, and there become witnesses of all their abominable sentiments and conduct. Here lies are not only told, but are made the subjects of jest and diversion. Successful falsehoods and impositions are not only repeated, but repeated with explanations, merriment, and triumph, and exhibited as proofs of superior address, and honourable ingenuity. What child can fail of corruption in such haunts of sin, and amid such examples of villany!

2. Children are taught to lie by influence.

In very early life children discover a strong tendency to talk abundantly, to repeat marvellous stories, to rehearse private history, and to recount the little occur-

rences of the neighbourhood. 'In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin.' Every tendency to loquacity ought therefore to be vigorously repressed. The disposition to recite marvellous stories, to give characters, and to recount private history and the occurrences of the neighbourhood, increases by every indulgence, and soon becomes both habitual and enormous.

Instead of checking those propensities, however, no small number of parents, unaware of the danger, and forgetful of their duty, directly listen, and inquire, and in many instances repeat what has been said in this manner by their children. In this conduct the children perceive that they derive consequence in the parental eye, from the fact that they utter things of this nature; and are efficaciously taught, that what they have said, instead of being criminal, odious, and disgraceful, is right and pleasing. They are naturally and powerfully led, therefore, to increase, instead of slackening their efforts, and to multiply their tales of these unfortunate kinds. From repeating, they go on to exaggerating; from rehearsing, to inventing; and from inventing such part as the memory does not supply, to inventing the whole. In this manner they become, after no great length of time, absolute liars.

In multitudes of instances, also, children, to gain favourite objects and interesting compliances from their companions, are induced to make promises of various kinds. These afterwards they are often disinclined to fulfill. The parent, whose duty it is to compel the performance, finding the child reluctant, because it involves some sacrifice of his playthings, his property, or his convenience, neglects his duty, and suffers the promise to go unfulfilled. In this manner he gives his own sanction to a direct breach of faith, infinitely more mischievous to the child than the loss of all the gratifications which he ever possessed. Nay, in some instances the child is even encouraged, and in some directly commanded, not to fulfill his promise; because, perhaps, the fulfilment will be very painful to the child, or in some degree inconvenient to the parent. In all such cases as I have mentioned, nothing can be expected, but that the child should grow up without truth, and of course without any moral principle.

3. Children are often driven to falsehood by passion.

There are parents whose whole life is an almost continual scene of passion. There are others, who often break out into paroxysms of rage. Among these, the number is not small of those who exercise this furious spirit towards their children; not unfrequently because their faults, whether real or supposed, disturb their own quiet, and make, or seem to make, it necessary for them to undertake, what they equally hate and dread, the task of parental discipline. The unhappy children are in such cases commonly assailed with the looks and language of a fury, instead of those of a Christian parent. Terrified at this storm of wrath and rage, the children are in a sense compelled, under the influence of the severest threatenings, to lie, in order to conceal their faults, and escape the dreadful infliction. Passion manifested towards children, whatever may have been their transgressions, is madness; shameful to the parent, and ruinous to the child. The parent who exercises it can expect nothing but that his child should become a liar.

4. Children are often forced to lie by punishment.

Parents, in many instances, feel satisfied that they have done their duty, when they have corrected their children for this crime. Accordingly, as often as the children repeat the crime, they repeat the punishment. Hardly any mistake with respect to the government of children can be more unhappy than this. So far as my own experience may be relied on, the same punishment can never be safely repeated in any great number of instances for the same fault. Usually, when administered once, if administered wisely, it will produce its whole efficacy on the child. All the supernumerary inflictions appear ordinarily to terminate in hardening the child; and, so far as my observation extends, in no case more effectually than in that of lying. Perhaps the rod is oftener used for the purpose of extirpating this fault than any other: and in no case, I suspect, with smaller success. The propriety and usefulness of correction, at early periods of childhood, are sanctioned by abundant experience, and by God himself. But reiterated correction, I mean often reiterated, has, I believe, rarely cured a child of falsehood; while it has confirmed multitudes in this sin beyond every rational hope of reformation.

The consciousness of having been often corrected, produces of course, in the mind of every child who is the subject of this discipline, a habitual sense of degradation. A sense of degradation is more nearly allied than mankind are usually aware to hardness of heart. When punishment fails of producing repentance, it is commonly followed by indifference to the crime; often by a determination to repeat it; and usually by feelings of revenge towards the author of the infliction. A child has told a lie; the parent has been provoked by it; the child has been corrected, but has not become a penitent: on the contrary, he feels that he has been injured; and, instead of regarding the lie as a crime, considers it only as an unfortunate cause of his own suffering. The turpitude of the act is, therefore, forgotten, and lost in the sense of suffering. To retribute the abuse will naturally seem, in this case, a gratification of no contemptible importance. A new crime is therefore committed, as soon as his own safety will permit. He is accused of it; and a new lie is told, to shield him from another correction. In this manner, he will soon begin to believe that both his lies and his other crimes are merely a balance for a given measure of punishment; and will calculate how many blows it will be prudent to hazard for the pleasure of committing a fault, and the convenience of telling a lie. The parent who governs his child in this manner, takes, in my opinion, well directed measures to make him a villain.

SERMON CXXVII.

THE LAW OF GOD.—THE DECALOGUE.—THE NINTH COMMANDMENT.—MISCHIEFS AND PREVENTIVES OF LYING.

Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.—Exod. xx. 16.

In the preceding Discourse I proposed to consider,

The nature,
The causes,
The mischiefs, and
The preventives of lying.

The two first of these subjects I discussed at that time. I shall now proceed to discuss the two last.

The first mischief of lying is the great and general one, that it is a sin against God.

There have not been wanting persons in every age, who have holden the doctrine, that lying is in some cases lawful. Among these have been many professed moralists, and at least some divines. Particularly, the very respectable writer, whose opinions I have several times questioned, Archdeacon Paley, has taught this doctrine in form in his system of Moral Philosophy. At the head of these men we find the celebrated name of Origen. This father, with an indistinctness of discernment, which characterizes not a small number of early writers in the Christian church, as well as most others at the same period, appears to have believed, that a falsehood might be lawfully told, in order to promote the cause of Christianity. This scheme, universally extended, is no other than the fundamental and detestable maxim of illuminism, that the end sanctions the means; a maxim on which St Paul has pronounced a terrible sentence of condemnation, while common sense and common honesty subjoin their united Amen.

Dr Paley, who strongly reprobates the doctrine of Origen, has, in my opinion, fallen into an error as really, though not so extensively, mischievous. He declares those falsehoods, where the person to whom you speak has no right to know the truth; or, more properly, where little or no inconveniency results from the want of confidence, in such cases, not to be lies; that is, not to be criminal falsehoods. The instances by which he illustrates the doctrine, are those of madmen, and robbers; persons, who in the cases supposed, have no right to know the truth; and to deceive whom, he remarks, in these cases, will either very little, or not at all, injure the confidence of mankind.

This is one, among various other unhappy specimens of the unhappy influence of the rule, prescribed by Dr Paley, for directing the moral conduct of men; viz. That the rectitude of our moral actions is to be measured by their expediency or utility. That utility is the foundation of virtue, has, it is believed, been sufficiently shown in a former Discourse. That it cannot be the criterion of virtue has also, if I mistake not, been proved to be equally certain. Indeed, nothing is more evident, than that the moral actions of beings who cannot possibly know what their consequences will be, cannot be safely directed by those consequences. In the present case, however, Dr Paley's own doctrine will refute his position. His declaration is, 'Falsehoods are not lies, where the person, to whom you speak, has no right to know the truth; or, more properly, where little or no inconveniency results from the want of confidence;' in such cases, as where you tell a falsehood to a madman, for his own advantage; to a robber, to conceal your property; to an assassin, to defeat, or to divert him from his purpose. 'In each of these cases,' the author says, 'the particular good consequence will overbalance the general evil consequence;' and thence he concludes the falsehood to be lawful.

Two cases are here stated, in which a wilful falsehood is pronounced to be lawful. One is that in which the person in question has no right to know the truth. The other, when little or no inconvenience will result from the falsehood.

On the first of these I observe, that the person who is to utter the falsehood, or the truth, in the case supposed, is always to determine whether the person to whom he speaks, has a right to know the truth or not. This determination also is ever to be made under the influence of such passions and biasses as may then happen to operate. It is impossible that the decision should fail, at least in most cases, of being a prejudiced, and therefore an unsound one. The person who is entangled with a madman, or assailed by a robber, or an assassin, must at the time be a very imperfect moralist; and in a very improper situation to decide justly concerning a question of this nicety and importance. What is true in this case is equally true of an infinity of others. Passion and prejudice would operate boundlessly on this subject, in the ordinary course of human affairs; and, wherever they operated, would control. On this very principle it has been decided by the Romish church, that it is lawful to lie to Huguenots; because Huguenots are such enemies to God, as to have no right to know the truth: a doctrine which has probably done more towards corrupting that church, than any, perhaps than all, the enormous errors by which it has been disgraced. The consequence, as may be easily seen in the history of this very fact, would soon be, that few or none of those with whom we had intercourse after this doctrine had become general, would in our view have a right to know the truth.

That there are persons who, in certain cases, have not a right to know the truth from us, I readily grant. But it will be difficult to show, that we have a right to utter falsehoods to them, any more than to others. We may lawfully be silent in many cases; we may lawfully conceal the truth; but we can in no case be justified in uttering a wilful falsehood.

With regard to the other rule of Dr Paley, that voluntary falsehoods cease to be lies, when very little inconvenience will result from the want of confidence which follows them; I observe, that it is even more unhappy than the other. The degree of inconvenience which in this case will result to others, will always be estimated by comparing it with the convenience which

the falsehood will promise to ourselves. The convenience which will overcome the natural repugnance of conscience to wilful falsehood must, for the time, be felt to be considerable. In a comparison with a considerable convenience of our own, an inconvenience, experienced either wholly, or at least chiefly, by others, will naturally be regarded as inconsiderable. In almost all instances, therefore, to use the words of Dr Paley, 'little or no inconvenience will result from the falsehood,' in the view of him who is to utter it, and who makes this comparison. Of course, in almost all instances, the falsehood will be uttered.

But when a man has once accustomed himself to utter falsehood so long as to render the practice familiar, all that apprehensiveness of guilt, that ready susceptibility of alarm at the appearance of criminality, which constitutes the chief safety of man in the moment of temptation, will be extinguished. The mind will be no longer agitated at the thought of sin, nor awake to the sense of danger. In this situation, the convenience to ourselves of uttering falsehood will always be great; and the inconvenience which will result to others will always be small. He who has uttered the first falsehood under the influence of ten degrees of temptation, will as readily utter the second under the influence of eight; the third, of six; the fourth, of four; the fifth, of two; and the sixth without any temptation at all. The obliquity of his judgment will now prevent him from discerning that others suffer any inconvenience from his conduct. In this manner any man living may easily become in a short time a confirmed liar.

Thus the adoption of either of these rules, and still more of both of them, will prove a complete destruction of that confidence without which society cannot exist. I need not say, that this evil would more than counterbalance all the good which a licentious imagination has ever supposed, or can suppose, to be capable of resulting from all possible falsehoods, in a degree which no numbers can estimate, and no finite mind conceive. Utility itself, therefore, absolutely forbids the adoption of these rules.

But this view of the subject is imperfect, and so far erroneous. The old distinction of crimes into what are styled by jurists, *mala in se*, and *mala prohibita*, is entirely just, as well as incalculably important. The *mala in se*, are those which are absolutely forbidden by God; because they are universally noxious to the intelligent creation, and universally dishonourable to the Creator. He who sees from the beginning to the end, and discerns all the possible consequences of all moral conduct, has thus pronounced them to be universally malignant in their influence on intelligent beings. *Mala prohibita*, are such evils as are forbidden in certain circumstances, which render them evils; or for the accomplishment of certain useful purposes, which could not otherwise be so well accomplished. These, in the ordinary state of things, would be matters of indifference; and, unless prohibited, would either not be, or not be known to be evils. Such, for example, was the eating of unclean meats; the assumption of the priest's office by those who were not descendants of Aaron; and many others, found in the Jewish law.

Lying is a pre-eminent evil of the former class. Accordingly, it is absolutely forbidden by God. The proof that it is such an evil, furnished in the Discourse on the nature and importance of truth and veracity (the first delivered on the text) is, if I mistake not, complete. Truth, and the utterance of it, were there shown to be the foundation of all society, and the basis of all virtue and happiness. If this be admitted, lying is plainly a radical evil, threatening the very existence of the divine glory, and the whole interest of the intelligent universe. In the Scriptures it is unconditionally forbidden, deeply censured, and terribly threatened. 'Whosoever loveth and maketh a lie,' God hath said, 'shall in nowise enter into the heavenly city; but shall have his part in the lake, which burneth with fire and brimstone.' Lying then is in this respect infinitely mischievous; as peculiarly provoking the anger of God, and being eminently the means of eternal woe. It is to be remembered that the Scriptures nowhere relax on this subject, furnish no indulgence to the practice, contain not a single hint that lying can ever be lawful, and are absolutely silent concerning that want of right to know the truth, and that smallness of inconvenience resulting from falsehood, which will make a falsehood wilfully uttered cease to be a lie.

The case is often put, that a lie may save one's own life, or the lives of others. The objection involved in this case is answered in many forms by the Scriptures. St Paul declares, that the 'condemnation' of those who only 'reported' that he and his companions taught the doctrine of 'doing evil, that good might come,' was 'just.' What would he have said of those who themselves taught this doctrine? But lying to save life is doing evil that good may come. Let no man think this a hard case. Christ has repeatedly told us, that 'he who will save his life,' by violating his duty, 'shall lose it;' and that 'he who shall lose his life for his sake,' that is, by doing his duty, 'shall find it' in the heavens. With this declaration in view, no man, it is presumed, will think himself required to utter a lie for the sake of saving his life. Had the apostles and the martyrs thought proper to lie, they might not only have saved their lives, but avoided also all the horrors and sufferings of malignant persecution.

It has been alleged, and supposed to afford some degree of countenance to this sin, that it was committed by Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and some other saints of ancient times. Without attempting to determine how far the faults of these good men may have been diminished by their imperfectly critical acquaintance with the proper nature of moral conduct, I shall answer the allegation by this question only: Will your sin be lessened, or fail of being punished, because the same sin was committed by a patriarch?

2. Lying produces incomprehensible mischiefs to the public concerns of nations.

All good government, as I have heretofore observed, is founded in confidence; and all oppressive government in force, or fraud. Governments constitutionally free resort invariably to fraud whenever they wish to oppress. Even despotism itself is compelled universally to the same resort, and is afraid and unwilling to rely on mere physical strength for the accomplishment of its tyrannical designs. It has recourse, therefore, to an uninterrupted series of art and management to ensure the submission of its subjects. Of this management, deceit is not merely the chief, but in a sense, the only means. All tyrants lie, and lie unceasingly. All their subordinate agents are abandoned liars. Were the tyrant himself, and the instruments of his tyranny, to lay

aside their deception, the tyranny would tumble to the ground.

If the rulers of a nation possessing liberty were invariably to utter truth, it would be impossible that the government should not be well administered. Should such rulers form evil designs against public or private happiness, an honest disclosure of their purposes would defeat them of course. This, every ruler who forms such designs knows perfectly well; and therefore he artfully misrepresents, or studiously conceals, them. But no design of any extent can be executed without a disclosure to all those who are necessarily employed in the execution. Were these men of integrity, they would disclose it, of course, to the public. Such men therefore are never voluntarily employed by rulers to accomplish evil designs. Men of falsehood are invariably sought for such purposes, and invariably employed in accomplishing them.

The person who has not read political history with an eye to this subject, is an incompetent judge of the immense extent to which falsehood is employed for the purpose of oppression, and of the innumerable forms in which it has been played off upon the unhappy race of men for their destruction. Art and trick, pretence and sophistry, false declarations and false promises, have ever been a more formidable host of enemies to public liberty, safety, and happiness, than the sword and the musket, the dungeon and the gibbet. Falsehood has ever been the mine, by which the enemies of freedom have blown up her citadel, and buried her votaries in the ruins. Falsehood ruined the freedom of Greece and Rome, and overturned all the republics of modern Europe. Without this terrible engine, the Romish hierarchy would never have raised its head to heaven, nor trodden down in the dust the suffering nations of men. Without this tremendous assistant, the French republic would never have sprung into existence, nor offered up half Europe as a holocaust to the powers of darkness. Banish falsehood from the world, and you will redeem it from three-fourths of its sins, and from almost all its sufferings.

Nations have in most cases eagerly watched against the intrusions of power, and the establishment of internal force. So far they have acted wisely. But, without the aid of falsehood, no force, beside that of a foreign conqueror, ever destroyed public liberty. Against this enemy they ought to watch with the eyes of Argus; a creeping, serpentine enemy, advancing silently and imperceptibly, equally unseen and unsuspected. If they were willing to become wise by the miserable experience of those who have gone before them, they would know, that their supreme danger lies here; that every ruler who flatters them, that every demagogue, is a liar; that he deceives them for his own advantage, not for theirs; for the overthrow of their liberty, not for its establishment; for the ruin of their interests, not for their peace, prosperity, or safety.

'If a ruler hearken to lies,' says Solomon, 'all his servants are wicked.'—'Judgment,' saith the prophet Isaiah, 'is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off.' What was the source of these calamities? Let the prophet himself answer: 'Truth is fallen in the streets, and therefore equity cannot enter.' It is the glorious character of Him whose dominion 'is as the light of the morning, of a morning without clouds, and as the clear shining of the sun after rain upon the tender herb of the field,' that 'He shall judge the people with truth.' It is a divine characteristic of the Infinite Ruler, that 'his paths are mercy and truth.' Such must be the character of earthly rulers, if they would be 'ministers of God, for good,' or if their objects are to be either safe or happy.

But we need not appeal to a numerous train of scriptural texts for instruction on this subject. In Psal. cxliv. there is the strongest, and perhaps the most comprehensive exhibition of its importance, which can be found even in the scriptural pages, and which ever will be found in the language of men. In this portion of the sacred canon, David, contemplating the wars in which he had been, and more probably those in which he was at that very time engaged; remembering the usual care and good providence of God, exercised towards him in his contests with his enemies; and feeling, that this was amply sufficient for his safety and success in every case of hostility waged by open force; breaks out in a joyful song of exultation for these blessings, as already partly received, and as partly secured to him for the time to come: 'Blessed be Jehovah, my strength, who teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight; my goodness, and my fortress, my high tower, and my deliverer, my shield, and he in whom I trust; who subdueth my people under me.'

After some short reflections on the humble and undeserving character of man, naturally excited by the contemplation of these mercies, he turns his eye to the state of his own kingdom, probably convulsed at that time by the rebellion of Absalom; a rebellion generated and supported by falsehood; he exclaims, 'Bow thy heavens, O Jehovah, and come down; touch the mountains, and they shall smoke: cast forth lightning, and scatter them; shoot out thine arrows, and destroy them: send thine hand from above; rid me, and deliver me out of great waters, from the hand of strange children; whose mouth speaketh vanity (that is, lies), and their right hand is a right hand of falsehood.' To this great man the ordinary blessings of God's providence to him and his people, appeared a defence amply sufficient, and sources of victory sure and abundant, against the violence of war, and enemies in arms. But, when he came to consider the danger which threatened his government and nation from the insidious attacks of deception, he felt that a new and singular interference of God was necessary for the deliverance of himself and his people. Then it became necessary that God should 'bow the heavens and come down;' that he should set the mountains on fire; that he should 'cast forth his lightning, to scatter, and shoot out his arrows, to destroy,' these children of falsehood. Such, in his view, was the danger to the people of Israel from the deceptions practised upon them, that nothing less than these wonderful exertions of divine power would insure their safety.

At the same time, he informs us in the strongest terms, that a deliverance from this terrible kind of warfare, from the spirit which generated it, and from the persons by whom it was carried on, was indispensable to the eternal prosperity of the nation, both moral and secular. 'Rid me', he exclaims again, 'and deliver me from the hand of strange children, whose mouth speaketh lies, and whose right hand is a right hand of falsehood: that our sons may be as plants, grown up in their youth; that our daughters may be as corner-stones, polished after the similitude of a palace; that our gar-

ners may be full, affording all manner of store; that our sheep may bring forth thousands and ten thousands in our streets; that our oxen may be strong to labour; that there be no breaking in, nor going out; that there be no complaining in our streets. Happy,' he subjoins, 'is that people, that is in such a case: yea happy is that people, whose God is Jehovah.'

These are blessings which cannot be found in a nation among whom falsehood prevails. There men will not labour to produce them; there God will not give them. They are blessings which truth leads in her train; blessings which God showers upon a people who love truth. But at the approach of falsehood they shrink, languish, and expire.

All this, it is to be remembered, was written by David, one of the greatest and wisest men whom the world has ever seen. He knew by experience every danger from war; from open enemies, embodied in powerful armies. By the same experience he was perfectly acquainted also with the evils which spring from falsehood. The evils of the latter class he perceived, by actual trial, to be immensely greater than those of the former. In these observations he has barely told us what passed under his own eye, and constituted his own case. Nay, more, he has told all this directly to his Maker; and in a psalm addressed directly to him, has poured forth the praises which he esteemed due, and prayed for the assistance which he deemed necessary. In these circumstances the sincerity of the suppliant cannot be questioned.

But it is farther to be remembered, that this psalm was dictated by the inspiration of God. It is all, therefore, exactly just and true. Nothing is diminished; nothing is exaggerated. Falsehood is just so much more dangerous, in the ordinary circumstances of mankind, than war; its evils are just so much more terrible; and peculiar interpositions of God, to deliver mankind from their efficacy, are in this very manner indispensable. Truth also is accompanied and followed by all these blessings; blessings which, fairly understood, involve the whole prosperity of a people. At the same time, falsehood either prevents or destroys them all; or, in other words, ruins the nation in which it prevails.

3. Falsehood is equally pernicious to the private interests of mankind.

A great proportion of all their miscarriages in the pursuit of happiness, are suffered by mankind from intentional misinformation only. A man is falsely informed of the state of the markets, and conveys his property to a ruinous sale. He wishes to employ an agent, to manage his business, to instruct his children, or to plead his cause. He wishes to employ a physician to attend his family in cases of sickness, or a clergyman to preach for himself and his neighbours. The character of each of these men is represented to him falsely. Of consequence, his business is mismanaged, his children are half-taught, his cause is lost by ignorance or treachery, his family are hastened to the grave by an empiric, and himself and his neighbours, by false exhibitions of the gospel, are led to perdition. The beggar cheats him by a false tale of woe. The false friend betrays his interests, and his secrets. A false witness swears away his rights; and a false judge perverts the law to his ruin. A flatterer deceives himself into fatal apprehensions concerning his own excellences. A censurer breaks his spirits by unfounded and malignant representations of his defects; and a sophist cheats him out of truth, virtue, and heaven. The frauds, practised on our fellow men, which were either recited or alluded to in a preceding Discourse on that subject are all perpetrated by the instrumentality of falsehood. This harpy seizes on every human enjoyment, and on every human interest; destroys whatever is in her power; and pollutes and distresses wherever she is unable to destroy.

4. Equally pernicious is falsehood to the personal interests of the liar himself.

The importance of this truth will appear in the following particulars:—

(1.) Lying is always followed by reproaches of conscience.

Mankind, with a single voice, have pronounced lying to be a gross and enormous sin. This is the dictate of every other religion, and every other law, as well as of the law and the religion of God. To this universal testimony, the conscience of every individual unites its own solemn accord: and, whenever a lie is uttered, proclaims the guilt of the criminal with an affecting and awful voice. At the sound of this remonstrance, the soul trembles and shrinks, and before the bar of this severe judge is compelled to plead guilty, without a hope of escape.

Nor is it compelled only to acknowledge its guilt, but also clearly to see and deeply to feel its peculiar debasement. A liar is obliged irresistibly to feel that he is sunk below the level of men. His mind is a house of pollution; a haunt of every despicable purpose, and every degrading thought. Thus his character, as seen by himself, lies upon him like 'a heavy burden, too grievous to be borne;' a load which he can neither carry, nor lay down.

In the mean time, conscience, faithful to her office, holds up to his view, in terrible forebodings, the anger of God against lying lips, and presents to him alarming anticipations of the dreadful account which he will be obliged to give at the future judgment. Such, I mean, is the fact, unless, through the want of a religious education, he is destitute of moral principle; or, by a repetition of crimes, his 'conscience has become seared as with a hot iron.'

(2.) The liar is continually tormented by the fear of detection.

A liar is never safe. It is so much the interest of mankind to expose this crime, and it is so often actually exposed that the danger is always great, and always felt by the criminal. Should a detection take place, the consequences he knows must be distressing. The shame, the hatred, the contempt, and the punishment, which in this case will arrest him, he knows not how to meet with a steady eye. His terrified mind is therefore in a perpetual alarm, and sees these evils always at the door. The 'path' of life, therefore, is to him, 'a hedge of thorns.'

(3.) Should he be detected, as he invariably will be, he is compelled to suffer many excruciating evils.

Particularly, he is necessitated to invent many falsehoods, to gain the object, or prevent the evils of one.

Truth is always plain and consistent: the high-way, in which the 'way-faring man, though a fool, need not err.' Falsehood is a by-path; crooked, perplexed, and blind; in which every traveller is soon bewildered and

lost. No liar can possibly foresee either the nature or the number of the difficulties into which he will plunge himself by a single lie. These difficulties he will often feel himself compelled to obviate by such means as are in his power. Usually no other means will offer themselves to him for this purpose beside a succession of lies. Thus, one falsehood, in a sense necessarily, draws after it another, and another. Nor is any mind which begins this course sufficiently comprehensive to know where it will end.

Those whom he has deceived also will often resent and often severely revenge the abuse. In one manner and another he is not unfrequently punished with severity. Always he is disgraced, reproached, stung with contempt, and insulted with derision. Decent men shun his company. Parents warn their children to beware of him. The finger of scorn points him out, the hiss of infamy follows him in the street. Even villains of most other sorts feel themselves superior to him.

His reputation, of course, is lost. Those whom he has deceived, will take sure and exemplary vengeance in publishing the deception to the world. His rivals will trumpet it to rise above him; his kindred villains to turn the eyes of mankind from their own guilt. Should they even be silent, he will disclose it himself. The safety and success which he has found in uttering one falsehood, will embolden him to utter another, and another, until he is detected. When this is done, he sinks speedily into absolute contempt. The proverb, 'once a liar and always a liar,' will meet him as a label, from every mouth in the street.

In this character all persons will feel themselves to be his superiors, and will take effectual care to announce this superiority. The tongues of multitudes will proclaim it in the most stinging terms. The eyes of more will look down upon him with haughtiness and scorn; while the conduct of all will attest his degradation with a visible mixture of pity and abhorrence. Of course, he will be obliged to feel, as well as to appear, only in the character of a mean, debased wretch, inferior to his kind; and to act an under, servile part in every scene of life. He can maintain no cause, assert no fact, make no promise, face no man, and meet no eye; but is forced to falter and fall even before those with whom he would once have disdained to acknowledge an acquaintance.

As he loses all confidence, he loses with it every opportunity of acquiring useful and reputable employment. None will trust him with their property; none will commit to him their business; because all will expect to be rewarded by him with baseness and treachery.

But all men are dependent on their fellow men. Peculiarly is this true of those who are young. Every youth is necessitated to lean, in no small degree, on those who are already in possession of the great business of mankind. Veracity to them is the door to confidence: confidence to useful employment; and useful employment to property, reputation, influence, and a prosperous and useful life. This door the liar has voluntarily shut against himself; and can be admitted neither to the good offices, nor even to the company, of those on whom he chiefly depends, under God, for every worldly blessing.

Thus he involves himself in innumerable distresses, and exposes himself to innumerable temptations. He is poor almost of course. Honest poverty is always and most deservedly respectable. But poverty which grows out of vice ensures contempt and abhorrence, and is encircled by numberless temptations which honest poverty never knew. I have already observed, that the liar is almost irresistibly prompted to a succession of falsehoods, in order to escape the dangers of the first. To these he is strongly solicited to add perjury; to corrupt others, that he may countenance himself; to cheat, that he may acquire what he cannot gain by lying; and to steal, that he may possess himself of what he cannot gain by cheating.

All these scandalous vices are soon fixed into habits; and these habits every day acquire new accessions of strength. His declension, therefore, is rapid and dreadful. From the company, conversation, and example of good men, indulged more or less to most sinners, he is excluded of course. Virtue may pity, but cannot consort with him. His touch is contagious; and his very breath carries infection with it wherever he goes. By this exclusion, he loses a blessing of more value than all the good which falsehood ever sought or found.

In this manner he goes on, hardening his heart, and polluting his life. His conscience becomes seared; and sooner than he could have originally mistrusted, he is given over to a reprobate mind. In the end, he dies a bitter death; and closes a shameful wretched life with a miserable eternity.

The preventives of this deplorable vice may be advantageously considered as they respect children under the education of their parents, and persons arrived at years of discretion.

The foundation of all moral good is best laid in childhood. This season therefore is to be regarded as of supreme importance, and husbanded for this great purpose with supreme solicitude. I shall address my observations on this subject directly to parents. To accomplish this invaluable end, so indispensable to the present and eternal welfare of your children.

1. Teach them always to speak truth, by precept and example.

Inculcate on them, from the moment in which they are able to speak at all, and inculcate daily, the immense importance of speaking truth. Truth is so much more easily and so much more naturally spoken than falsehood, that children usually speak truth of course. Facts always present it, the mind always perceives it, the tongue always utters it, without effort or contrivance. Falsehood, on the contrary, must ever be invented, and continually laboured into existence. Before this labour has commenced, truth must be effectually impressed on the conscience, and instamped on the heart.

Teach them, that veracity is inestimably useful; that it will make them loved, trusted, honoured, and befriended; and will save them from shame, neglect, reproach, and poverty, from extreme humiliation, and the terrors of a condemning conscience. Teach them, that lying will prevent all these blessings, and entail upon them all these sufferings; that it will wither their reputation, their comforts, and their hopes; that, deformed with this sin, they will be pitied by every good, and insulted by every bad man; that their enemies will tread them under foot, while their friends cannot protect them; and that their character, when once habitually blackened by falsehood, can never be made white again.

Teach them, that every equivocal, every prevaricating, every evasive expression, everything which partakes of duplicity, is radically a lie; and that, if they indulge themselves in these humbler efforts of falsehood, they will soon sink to the lowest degradations of villany.

Teach them, that the eternal God, the God of truth, to whom 'lying lips are an abomination,' hears, marks, and records everything which they speak; and that this record will be the foundation of their final sentence at the great day.

Discourage in them, at all times, a propensity to idle talk, to story-telling, particularly to the telling of marvellous stories, the recital of private history, the news of the neighbourhood, and the giving of characters. Lead them carefully, whenever they converse concerning others, to such conversation, and such only as is prudent and kind: and accustom them to feel that, when they cannot speak of others in this manner, it is usually both their duty and their interest not to speak at all. Teach them faithfully to keep, and never to betray, the secrets intrusted to them: and effectually repress in them a disposition to pry into the personal and domestic concerns of others.

What you thus communicate by your instruction, endeavour to complete by your example. Show on all occasions the most solemn and the most intense regard to truth. Speak truth to them exactly, on every occasion, whether in earnest or in jest. Promise them nothing which you do not faithfully resolve to fulfill. Fulfill faithfully all that you promise, however difficult or inconvenient may be the fulfilment. If at any time and by any circumstances they are led to suppose that you have failed to perform your promise exactly, or if the performance has at any time subsequent to the promise become unlawful or impossible, carefully remove every suspicion which they may entertain concerning your veracity, by a diligent explanation of every doubtful or unknown circumstance; and show them that your conduct has been strictly conformed to the rigid dictates of truth.

At the same time oblige them to fulfill all their own promises, however self-denying the fulfilment may be to them, and however expensive or troublesome to you. This discipline will, ere long, teach them not to promise rashly, and to regard every promise which they make, as secret and unalterable.

Universally, make the establishment of an unwarping veracity in their minds, a prime and ever-present object of your parental labours; and, until this object is accomplished, devote to it the energy of your minds, and the efforts of your lives.

2. Prevent them from keeping company with deceitful persons.

Forbid them absolutely to consort with those who are known to be of this character. Restrain them from every place frequented by such persons; from taverns, from public corners, from horse-races, and universally from every lounging, idle resort. The plague is usually taken by infection. He therefore who is on healthy ground will be safe. Suffer your children then, on no occasion, to become the companions of loose, immoral persons. Of them your children will learn to lie, of course; and that, however faithful may be your instructions, and however unspotted your example. Remember yourselves, and teach them, that the 'companion of fools shall be destroyed.'

3. If your children are at any time guilty of deceit, endeavour by the best means in your power, to prevent every future transgression of the same nature.

Rehearse to them solemnly and kindly all the interesting considerations which I have mentioned, and every other useful thought which your own minds may suggest. Present to them, particularly, clear, affecting views of their guilt and their danger; and forcibly exhibit to them the ruinous efficacy of falsehood on every interest of time and eternity. If the transgression demands a punishment, never administer it in a passion. Delay the administration, not only until you are free from every resentful emotion, but until you are secure of preserving your equanimity in spite of any incidental provocation, and are absolutely collected and self-controlled. In this state of mind, accompany the discipline with solemn instructions, calm reproofs, and affectionate testimonies of the mingled pain and pity with which you regard the guilty transaction.

If one punishment, if, for example, correction fails of producing a reformation, vary your inflictions successively through the several modes of discipline, until you have gained the object. Shame or confinement will often accomplish what correction cannot. If these prove ineffectual, the denial of favourite indulgences, and the deprivation of customary privileges, will often produce reformation. A string may almost always be struck, which will accord with the state of the heart; an effort made which will ensure a victory.

In the mean time, if your child is charged with some other fault, and frankly tells the truth concerning it, remit either the whole or a part of the punishment due to his crime, discretionally, as a proof of the high value which you place upon his veracity.

4. Commend them to the constant care and blessing of God.

'Except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh in vain.' As God alone can preserve them, so if you ask him in earnest, you have every reason to hope that he will.

I shall now address the subject to all such persons as have arrived at that period of life, in which they are capable of taking some useful care of themselves. To such persons the following directions may be the means of guarding against this fatal evil:

1. Watch faithfully over your speech.

Consider before you speak, whether what you are about to say is true, right, kind, and useful: or false, unkind, and mischievous; and determine to utter nothing, until you are satisfied. Steadily resist a propensity to talk much, remembering that 'in a multitude of words there wanteth not sin:' and never speak at all, unless some good purpose be answered; unless some useful information be given; some innocent pleasure communicated; or some other lawful end accomplished.

Resist a disposition to give characters; to recite family news; to expose private failings; and to ridicule personal imperfections. Ask yourselves whether you would be willing that your own failings should be published, repeated, ridiculed. Remember that others thus attacked will feel as you would feel: and that, as you would resent such a base intrusion upon your peace, so they, when in the same manner wounded by you, will become your enemies; and will sooner or later find an opportunity of making you feel their resentment. Remember farther, that even those who hear and applaud

what you say, may yet and often do, despise you for saying it; that they will ever afterwards regard you with suspicion, shun you as dangerous to their safety, and characterize you as nuisances to society. In this manner, before you are aware, your characters will become odious, and your reputation be lost.

When you repeat anything, strive to repeat it exactly. Neither enhance nor lessen. Colour nothing beyond the strict truth. Recite that, and that only, which you believe; and express no more confidence in what you recite than you really feel. Recite, also, so much of the circumstances, drift, and tendency of the transaction which is your subject, as fairly to explain its true nature, and the real character and conduct of those who were concerned.

Refrain from speaking when you are in a passion. All passionate words are dangerous and sinful. The wisest and most guarded persons, when provoked, utter at times things which they regret ever afterward. Moses, the meekest of all men, when provoked at Meribah, 'spake unadvisedly with his lips:' and was forbidden to enter the land of promise.

Guard especially against making promises in a passion. Such promises will often involve you in serious difficulties; and prove snares and traps to your feet. You will feel a strong reluctance to fulfill, and powerful temptations to break them: temptations, which frequently overcome vigorous resolutions, subvert established reputation, and lead their miserable victims fatally astray.

Many persons, and youths more than almost any others, are prone to make rash and inconsiderate promises. Few propensities are more unhappy than this, or conduct men to more bitter consequences. Universally resolve to make no promise when it can fairly be avoided. When it cannot, guard it with such conditions as shall render it certainly safe. Consider, particularly, whether you possess the means of a faithful performance; if not, make no promises. In this manner you will escape the most dangerous temptations to falsehood, and the most alarming exposures to shame and ruin.

2. Fix in your minds the most solemn resolutions to speak truth only.

Call to mind daily the immense advantages of truth, and the immense evils of falsehood. These advantages resolve to acquire; these evils determine not to suffer. Both, to a considerable extent, have been set before you. Ponder them deeply and daily, as their importance deserves. Determine, that no person shall ever have it in his power to charge you with falsehood. Determine never to say anything which shall enable your enemies to triumph, or force your friends to blush; to say nothing, which you would be ashamed to have recorded of you; nothing, which shall forbid you to look an honest man in the face; nothing which, in the presence of such a man, shall force your eyes, when they meet his, to labour, linger, and fall.

Resolve firmly never to flatter any man. Speak that which is good of others when you can; and when you cannot, speak, at least in ordinary cases, nothing. Remember, that 'a flattering mouth worketh ruin,' for him who flatters, as well as for him who is flattered. Be able, therefore, with Elihu, nobly to say, 'Let me not, I pray you, accept any man's person; neither let me give flattering titles unto man. For I know not to give flattering titles; in so doing my Maker would soon take me away.' To strengthen your resolutions, remember always, that when you are once embarked in deceit, you are wholly afloat; will be driven you know not whither, without either compass or pilot; and will be environed by rocks and shoals, threatening you unceasingly with irremediable destruction.

3. Frequent the company of wise and good men only.

In this society you will find temptations, not spread before you, but taken away; examples, which will not corrupt, but strengthen you in virtue. Here you will always find honour, peace, and profit; instead of shame, anxiety, and ruin. If you will seek this society, and this only, you will be welcomed to their esteem and good offices; and will gain from their precepts and example, wisdom, truth, noble sentiments, and the most excellent conduct. These they will enforce by ten thousand motives, unthought of by licentious men, instinctively rising up to view, presented in strong lights, and exhibited with powerful persuasion. The excellency, usefulness, and glory of virtue they will unfold to you in many ways, of which loose men never entertain a thought, and of which you yourselves have probably not formed a conception. The divine object also they will commend to your adoption by the charms of an amiable, honourable, and delightful example. Their sentiments you will imbibe, even before you are aware. Their exalted spirit you will catch. Their dignified life you will make your own.

Here you will soon learn to wonder, to be astonished, that yourselves, that any being who possesses a rational mind, could ever frequent, or ever think for a moment of frequenting the haunts of licentious men; the scenes of profaneness, gaming, fraud, and falsehood; where darkness spreads her funeral pall; where oaths and obscenity, lies and blasphemies, furnish a dreadful prelude to a more enormous perpetration of the same foul sins in the world of perdition. To exchange the society which I have recommended for these haunts, would, in your own view, be to quit the splendours of a palace for the loathsome horrors of a jail; to wander from the sweets of Eden into the gloom, the chains, and the madness of a dungeon.

4. To strengthen yourselves in all the conduct which I have recommended, labour to fix in your minds a strong, solemn, and habitual sense of the amazing importance of speaking truth always.

Truth is the foundation of all virtue, and of all permanent happiness. Establish this great doctrine in your minds so, that it shall never be forgotten; so, that it shall be a part of your whole train of thinking, and inwoven, as an habitual commanding principle, in all your conduct. Bring it home to your hearts; and spurn at the thought of regarding it even with a momentary indifference.

Remember, that confidence is the foundation of all good; that unless you can confide in others, you cannot live a single day with comfort, or even with safety; that you can confide no farther than others speak truth, and fulfill promises: and that universal distrust would to yourselves and others be universal misery; would unhinge every expectation, and every hope; would annihilate all the business of intelligent beings; would set them at variance with each other, and with God; and would make the universe a solitude and a desert.

Remember, that every human concern is decided by

testimony; that he who weakens it is an enemy to mankind, and makes havoc of human happiness. Realize, that if by influence or example you destroy or diminish the confidence of men, if you lessen the sense of the obligations to veracity, you will become pests of the universe, and foes of every intelligent being which it contains.

Call to mind, that by falsehood you will debase yourselves beyond measure; cut off all your hopes of becoming virtuous; arm your consciences against your peace; and make yourselves objects of contempt, indignation, and abhorrence.

Recollect daily, that the first step which you take in falsehood is the commencement of this boundless evil; that the way to become an abandoned liar is to conceal truth, to equivocate, to evade, to utter sportive falsehood, to rehearse marvellous stories, to recite the tales of private history, and to colour what you recite with hues and stains mixed by yourselves. In all these things you may feel at your ease; may profess yourselves to be, and may often actually be, in sport. So is the madman, who 'scatters fire-brands, arrows, and death.'

Remember, last of all, that the time in which your lot is cast, is pre-eminently a time in which the sense of truth is weakened, and the consciousness of moral obligation to a wonderful degree forgotten. In this day, falsehood has come forth to the public eye with her brazen front unveiled, her cheek without even a tinge, and her snaky tongue newly dipt in poison. Her professed enemies are changed into friends; her friends into worshippers. The whole world wonders after her. Afraid no longer of the contempt of society, or the brand of public justice, she enters familiarly into the study of the philosopher, the hall of deliberation, and the palace of power; and dictates instructions, laws, edicts, and manifestoes to nations. In her train, parties, princes, and nations are proud to be enrolled. How immense, then, how unceasing, how universal, is the danger to you. Awake to that danger, and feel that you are struggling for your all.

Above all things, commit yourselves to God in prayer. Ask him, and he will make you watchful, wise, and steadfast in your duty. Ask him, and he will teach you to love, and enable you to speak, truth only, until you arrive at that glorious world, where truth only is spoken by its happy inhabitants, and where all its blessings are realized with increasing delight, throughout ages which know no end.

SERMON CXXVIII.

THE LAW OF GOD.—THE DECALOGUE.—THE NINTH COMMANDMENT.—SLANDER.

Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.—EXOD. xx. 16.

IN the last Discourse but one, I proposed to consider falsehood under the two heads of *lying*, and *slander*.

The former of these I have discussed at length. I shall now proceed to the consideration of the latter; and shall arrange my observations under the following heads:

I. *The nature of slander.*

II. *The modes in which it is practised.*

III. *The evils of it.*

IV. *Dissuasives from it.*

I. Slander may be thus defined: *It is that conduct which injuriously lessens or destroys another's reputation.*

In most cases, words are made the vehicle of slander. It may, however, be accomplished without words. When we are reasonably expected to give a fair character of another, we may easily and deeply slander him by our silence. We may also accomplish the same purpose by our actions; as when we withhold our countenance from a man who, in ordinary circumstances, might fairly expect to enjoy it; withdraw from him business, with which he has heretofore been intrusted; or turn him out of our service, without alleging any reasons for our conduct. In these, and the like cases, we give such proofs of suspecting him ourselves, as to entail upon him, in greater or less degrees, the suspicion of others.

Slander is perpetrated sometimes with design, and sometimes through inattention. In the former case it is perpetrated with an intention to destroy happiness; in the latter, from indifference to it. In the former case, it springs from malice; in the latter, from that sordid insensibility to the interests of others which is little less censurable. It will be unnecessary to distinguish them any farther.

II. *Slander is most frequently practised in the following modes*:—

1. In direct and false aspersions.

The slanderer commences this malignant employment by inventing and fabricating tales of falsehood concerning the person who is either the object of his hatred, or the subject of his diversion. To the fabricator of these tales all the subsequent mischief which arises from them is supremely chargeable.

The second step is the rehearsing of such stories, after they have been told to us by others. In this step we do not participate in all the guilt which is attendant on the first. But both the guilt and the mischief are often greater. The spirit with which we rehearse tales of slander may be more malignant than that which gave birth to them; and the consequences may be incomparably worse. The inventor may have been a thoughtless, ignorant, giddy-minded man, without con-

sideration, and without character. We, on the contrary, may possess reputation, forecast, and a correct knowledge of human concerns, may comprehend the whole efficacy of the tale, may perceive its falsehood, and may enjoy a base pleasure in giving it the most effectual operation. Thus, although not chargeable with the guilt of fabricating falsehood, we may become much more criminal than the fabricator.

Whatever is our situation, we lend in this case our own weight to the story; and in this manner we sometimes do all, and not unfrequently most of the mischief of which the story becomes the instrument. The inventors of such tales are usually persons of no reputation; and, if reputable at first, they soon destroy their character by this very employment. Were they then disregarded, and their tales not repeated, both would sink at once into absolute contempt. But when persons of a fair character take up such stories, and soberly rehearse them, the falsehood acquires new strength, and spreads with a new and most unhappy influence. This base coin they have not indeed made; but they have passed it, and given it a currency, which it could never have derived from the maker. Let no person then think himself at all justified in reciting a tale of slander by the very common, indeed, but very wretched excuse, dictated, and adopted only by the coarsest and most vulgar morality; that they heard it from others. Guilt fastens on every traveller in this base and by-path, and at every step in his progress.

Some persons perpetrate this iniquity with designs directly malicious. Some from a busy, meddling disposition, always unsatisfied, unless when interfering in the concerns of others; and some from a wish to be thought extensively acquainted with private history. All these are characterized in the Scriptures by the significant names of 'busy bodies,' and 'tale-bearers;' and are considered there, and everywhere else, as the disturbers and pests of society. They are characterized in the most disadvantageous manner. Lev. xix. 16, 'Thou shalt not go up and down as a tale-bearer among thy people; neither shalt thou stand against the blood of thy neighbour. I am the Lord.' And again, in Prov. xxvi. 20. &c., 'The words of a tale-bearer are as wounds.—Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out.' They are classed with the worst of mankind, 1 Pet. iv. 15, 'Let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evil-doer, or as a busy-body in other men's matters.'

The character given of them in the Scriptures is the character given of them by common sense. In every age and country they have been objects of contempt and abhorrence. Prudent men have everywhere shunned them; and pointed them out to their friends and children as enemies, as gins and snares, which they were ever cautiously to spy out, and eagerly to avoid. Every company into which they enter after their character is known, feels a sudden pressure upon its thoughts, and an alarm for its peace and safety. The aspect is changed at once. The features, relaxed by ease, friendship, and confidence, are suddenly contracted and fixed. The eye quits its smile of serenity and pleasure; and settles itself in the attitude of vigilance, apprehensive and ill-boding; and the conversation, which sprang from the heart, reciprocated friendship, and awakened delight, is chilled down in a moment into general, unmeaning observations, adopted only because they have no meaning, and because no tale of mischief can be told about them. When such a man resides in a neighbourhood, a thick cloud hangs over all its enjoyments. When he removes, it is again co vered with cheerfulness and sunshine.

With a criminality often greater, we slander others by giving accounts concerning them which are true. No excuse is more frequently or more confidently pleaded, as an ample justification of malignant stories concerning others, than this: that they are true. The author of ill-natured tales or remarks is not indeed chargeable, in this case, with the crime of falsehood. Still, he may be really and eminently criminal. If the good name of our neighbour be injured, the great evil in question is done. If it be injured by us, the evil is done by us. If we have injured it with pleasure, our malevolence is real, and therefore our guilt is real. That guilt also may be as great or greater in the eye of God, than any which even we ourselves have attributed to the inventor of a slanderous story.

Be it so, that our neighbour has slipped; and that he has sinned against God. Still, 'if his sin remain with him,' he may repent; and his repentance may render his character better, and his hopes brighter, than ours. Still, his talents may be employed for the benefit of himself, his family, and mankind. All this benefit, and all the comfort which he and his might enjoy, we may thus prevent, and blast for ever.

My neighbour is a merchant. In a course of honest industry, he is reduced by misfortunes to failing circumstances. The fact is known to me. I publish it. His creditors, anxious to secure as far as may be their own property, seize upon his effects, and perhaps confine him in a prison. Thus he may be completely ruined by a story which I have told; and a story which is true. Thus also his family are reduced to want; and see their hopes of support, education, usefulness, and comfort finally destroyed.

Had I, with the prudence and benevolence which Christianity inspires, confined this secret within my own breast, the industry of my neighbour, his skill in business, his integrity, and the credit which he had merited and gained by these qualifications, would have enabled him to continue in trade without interruption; and probably to acquire all the necessary means of comfort and prosperity for himself and his family. These blessings I have prevented; and am chargeable with the prevention. I have not, indeed, told a falsehood; but I have done mischief which is incalculable, and which a falsehood in the case supposed could not have done.

Why have I done this mischief? There was no necessity that my neighbour should be injured, that his failings should be published, that his character should be lowered, that his misfortune should be announced to the world, that the peace of his family should be wounded, their enjoyments cut off, and their hopes blasted in the bud. In all this there is no profit to me nor to mankind; nor, unless I am possessed of the spirit of a fiend, can there be any pleasure.

It is evident, therefore, beyond debate, that he who tells a mischievous story, and that he who by declaring his belief of a mischievous story told by others, lends it the credit and sanction of his own authority, are essentially and alike guilty of slander. In the conduct specified both also are without excuse.

So long as persons of reputation will either repeat the false stories of others, invented for the purpose of lowering or destroying character, or will publish malignant truths concerning others, the peace, the good name, and the comfort of mankind, will be invaded and destroyed.

2. Slander may be practised without inventing or repeating malignant stories, whether true or false.

(1.) This may be done by listening to the slanderous stories of others.

He who listens to a story of this nature without expressing his disapprobation, declares by his conduct, the strongest of all attestations, that he considers it as meriting his attention, and in some degree his belief. This belief, and even this attention, from persons of respectability, will give the slander a weight and currency which it could never have derived from the inventor. Those who see us listen in this manner will conclude of course, that the slander in our view has foundation and importance. Hence they will be induced both to believe, and to report what, otherwise, they would have disregarded.

The inventor of slander derives all his consequence and all his encouragement from the countenance lent to him by others. But to believe is to countenance him; to listen is to countenance him. By listening to him, therefore, we give life and activity to his mischievous fabrications; and lend them most of their power to do hurt. Besides, by doing this, we keep the spirit of slander alive in his breast; and make him feel secure of the consequence which he hopes to gain by this course of conduct; the consequence which is his principal motive to sin. In this manner, we contribute to the existence of future slanders, and, in a manner possessed of no contemptible efficacy, aid the diffusion of calumny through the world. This nuisance to society, this pest to mankind, we sustain, cherish, and send abroad, to destroy the peace of those around us. How plainly is he who acts in this manner a nuisance to his fellow men?

Both reason and revelation, both common sense and common good nature, demand, on the contrary, that whenever our neighbour's character is attacked, we should appear openly in his defence. In very few ways can we so often or so greatly befriend others, as by supporting their good name; and in very few cases will our kindness be so deeply or so gratefully felt. The person thus attacked is absent of course, and cannot therefore defend himself. If we do not defend him, he is left naked to the attack, and to all its malignant consequences. Our silence cannot but injure him seriously. It may be the means of his ruin. Who would not wish, in such a case, to have his own character defended? Who then is not bound to defend that of another? Were this great law of righteousness duly felt, were its injunctions, as they respect the case under consideration, faithfully obeyed, what a horde of busybodies, tale-bearers, and calumniators would be broken down! What an endless multitude of base and snaky efforts against the peace of society, and the comfort of families, would in this way be crushed at once!

(2.) If our silence, when tales of slander are reported, is thus injurious to others; the declaration, that we believe them, is still more criminal.

A multitude of persons not only suffer slander to pass without censure or opposition, but readily believe it; and without hesitation declare this belief. If they do not repeat it to others, their consciences appear to be satisfied. Even when they give it no credit, they suffer others quietly to repeat it, not only without animadversion, but even without hinting their disbelief. Through a company of such persons a calumny rolls on without an impediment, without a single generous effort to check its progress. On the contrary, it fares like a spy in a venal, mercenary army, whom none will detect, and whose escape all will favour, because all are hollow-hearted and false. If it is attended with evidence moderately plausible, they declare their belief of it, and thus help it onward to the belief of others. If it be supported by no evidence whatever, they will not declare their belief of it; thus suffering it to proceed without interruption, and to gain credit wherever it may.

There is, in the human breast, a strong propensity to censoriousness. We need no instruction to teach us, that our fellow men are by every censure which adheres to them, lowered beneath their customary level. Nor do we discern with less readiness, that whatever sinks those around us, raises comparatively ourselves. With this self-exaltation, despicable as are the means by which it is achieved, we, whenever we become the authors of it, are despicable enough to be gratified: and the gratification, base and contemptible as it is, is still eagerly sought and highly enjoyed, by many such minds as are found in the present world.

When these persons hear the characters of others aspersed, they hear it with pleasure; and with pleasure believe the aspersion. Their faith here is not given to evidence; it does not wait for evidence. If evidence be furnished, indeed, it is so much the better, because it is expected to command the faith of others also. But no evidence is necessary to ensure the faith of these persons. The tale pleases, because it involves the degradation of a neighbour, a rival, a superior, or some other object of jealousy. It is believed, because they wish it to be true. Still, many such persons are too cautious to rehearse it again; and with their avoidance of this additional injury, their cold, heartless consciences are satisfied.

III. *The evils of slander are either personal or public.*

1. The personal evils of slander, by which I intend the sufferings experienced from it by individuals, are the pain felt, and the injuries derived, from the loss of a good name.

A good name is the estimation in which we are holden by others, on account of our good qualities, and our good conduct. Such a name is declared by God himself to be 'better than precious ointment.' Eccles. vii. 1. And in Prov. xxii. 1, 'A good name is' said to be 'better than great riches; and loving-favour,' that is, the favourable emotions, exercised towards such as possess a good name, better 'than silver and gold.' Silver and gold, particularly when possessed in such accumulations as constitute 'great riches,' are proverbially the supreme objects which this world furnishes of human desires. As such, they are customarily used, as objects of comparison, to illustrate the value of things eminently precious. Thus, in the Scriptures themselves we are informed, that 'the law of the Lord is more to be chosen than the most fine gold.' Thus also Job says of the wisdom which is the obedience of that law, that 'it cannot be gotten for gold; neither shall silver be weighed for the price thereof.'

'Precious ointment,' as intended by a Jewish writer, probably denotes that which was used to anoint the high priest, and the kings of the Jewish nation. The materials of which it was composed are well known to have been pre-eminently costly and valuable, far more so than the most fine gold. In this point of view, precious ointment was, in the mouth of an Israelite, perhaps the strongest conceivable illustration of the value of a good name. At the same time, this unguent, being composed of the richest and most elegant aromatic substances, diffused extensively the most delightful fragrance, wherever it was employed. With reference to this fine character, the psalmist adopts it as a charming illustration of one of the most charming objects ever seen in the present world. 'Behold,' he exclaims, 'how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment upon the head of Aaron, that went down to the skirts of his garment; as the dew of Hermon, that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore.' A more exquisite illustration of the delightful impression made by a fair character could not be given.

Such a character is of inestimable value to the possessor, if considered merely as a source of enjoyment. The esteem of our fellow men is probably regarded by the great body of mankind, as standing in the list of enjoyments next to self-approbation. Common sense, as well as the Scriptures, pronounces 'loving favour to be better than silver and gold.' The opinion of wise and good men may be considered, in all ordinary cases, as the best criterion of worth on this side of the grave; and their good-will, which always accompanies their esteem, as the richest possession which does not descend immediately from heaven. Even in that happy world, the uninterrupted and intense complacency of its glorious inhabitants will, after the favour of God and the peace of a self-approving mind, constitute the prime ingredient of eternal joy.

In the world of misery, on the contrary, all the inhabitants, being destitute of all good character in the eyes of each other, will be the subjects of perpetual shame, and the objects of mutual and everlasting contempt. These ingredients of suffering, so terrible even in the present world, will there become the means of inexpressible woe. They will be despised by themselves; they will be despised by each other; they will be objects of abhorrence to God, and to the whole virtuous universe. The anguish inflicted by this engine of torture so completely in that melancholy world, is often excruciating in this. In how many instances has the consciousness of contempt, even from a single person, driven its miserable victim to suicide!

Nor is a good name less indispensable to the attainment of confidence, and of all the blessings, by which confidence is followed. If we are unpossessed of a fair character, no one will confide in us. Without confidence, besides losing the serene and high enjoyment which it communicates, we shall be prevented from all useful employment, and from all the benefits which would flow from such employment to ourselves, and through us to others.

A fair character is also essential to personal usefulness. A man destitute of reputation is, of course, destitute of influence; and virtuous influence is the principal means of usefulness. The good which we can individually do, must ever be small; that which we may influence others to do, can be very great. If we are destitute of this instrument of beneficence, we can never persuade others to unite with us in any valuable purpose; and must on every occasion, however important, stand alone. Our talents are thus, in a great measure, rendered useless; and our power of contributing to the welfare of our fellow men, and promoting the cause of righteousness, is shrunk and withered.

In the loss of our reputation also, and in all its miserable consequences; our connexions necessarily partake; particularly our friends, and our families. Whoever wishes well to the sufferer feels the wound. Thus the evils, instead of being suffered by us only, are felt by multitudes; and often with anguish not inferior to our own.

Whenever the persons whose character is thus injured are in public stations, or are otherwise possessed of superior consequences, the mischief becomes more extensive, and more important. Thus a slander directed against a minister of the gospel, is a wound to the church; a calumny branded upon a magistrate of distinction is felt by the whole community.

Finally; the loss of reputation, both in itself, and especially in its consequences, the prevention of confidence, employment, and usefulness, brings with it a multitude of temptations, and prepares the mind for a ready perpetration of sin in every form, and extending to every degree. Regard to character is a powerful motive to every species of good conduct; and when duly felt, is an evangelical motive. 'Whatsoever things are honest, lovely, and of good report,' St Paul enjoins upon Christians as their duty. 'A bishop,' also the same apostle teaches us, 'must have a good report of them who are without' the church, as one indispensable qualification for his election to the ministry of the gospel. Those who were without the church, when this was written, were Jews and heathens. Yet, even among these men, a bishop was required to sustain an unblemished reputation. Danger to character is also a prime restraint from all open wickedness, a restraint felt by every decent man every day of his life. He who is unconscious of it, has already become almost desperate. He who discovers that he disregards it, will be pronounced by his fellow men abandoned.

In accordance with these observations, the Scriptures have solemnly guarded personal reputation in various ways. They have taught the high value of a good name; declared the guilt and odiousness of slander and tale-bearing; prohibited strongly the practice of these crimes, and threatened the perpetrators with exemplary punishment. Municipal law also has hedged the private character of every man with a strong inclosure; and denounced against every trespasser heavy penalties.

From these considerations it is manifest that the mischiefs involved in the loss of reputation are to individuals incomprehensibly great. Rarely does the thief or the cheat rob his fellow men of 'great riches.' The slanderer, therefore, accomplishes a greater injury than either of these villains; for 'a good name is better than great riches.' It is of no consequence whether his efforts succeed, or not. The thief is not the less a thief because he drops his booty; nor the cheat the less a cheat because he is detected in his fraud. If, then, the slanderer is not more despised and abhorred than either,

it is because reputation is not esteemed according to its value.

2. The public evils of slander are too numerous to permit, and too obvious to need, a discussion in this place.

I have already remarked, that when persons of consequence are attacked by calumny, the mischief is extensively spread. The slandering of private individuals is capable also of extending far, and of harassing not a little the peace of society. There is in many places a kind of indulgence often given to that pestilential class of mankind, the retailers of private history. In villages, precluded by their size or their situation from being theatres of public news, a strong propensity is often discovered to listen to those who employ their time in prying into the private concerns of their neighbours. Encouraged by this kind of approbation, as well as urged onward by restless curiosity, and an eager spirit of meddling, persons of this description multiply without number their suspicions, their innuendoes, their predictions of evils, and their tales of mischief. Speedily, jealousies are excited between neighbour and neighbour, between friend and friend. Speedily the offices of good-will and good neighbourhood are withdrawn. Social visits are interdicted. Kindness, both in opinion and conduct, ceases; and a village, in which peace and good order have long prevailed, is thrown into an uproar. The general conversation is made up of ridicule, invective, and threatening; and a quiet life gives place to quarrels and litigations. Even in the house of God the inhabitants find themselves scarcely able to unite with each other in the worship of their Maker.

But the spirit of slander is not confined to villages, nor towns, nor cities. It often flies at higher objects; and boldly intrudes upon the hall of justice, the senate-house, and the chair of state. No life is too spotless, no character is too sacred, to be assaulted and destroyed by this evil genius of man. A single calumny, especially in seasons of violent party, has set a nation in a flame; and for a season consumed its peace, and wasted its prosperity. The evils suffered in this case are numberless, and incomprehensible. One of the chief sources of the unprecedented crimes and sufferings attendant upon the French revolution, was the slander of distinguished men, both in public and private life. Misrepresentation and obloquy have been more fatal enemies to the cause of Christianity, than the faggot and the rack.

IV. *Among the dissuasives from this sin I shall briefly suggest the following:—*

1. It is eminently odious in the sight of God.

The great body of slanderers are liars; and are therefore chargeable with all the gross wickedness attributed to men of this character, and exposed to all the awful threatenings denounced against them in the Scriptures. 'Whoso privily slandereth his neighbour,' says David, under the guidance of the Spirit of truth, directing his duty as the ruler of Israel, 'him I will cut off.' In that kingdom, therefore, this crime was made capital, by a divine decision. The slanderer also, and that when he is not, as well as when he is, the inventor of a false calumny, is, in Psal. xv. excluded from the favourable presence of God. 'Lord,' saith the psalmist,' who shall abide in thy tabernacle, who shall dwell in thy holy hill?' One answer to this inquiry is the following: 'He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour.'

2. Every person guilty of this sin exposes himself also to the hatred and contempt of mankind.

A slanderer is a common enemy. All considerate persons know and feel this truth, and guard themselves with watchful care against his attacks. So far as their circumstances will permit, they shun, and warn their children and friends to shun, his company. Not mere suspicion, but a well-founded and deeply felt conviction of his hostility to the common interests of men, meets him wherever he goes. His presence creates only pain. His tongue is a blast upon human comfort; and his name is an additional spot upon the human character.

No member of this audience, I presume, feels that he is prepared to encounter an evil of this magnitude. It is a terrible consideration, that mankind are less afraid to offend their God, than to provoke the resentment of their fellow men. Still, it furnishes some consolation, that the dread of public odium and contempt is a powerful hinderance of open iniquity, and a forcible restraint upon evil dispositions. If any individual present feels adventurous enough to hazard this evil, or is indifferent about it, let him recollect with what agitation he has sustained even slight attacks upon his character; how tremblingly apprehensive he has been, lest a few, or even one of those around him should believe the calumny, and lest he should be regarded with hatred and contempt on a speck of earth, and by a handful of mankind. If he could not sustain this shock, how unprepared must he be to meet the common assault of the human race! How must he shrink, and falter, and fall, when indignation burns against him in every breast, contempt flashes on him from every eye, and a sentence of final condemnation is pronounced on him by every tongue! How will he bear to be shunned by all decent society; pointed at by the finger of prudence, as well as of scorn, and hissed wherever he appears, not by vulgarity, ill-nature, and enmity only, but by decency, delicacy, and common sense! How will he bear to spend his days in a kind of solitude in the midst of mankind, to be welcomed cordially to no man's bosom, to be regarded as a public nuisance, to be suspected and dreaded, and to have his presence regarded as a burden, and his character as a brand, upon the human race! Especially, how will he bear all this, and feel at the same time, that in all this no injustice is done to him; since he has merited it all by his own vile and infamous conduct!

3. The immense mischiefs occasioned by slander, ought to deter every man who has not, and to stop every man who has, entered upon this guilty career.

There are persons to whom I should scarcely think of addressing this consideration. But to this audience it may surely be addressed with success. It cannot for a moment be admitted even with decency, that those who are before me can be indifferent to the thought of doing such mischiefs to their fellow men. Think what it will be to stab the character, to destroy the peace and the usefuluess, even of one of your fellow creatures. Remember how tenderly you regard your own reputation: how deeply you have been pierced even by the darts of ridicule; how suddenly you have shrunk from the eye of scorn; and how you have trembled under a tale of slander, or a foul aspersion. Remember, that others have their feelings also. Remember, that reputation is to them as dear, calumny as unwelcome, con-

tempt as oppressive, and disgrace as full of anguish, as to you. Then ask yourselves, whether you can consent to be the authors of these evils.

All this, however, is only the first stage of the mischiefs which you will accomplish. Extend your views from individuals to families. How much happiness in these little, delightful circles is often destroyed by a single calumnious tale! How often are the hearts of parents broken, and the peace of their children destroyed, by false imputations of dishonesty to a son, or impurity to a daughter! How often is the domestic group clustered together with terror and anguish, by false charges upon the good name of a parent! Before, they were happy. Why are they not happy now? Because a fiend in the shape and with the tongue of a man has blasted all their enjoyments.

But the mischiefs do not stop here. Families are set at variance with each other, friends are converted into enemies, and neighbours into strangers. Harmony, hospitality, and peace sicken and die before the foul breath of slander. Every office of kindness is interrupted; and the spirit of Christianity itself, amazed, perplexed, bewildered, looks around in vain, or almost in vain, to find proper objects of its beneficence, and means and modes of administering it with success. To the happiness of good neighbourhood succeeds a train of grovelling, base serpentine hostilities; depraving all who practise them, and distressing all against whom they are practised. Anxiety and dismay haunt every fire-side; and a funereal gloom settles upon every prospect, and broods over every hope.

4. The slanderer ought to be deterred from his purpose by the incalculable mischiefs which he will do to himself.

It cannot be supposed that in such a course of hostilities against his fellow men, the slanderer will escape from the common resentment of those whom he has injured. As he is an enemy to all men, all men become at length enemies to him. Such as have smarted severely from his tongue will usually take effectual care to make him smart in his turn. The vengeance executed upon him will often be exemplary. Sometimes he will be chastised. Sometimes he will be prosecuted. Sometimes he will be excluded from all decent society; and often, if not always, he will be openly insulted with indignities which he knows not how to brook, and yet dares not resist. The consciousness of his guilt will make him a coward; while a painful conviction that his sufferings are a mere and just retribution of his crimes, will point every sting, and give a double force to every blow.

Still more ought he to be alarmed at the certain prospect of depraving himself. Slander is a compound of falsehood, injustice, unkindness, and meanness; forming in itself a character eminently depraved. What is so unhappily begun, proceeds with a rapid and dreadful declension. All the designs which he forms in the indulgence of this characteristical propensity, all the measures which he feels obliged to employ, all the instruments which he can summon to his assistance, all the gratifications which he can experience in his success, are such, and such only, as contribute to shrink, debase, and pollute his mind. In such a soil a noble generous thought would instantly wither. To such a bosom honourable friendship cannot approach. At the door of such a heart Christianity knocks for admittance in vain. His career is the career of abandonment only, through a path of steep and rapid descent, 'going down to the chambers of death.'

SERMON CXXIX.

THE LAW OF GOD.—THE DECALOGUE.—THE TENTH COMMANDMENT.—CONTENTMENT

Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his man-servant, nor his maid-servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is thy neighbour's.—Exod. xx. 17.

The preceding precepts of the Decalogue, so far as the language in which they are written is concerned, are apparently intended to regulate chiefly the external conduct of mankind. Had they not been explained by the prophets who followed Moses, and still more by our Saviour and his apostles, plausible reasons might be alleged why all of them, even the fourth, might be satisfied by external observances. But the precept in the text is directed immediately and only to the heart, and is intended supremely to control the disposition. The propensity forbidden in it is covetousness; an inordinate desire of worldly enjoyment; and particularly an inordinate desire of such enjoyments when in the possession of others. We may lawfully desire the enjoyments furnished by this world; and that even when they belong to our fellow men, if the desire is confined within due bounds. We may desire lawfully the lands and houses of others, when they are willing to part with them, and we are equally willing to purchase them at an equitable price. We may lawfully wish to obtain any share of worldly good with which God may crown our honest and industrious efforts, and which we may be prepared to enjoy with a spirit of gratitude, beneficence, and moderation. 'I know,' says Solomon, 'that there is no good in them' (that is, in the creatures which God has made in this world, or the things created here), 'but for a man to rejoice, and to do good in his life; and also, that every man should eat, and drink, and enjoy the good of all his labour: it is the gift of God.'

An inordinate desire of natural good seems, in the order of things, to be the commencement of sin in a virtuous being. Our first parents began their apostasy by coveting the forbidden fruit as an enjoyment, and wishing to become 'as gods, knowing good and evil.' In this disposition seem naturally to be involved ambition, avarice, and voluptuous wishes for its attainment: and out of it to spring, as consequences, pride, vanity, and criminal sensuality, in its enjoyment; envy towards those who possess more of it than ourselves; anger and malice towards those who hinder us from acquiring it; revenge towards those who have deprived us of it; falsehood, as the means of achieving and securing it; forgetfulness, and therefore ingratitude, with respect to such as give it; and impiety, and consequent rebellion, repining, and profaneness, towards him from whom we receive less of it than our unreasonable wishes demand. In a word, to this disposition may be traced with no great difficulty most, if not all, of the sins committed by mankind. The text therefore appears to be levelled at the root of bitterness; at a sinful disposition in its original form, and in the very commencement of its existence. If we obey this precept with the heart, and it cannot otherwise be obeyed, that obedience will immediately fulfill all the demands of the other precepts belonging to the second table, or those regulating our duty to mankind; and consequentially, will fulfill those of the first. The tenth command therefore may be regarded as, in an extensive sense, a summary of our duty.

This command directly prohibits coveting; or, in other words, ambition, avarice, and voluptuous desire. Of course it requires universally contentment, and, by easy implication, charity. Of consequence, also, it forbids discontentment and envy. Contentment, the virtue required in this precept, shall be the principal subject of the present Discourse. With this subject I shall connect some observations concerning discontentment and envy. Concerning voluptuous desires I shall not here enter into any discussion.

In examining this subject I shall,

I. *Describe the nature,*

II. *Mention the benefits of contentment.*

The nature of contentment has been very often misapprehended. Persons often suppose themselves to be contented, when they are merely gay or glad; when a native or accidental sprightliness of mind excludes sorrow and gloom: or when a multiplicity of enjoyments, the gratification of a darling wish, or the success of a favourite enterprise, or the arrival of some unexpected benefit, fills the heart with pleasure. Others mistake indifference and phlegm for contentment; and others still, that kind of dull equanimity which springs from uniform, grave, and spiritless employments; destroying all the elasticity of the mind, and settling it down in an immovable stagnation. The contentment which is the object of this precept, differs radically from all these dispositions. A man may be gay, or glad, and yet be totally destitute of this virtue. His natural disposition may incline him to flutter from one amusement to another, without suffering him to settle seriously upon any. Still the disposition which he mistakes for contentment is only sportiveness. But no man will mistrust, that sportiveness is the disposition required by this precept. A man may be greatly delighted with his present enjoyments, but no person beside himself will mistake his pleasure for contentment; and a reverse of fortune may convince even him, that there is a wide difference between these two states of mind. Much less can the other attributes which I have mentioned, lay a claim to this title. There is nothing excellent or amiable in being merely grave, insensible of sufferings, or indifferent about them.

The words used in the Scriptures to denote contentment, involve, as one of their significations, the restraining of ourselves; and, as another, the supporting of such burdens as are incumbent on us. It includes, therefore, the supposition, that the contented person is placed in circumstances which demand the restraint of his inclinations, and the sustentation of difficulties. Such, plainly, are the circumstances of every being who can, with strict propriety, be said to be contented. To say, that an angel was contented, would certainly be incorrect phraseology. An angel is happy; all his circumstances being completely gratifying to his desires. A man whom many troubles befall, and many burdens press, may, by steadily restraining his inclinations to murmur at the former, and serenely supporting the latter, be contented. Such is always the situation of man upon the whole. He is never, for any length of time, in a situation entirely agreeable to him. On the contrary, he is always required, in some degree, and at short intervals, to suffer. If he possess a contented spirit, he will suffer with quietness and serenity.

Having premised these general remarks, I observe, that evangelical contentment, the object of the command in the text, involves,

1. A fixed belief of the reality and excellency of the divine government.

The divine government is, throughout the Scriptures, made the foundation of every delightful, and even every comfortable thought. This scheme is perfectly accordant with the dictates of reason. Both the views and prospects of the atheist, as I have heretofore shown at large,* are gloomy and desolate, full of perplexity and discouragement, and destitute alike of comfort and hope. 'The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice;' is a declaration, and a precept founded on it, which a very limited understanding will show us to be just, and a very moderate degree of rectitude incline us to obey.

It is not, however, sufficient to insure our obedience, however well disposed, that we believe in the superintendence of some all-controlling agent. It is the government of Jehovah in which we are required to rejoice; the result of the wisdom, power, and goodness which constitute the perfect character of this glorious Being. No man can be contented who does not believe that the administration by which all his own interests, both personal and social, are ultimately to be decided, is both just and benevolent. The state of things with which we are immediately concerned, is mysterious and distressing. The mysteries we cannot unravel; the distresses we often find it difficult to bear. Both united must frequently be insupportable, unless we could confide in the wisdom and goodness of him who controls the universe, as furnishing sufficient assurance, that they are right and good in themselves, and will in the end be shown to be right and good. The reality and excellence of the divine government, therefore, must indispensably be objects of a steady faith to a contented mind.

* See Sermon III.

2. Contentment involves an humble hope, generally existing, that we are interested in the divine favour.

We suffer many evils in the present world. Philosophy bids us suffer them with firmness, since they cannot be avoided; and since impatience and sinking under them will only make them heavier. I am not disposed to deny the prudence, or even the propriety, of this precept. It may be, it usually is, true, that we lessen the degree of our sufferings by resolving firmly to endure them. But it is equally true, that the immovable nature of evils is no cause of contentment. On the contrary, it is always the most distressing consideration which can attend them. This, however, is the only support which philosophy can give to the sufferer.

No motive can rationally make us willing to suffer, there is no virtue in suffering evil for its own sake. All rational submission to evil arises from the consideration that God wills us to suffer, as the proper reward of our sins, and as the means of promoting his glory, and the good of ourselves, or others; of others always, and of ourselves if we do not prevent it by our disobedience to his pleasure. This motive to contentment, Christianity holds out to its disciples invariably, by pointing their attention and their faith to the government of God. The hope of an interest in his favour, Christianity also regularly inspires, by presenting to them all the promises of infinite mercy through the mediation of Christ. Without such a hope, the ills of life would often overcome the equanimity of such minds as ours. The outcast would be feebly supported by an assurance that he could obtain no relief for his sufferings; and the martyr by being told that his flames could not be extinguished. In the hope of the divine mercy, a remedy is found for every present evil; and he who exercises it will naturally summon all his powers to sustain with serenity distresses which, although grievous for the present, will operate as the means, and terminate in the enjoyment, of everlasting good.

3. Contentment involves a conviction, that it is both our duty and our interest to acquiesce in the divine dispensations.

With the dispositions already mentioned, it may be regarded as a thing of course, that such a conviction will prevail in the mind. If God is the universal Ruler; if his government is the result of infinite excellence; if what he does, or permits to be done, is right in itself, and will hereafter appear to be right: if we are furnished with an humble hope of an interest in his favour; then, however mysterious and perplexing the events of Divine Providence may be, and however distressing to us, we still shall see and feel abundant reason to be satisfied. We shall readily admit, that the most untoward events, the most difficult to be reconciled with our apprehensions of wisdom and goodness, are difficult only in the view of creatures, whose minds are limited like ours. We shall believe that they are perplexing, only because we cannot explain them; that they seem wrong, only because we cannot understand them. With such views, we shall cheerfully resign the government of the universe into the hands of its Maker, and wait for the removal of our own perplexities, until the day when 'the mystery shall be finished,' when God shall appear just in judging, and clear even in condemning.

4. Contentment implies a cordial acknowledgment, that we are unworthy of those mercies which we receive.

There are in the present world many afflictions. If we are guiltless beings, our sufferance of them must be unmerited; and the communication of them to us by our Creator is irreconcilable with all our ideas of equity. If we admit God to be just, we are obliged also to admit that ourselves are sinners. If we are not sinners, but are unjustly distressed, there is no reason why we should be contented with our situation. No being can be bound to be contented with injustice. But if we are sinners, we can have no claim to any favour. If we are conscious that we are sinners, we shall see that we have no such claim. We shall see that, however small our blessings may appear, God 'hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.' Enjoyments, in the view of a mind thus attempered, will all appear to be mere gifts of sovereign goodness, mere emanations of benevolence, to a being destitute of any claim to the favour of God. Without such views, seated in the heart, and controlling its affections, it appears to me impossible that such a being as man should be contented.

5. Contentment involves a disposition steadily to mark the daily mercies of God.

The great body of mankind seem to regard their enjoyments either as things of course; or as acquisitions made by their own ingenuity and efforts. With such views, it seems impossible that they should consider them as blessings. Their afflictions, on the contrary, they appear to consider as mere hardships; partly as injuries done to them by their fellow men, and partly as vexatious and unlucky events, brought upon them by they know not what untoward chance, or evil destiny. Accordingly, in their hours of complaining, they customarily pronounce themselves to be ill-starred, unlucky, unfortunate, persecuted by ill fortune, plagued and harassed; and, what is very remarkable, never speak of themselves as chastised or afflicted by God. According to their own account, their enjoyments are accidents and acquisitions, not blessings; and their sufferings are calamities, not judgments of God.

Multitudes also, who do not go all this length, suffer the mercies which they daily receive, and these both invaluable and numberless, to pass by them in a great measure unregarded. Converse with these men on this subject, and they will readily acknowledge that all their enjoyments are gifts of God, and in no sense merited by themselves. Still, from their ordinary conversation and conduct, it is evident that such acknowledgments are no part of the current state of their minds. From their obvious indifference, from their regardless inattention, amid the common and most necessary blessings of life, it is undeniably certain, that they are scarcely conscious even of the existence, much less of the source of these blessings. Were these persons to number their enjoyments, they would be astonished to find their amount. Were they to estimate them, they would be equally astonished to perceive their value. Were they to examine their own character they would be amazed that blessings of such value, and of such an amount were bestowed on themselves.

The man who actually adopts this conduct, will soon discern in the importance and number of his enjoyments, and in his own undeserving character, ample reasons, not only for being satisfied, but also for being

grateful. On the one hand, he will admire that divine goodness which is manifested to him every hour in so many forms; and will wonder, on the other, that it should be manifested to so guilty and undeserving a creature. So long as we do not perceive these facts (and unless we mark them, we shall not perceive them), it seems impossible that we should possess a contented spirit.

6. Contentment involves the moderation of those desires which are directed to worldly enjoyments.

There are two modes in which mankind seek happiness: indulging their wishes, and seeking to find objects, sufficient in their nature and number to gratify them: and confining their wishes, by choice and system, to a moderate number of objects: and thus preparing themselves to find their enjoyment in such objects as, in the ordinary course of things, they may rationally expect to obtain. The former of these modes is generally pursued by mankind. Still it is palpably unwise, full of danger, and regularly attended by disappointment, mortification, and distress. Every man who adopts it will be compelled to learn, that the state of this world is altogether unsuited to satisfy numerous and eager desires. The enjoyments which it furnishes are comparatively few and small. They are incapable therefore of fulfilling the demands of numerous and extensive desires. At the same time, he will find his desires enlarging incomparably more, and increasing incomparably faster, than their gratifications. A rich man covets property with far more greediness than the possessor of moderate wealth. He who has entered the chase of fame, power, or pleasure, will find his wishes become more vehement, as well as more expanded, by every new instance of success; and will soon perceive, that what he once thought to be sufficient good, has ceased to be good at all. If he gains all that he pursues, he will therefore be continually less and less satisfied; and, while 'he snatches on the right hand, and devours on the left,' he will still be 'hungry' in the midst of his gluttony and plunder.

Incomparably more wise and hopeful is the latter of these modes. The wishes which are directed to worldly enjoyments can be controlled, to an indefinite degree, by reason, firmness, and regular pre-concertion. In this case, the mind, demanding only moderate enjoyments, may ordinarily be in a good measure satisfied; for moderate enjoyments not only exist in our present state, but are commonly attainable without much difficulty by the great body of mankind. Our wishes, in this case, are suited to our circumstances. As, therefore, our enjoyment is commensurate to the satisfaction of our wishes; so, when our wishes are moderate, the moderate enjoyments which this world supplies will furnish us with sufficient gratification.

Without this moderation of our desires, contentment cannot exist. An eager pursuit of earthly good would make an angel discontented. Vehement desires ungratified are sure and copious sources of misery. The demands of enjoyment in the mind which cherishes them, are too high to be satisfied by any thing which this world has to give. The mind seeks for enjoyment, not with the spirit of a rational, industrious man, but with that of a miser; and cries unceasingly, 'Give, give;' but, whatever may be its acquisitions, is never sufficiently satisfied to be able to say, 'It is enough.'

7. Contentment involves self-approbation.

All enjoyment commences in the state of the mind itself. When that is disturbed, no external gratifications can be relished or regarded. No seasoning, no daintiness, will enable him who is languishing under a fever to relish even the choicest viands. But to ease of mind, self-approbation is indispensable. Unless the conscience approve and smile, serenity can never overspread the world within. So long as the conscience reproaches, wounds, and terrifies, the soul must be perturbed, restless, and unhappy. That contentment should exist in such a mind, can neither be proper nor possible. But, whenever the man begins to submit to be controlled by his conscience, he begins to be approved by himself. The tumult of the soul then begins to subside; the storm ceases to lower, and to threaten; the violence of the blast is hushed; the angry clouds disperse; a summer evening overspreads the soul; calm, serene, bright, the promise of a future, peaceful, and delightful day.

II. *I shall now briefly mention some of the benefits of contentment.*

1. This disposition of mind secures to us the favour of God.

The preceding observations make it evident that contentment is in an extensive sense, obedience to the divine will. It is also directly and repeatedly commanded in the Scriptures. To Timothy, St Paul writes, 'Having food and raiment, let us be therewith content.' To the Hebrews he says, universally, 'Be content with such things as ye have.' This injunction he also enforces by the best of all reasons: viz. that 'God hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.' That God is pleased with obedience to his commands, needs no illustration. Equally unnecessary, would be an attempt to show that a state of mind, formed, as contentment obviously is, chiefly of faith, submission, humility, gratitude, and self-government, must be obedience eminently acceptable. But him whom God approves, he will bless. The promises of the divine favour to such as cordially obey the divine will are spread everywhere throughout the Scriptures, and not one of them will fail of being accomplished. But the favour of God is the sum of all benefits, and the source whence every other proceeds. Contentment begins with a hope of the divine favour; and, as a continued course of obedience to the commands of God, originates unceasingly new hopes, and makes sure of new communications of the same invaluable blessing.

2. Contentment enables him who possesses it to perform his duty with more exactness and more pleasure than he can otherwise attain.

The contented mind is unencumbered by many cares and many hindrances which usually obstruct and retard men in the performance of their duty. The serenity of its disposition leaves it at full leisure calmly to examine, and therefore clearly to understand, and thoroughly to feel, the nature, directions, and amount of its duty. Satisfied with the divine dispensations, and assured of the approbation of him whose dispensations they are, it is prepared beforehand to accord with their tenor, and to perform whatever they may require. In this case, its obedience obviously becomes easy, cheerful, and of course delightful, as well as uniform and exact. It is the punctilious and cheerful obedience of a child, compared with which the occasional and reluctant performances of a discontented man, are

merely the mercenary drudgery of an unfaithful servant. But to perform our duty with pleasure, is to lead a life of enjoyment; for our duty returns every moment of our lives. To perform our duty also with exactness, is not only delightful in itself, but is a continual source of self-approbation and peace; and the only source whence these blessings can be derived.

3. The man in whom this spirit prevails is secured from many temptations and many sins to which others are exposed.

A discontented man naturally indulges, and is always liable to the sin of murmuring against God, arraigning his justice, wisdom, and goodness, and hardening his heart against his mercy; because he is impatient under his own allotments, and unwilling to accord with any proposals from a Being whose character he disrelishes, and whose conduct he regards as the source of his troubles. The envious man is prompted by his ruling disposition to repine at the blessings of others, to accuse God of partiality in bestowing them, to wish them lessened, to resort not unfrequently to active, insidious, and malignant exertions for the purpose of lessening them, and to exercise a kind of infernal joy when they are taken away. Such a man turns a gloomy, misanthropic eye on all those who, he thinks, are richer, greater, wiser, or happier than himself. From these rebellious and fiend-like dispositions, from the temptations which they create, and the sins to which they lead, the contented mind is delightfully free. Satisfied with its own lot, it feels no anxiety, mortification, or opposition to its Maker, because others are possessed of superior good. Particularly, it is undisturbed by the sight of superior wealth in the possession of others; of superior power, pleasures, reputation, and influence. On all these splendours it can look, as the eagle on the sun, with a steady and serene eye; and can find its happiness not lessened, but increased, because others are happy. The disposal, both of its own concerns and theirs, it is willing to leave wholly to God; and prepared to enjoy any good which he is pleased to bestow, whoever may be the recipient. Thus,

4. It is a disposition eminently peaceful and comfortable.

On the one hand, it is preserved from many troubles, suffered by others; and on the other, finds many pleasures, which others never know. The distress experienced in an unceasing course of disappointments, by all discontented, covetous, and ambitious men, is chiefly unknown to him who has acquired this delightful spirit. Equally free is he also from the pain of ungratified desires, and from continual fears that his desires will be ungratified. Nor is he less secure from that complication of woe, which springs incessantly from distrust of the goodness and faithfulness of God, from murmuring against his providence, from reluctance to obey his pleasure, and from the consciousness of not having faithfully obeyed at all. At the same time, he is delivered from those fears of future woe which so often harass the minds of guilty men.

It is not here intended to insinuate, that the contented man is free from afflictions; but that he is comparatively free from them is unquestionable. Contentment will not remove the thorns and briars spread over this unhappy world by the apostasy, and renew upon its face the bloom, the beauty, and the fragrance of Eden. But it will blunt the point of many a thorn, and convert many a wilderness into a fruitful field. The sorrows which it feels will be all allayed by the remembrance, that they come from the hand of the infinitely Good; and by the hope, that they will all terminate in the promotion of its own best interests. To the blast of calamity also it yields, like the willow; and is therefore not rooted up and destroyed. In the mean time, whenever troubles arrive, however numerous or great they may be, their distressing efficacy is always allayed by the soothing balmy influence of peace and self-approbation.

This delightful influence also is regularly diffused over every enjoyment. The enjoyments of the contented man are in his view all gifts and blessings; not acquisitions, made by his own ingenuity and efforts. As gifts, they are relished with gratitude to their glorious Author. The light in which they are seen by this grateful disposition is always glossy and brilliant, and the taste which they furnish is singularly sweet. Thus the contented man finds pleasures, where others find only troubles. Thus, when troubles arrest him, their bitterness is allayed; and thus all the pleasures which he finds are enhanced by his own happy disposition. Even in seasons when darkness overspreads the world, and such seasons it must be acknowledged there are, when the gloom overshadows his mind, as well as the minds of those around him; and when the face of the Sun of righteousness is eclipsed to the eyes of mankind; hope, humble and serene, will lift up her exploring eye, and behold the divine luminary still visible, and environing the intervening darkness with a circle of glory.

5. Contentment renders its possessor eminently pleasing and comfortable to others.

Uniform serenity, cheerfulness, and sweetness of disposition, constitute that character in man, which to his fellow men is more agreeable than any other. Religion itself, however pious and benevolent the mind may be, is despoiled, if sensibly destitute of this disposition, of its peculiar burnish and beauty. It will indeed be approved and esteemed; but it will not be entirely relished. Gravity, existing beyond a certain degree, may render it forbidding. Reserve may render it suspicious; and a sorrowful, melancholy aspect may excite a sympathy so painful, as to make it unwelcome. But a sweet, serene, and cheerful temper is the object, not only of esteem, but of delight. The presence of a person who manifests this temper is universally coveted, and diffuses a kind of lustre over every circle. He is accordingly welcome to every house, and to every company. Even men destitute of religion will strongly relish his company, and will never mention his character without pointed commendations.

Beside the immediate and extensive pleasure which such a person communicates to those with whom he converses, this disposition recommends his opinions, his rules of life, his various conduct, and the several plans which he proposes for the benefit of mankind. Multitudes will embark with readiness and ardour in the promotion of purposes which he recommends, because they are recommended by him; because they think favourably of whatever he proposes, and love to unite with him in any pursuit. Thus this spirit, beside rendering him eminently agreeable to others, gives him an influence with mankind which he could not otherwise possess; and in the happiest manner increases his

power to do good. It deserves particular consideration, that some of the most popular men who have ever lived in this country have not been distinguished for brilliancy of genius, extensiveness of views, or profoundness of research; but, while they possessed respectable talents, were remarkably distinguished by the disposition which I have here described.

Of this disposition, contentment is the uniform and the only efficacious source. By a discontented man, it can be assumed only by effort, and for a moment; and must speedily and characteristically give way to the uneasy fretful spirit which has taken possession of his mind. There is indeed a native good humour, which is pleasant to the possessor, and very agreeable to those with whom he converses. But this desirable disposition, although possessing many advantages, is radically defective, because it is a mere propensity, and not a moral principle. Too frail to sustain the rude shocks, or the long continued pressure of adversity, it is prone to give way in seasons of severe trial; and is incapable of the serene and steady endurance, so characteristical of a contented mind. Such a mind may bend; but, while life lasts, it will not break. Where native good humour would shrink and fly from the conflict on innumerable occasions, the contented mind will firmly brave the danger, sustain the assault, and, with a cool, noiseless, unruffled energy, in the end overcome. At the same time, such a mind will always find at hand a divine auxiliary, an almighty friend, ever present, ever watchful, ever extending his arm to protect, strengthen, and give the victory. This indispensable aid native good humour cannot claim. All its ultimate reliance is fixed on this world. Its eye is never lifted upward, but fastens on earth and time for all its resources. Contentment, on the contrary, while she finds more sweetness in earthly enjoyment than good humour can ever find, and far more effectually lightens the pressure of calamity by the assistance which this world presents, fixes her eye on the heavens for superior aid; and sees the thickest darkness of suffering, and even of death, delightfully illumined by beams of glory, shining from beyond the grave!

SERMON CXXX.

THE LAW OF GOD.—THE DECALOGUE.—THE TENTH COMMANDMENT.—CHARITY.

Charge them that are rich in this world—that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come. That they may lay hold on eternal life.—1 Tim. vi. 17—19.

There are, as I have heretofore observed, two attributes of the human mind, in the indulgence of which we especially disobey the tenth command, viz., ambition and avarice. Contentment is opposed to both, particularly to the former. What in modern times is called charity, that is, a disposition cheerfully to impart our property and kind offices to the poor and suffering, is especially opposed to the latter. Of course, it naturally becomes the next subject of our consideration in our progress.

In examining it, I propose briefly to point out,

I. *The nature of this duty.*

II. *The persons to whom,*

III. *The manner in which it is to be performed;* and,

IV. *The motives to the performance.*

I. *I will endeavour to explain the nature of this duty.*

It has been already mentioned as a general definition of charity, as an attribute of the human mind, that it is a disposition cheerfully to impart our property and our kind offices to the poor and suffering. But we are not to suppose that every cheerful communication of these benefits to persons of this description merits the name of charity in the evangelical sense.

Persons often aid the suffering merely from ostentation. These will not be suspected of charity.

Others do the same thing merely to free themselves from the importunate applications of those by whom it is solicited. This will not be mistaken for charity.

Some, and those not a few, impart their property to the distressed, because they place little value upon property. Neither will this be soberly considered as charitable conduct.

Some perform charitable acts to free themselves from those reproaches of conscience, which they are assured will follow the refusal of such acts.

Multitudes perform offices of this nature from the hope of acquiring the esteem of others, and the various benefits which it is expected to confer.

Other multitudes extend relief to sufferers from a native spirit of generosity. This is amiable; but is not even an intentional performance of any duty, and can therefore possess no evangelical character.

Others still do the same things, under the influence of constitutional compassion, or native tenderness. This also is amiable; but for the same reason does not partake of an evangelical nature.

Some perform actions of this class, because they have been taught and habituated in early life to perform them as a duty. Though they merit and obtain the esteem of those around them, yet they never with the heart, or in the evangelical sense, perform any duty.

Others do works of this nature, because they have been accustomed to commend them highly, and are thus

compelled to charitable exertions, for the sake of maintaining consistency of character.

Finally: Not a small number pursue a charitable course of life, because they think actions of this nature the sum and substance of religion; and expect by them to recommend themselves to the favour of God, and to obtain the blessings of a happy immortality. These men, whether aware of it or not, are intending to purchase heaven, by paying the price which they suppose to be set upon it in the gospel.

It must undoubtedly be admitted, that in several of these cases, that which is actually done is done cheerfully, and that property and kind offices are really imparted to the distressed; yet in none of them, at least in my opinion, is there any degree of evangelical charity.

Charity, in the evangelical sense, is no other than the beneficence required by the gospel, administered, with the disposition which it requires, to a particular class of mankind, viz. those who are, or without this administration would be, in circumstances of distress. The disposition which is here intended is that 'Love which is the fulfilling of the law, the genuine source of every other duty.'

If this account of the subject be admitted, it must also be conceded, that all acts of real charity are performed from a sense of duty, and with an intention to obey God in the performance; and that this is indispensable to its very existence. It cannot, therefore, be the result of native tenderness or compassion. No virtue is, in the proper sense, an exercise of any human passion. Virtue, in all instances, is the energy of the mind directed to that which is right; or, in other words, agreeable to the will of God, and conducive to the good of the universe, because it is believed to be of this nature. The native affections of the mind are in several instances amiable, and often contribute to enhance and adorn the real exercise of virtue; but in themselves they are never, in the evangelical sense, virtuous. That which is done without any sense of duty, and without an intention to perform a duty, can never sustain the character of virtue.

Farther: It is plain, if the above observations be admitted, that charity, in the sense of the gospel, is disinterested. The design, in every act which is entitled to this name, is to do real good to those who are its objects. The intention of the author of it will invariably be to promote the happiness, or to relieve the distresses of the sufferer; and not to advance his own reputation, to promote his own selfish purposes, nor even to prevent the reproaches of his own conscience. In a word, selfishness, of whatever kind, and in whatever form it may exist, is not charity.

In addition to these things it may be observed, that evangelical charity demands essentially that we take delight in doing the good which is to be done. 'It is more blessed,' in the original 'It is more happy, to give than to receive;' that is, it is an employment, a character attended of course with a higher degree of happiness; or, to declare the same truth in a more universal form, It is a happier state to communicate good to others, than to gain it from their hands. He who does not find some degree of this happiness in bestowing alms and other kindnesses upon his suffering fellow creatures, has not yet begun to be charitable.

II. *The persons, to whom these offices of kindness are to be performed, are various.*

These are, universally, such as already suffer, or have become liable to some distress; to relieve or prevent which, the kind offices, included under the name of charity, are necessary. It will readily occur, that within this broad description there must be not only many persons, but many classes of persons, differing very materially in their character and circumstances, and having therefore very different claims upon the kind offices of their fellow men. Among these are found all gradations of character and of suffering.

The class which first obtrudes itself upon the eye, is that of the common wandering beggars, seen in every country, and particularly in the streets of every city. There are not wanting persons, and those of a fair reputation, who hold that alms ought not to be given to this miserable class of mankind. In their view, charity administered to them answers scarcely any other purpose than to encourage idleness, intemperance, and other vices to which these degraded beings are so generally addicted. Whatever is done for them, it is observed, is ordinarily useless, and worse than useless to themselves; and might always be bestowed on more deserving objects, and with happier effects. That to a great extent these observations are just, cannot be questioned. But it may be questioned, whether they are capable of so universal an application. Some of these persons, and the number is not small, are unable to labour; and are yet without friends or home. To wander seems necessary for the preservation of their health, and even of their lives. It is not true of all of them, that they are vicious, nor that vice has been the means of reducing them to their present sufferings. I know of no evangelical principle which warrants us to leave them to perish, or to refuse the proper means of alleviating their distresses.

'We command you,' says St Paul to the Thessalonians, 'that if any would not work, neither should he eat.' But it will not be supposed, that the apostle intended to include in this prohibition those who are unable to work, many of whom are found in this class of the indigent. To these, subsistence, comforts, medicines, and whatever kind offices are necessary cannot be denied. Were no person suffered to wander in this manner, but such as I have described, probably objections never would have been started against admitting them within the pale of charity.

As to the really idle and vicious members, of which almost the whole of this class is apparently composed, it is, in my opinion, the duty of every government to force them, by every vindicable and necessary measure, to labour for their own subsistence.

Individuals are often unable to distinguish, among the wandering applicants for charity, which are proper objects of their bounty. In this uncertainty, it seems to be a good rule to relieve the distresses occasioned by hunger and nakedness, wherever we cannot satisfactorily prove imposition on the part of the applicant. Money is given to such persons, when given at all, without answering any valuable end.

Concerning the administration of charity to sufferers of every other description, there will be no dispute.

Among these, those whom providence has stationed in our own neighbourhood, seem, in ordinary cases, to have superior claims for relief upon us for three reasons; viz. that it is in our power to do them more good than we can do to others, because they are within our reach;

that the poor, who are at a distance from us, will find other benefactors in their vicinity; and that, if we do not take a charitable care of those who surround us, they will ordinarily be without relief. It may be generally said, that providence has placed them under our eye for the very purpose of awakening our beneficence towards them; and has thus, in a manner, which may be called express, required this service at our hands.

A distinction ought to be made among these, on the score of that modesty which prevents some of them from soliciting benefactions, and even from making known their sufferings; on account of the industry and faithfulness with which some of them labour, amid many discouragements, to supply their own wants; as well as with regard to the uprightness of their dispositions and the blamelessness of their lives. All these are obvious recommendations to evangelical charity. We are to 'do good unto all men, as we have opportunity, but especially to them who are of the housenold of faith.' The poor and suffering who belong to this household have the first of all claims to the good which we are able to do. To relieve the distresses of these men, when the relief springs from the spirit of the gospel, is conduct so excellent, that, as Christ has expressly informed us, he will remember and distinguish it at the final day, and will regard the charity as being administered to himself.

Universally, the better the character of the sufferer, the higher will be his claims upon us for our beneficence.

III. *I will now endeavour to point out the manner in which this duty should be performed.*

Concerning this subject I observe,

1. Our beneficence should obviously be such as to answer the end which is proposed.

The sufferings of this world are almost endlessly diversified. The modes of administering charity ought plainly to be varied, so as to suit the varieties of distress. A large proportion of the evils of life arise from want. The communication of property, in some degree and form or other, is the proper means of removing those which belong to this class. Others are derived from sickness, pain, disgrace, the loss of friends, the want of friends, the want of encouragement in the business of life: often from the fact that we are strangers; often from unkindness, contempt, and contumely; often from ignorance, want of advice, and from very many other sources. There are also distresses merely of a moral nature, such as spring from unhappy errors concerning the doctrines and duties of religion, from ignorance of the way of salvation, from spiritual prejudices, from stupidity, from temptations, and universally from sin in all its forms and degrees. Now it is evident, that very different modes of relief must be applied to these numerous and diversified cases of suffering. That mode only is of any value, which is fitted to accomplish the end. To employ ourselves in giving grave advice to a person famishing with hunger, would be not merely idle, but ludicrous; and to offer food to a person labouring under the pangs of a broken heart, would be a specimen of folly equally contemptible.

2. Our charity should be administered in such a degree as actually to accomplish the end.

It is not enough to mitigate a calamity, when it is in our power to remove it; to assuage a disease, when we are able to complete the cure; to give advice or consolation to a youth, whose spirits are sinking for want of employment, when it is in our power to put him into useful business; to pity a backsliding Christian, when we are able to restore him to his duty; to pray for the conversion of the heathen, when we can send them the word of God, and missionaries to preach it. Particularly, it is never enough to expend our benevolence to the distressed in talking, however wisely, however affectionately, however evangelically, concerning their sufferings, and the proper means of relieving them; or in breathing sighs or shedding tears, or uttering good wishes over their distresses. 'If a brother or sister be naked, or destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding, ye give them not those things which are needful to the body, what doth it profit?' Nothing is more absurd, nothing is more contemptible, than the charity which evaporates in words and wishes.

3. It is our duty, so far as it is in our power, to relieve greater distresses in preference to those which are small.

The smaller sufferings of those around us are by no means to be neglected; and they have this recommendation, to our particular attention, that we can almost always relieve them, when such as are greater may demand efforts beyond the limits of our ability. When this is not the case, a greater suffering prefers a proportionally stronger claim to our charitable exertions.

4. When we have objects of charity in our neighbourhood, for whose relief we propose to contribute with regularity, it is ordinarily better to furnish them with a considerable sum at once, than to communicate to them the same aid in a number of smaller sums.

Small sums are not only of little value in reality, but are usually regarded, especially by persons of this class, as being still less valuable. Improvidence is almost always a prominent feature in the character of those who permanently need charity. They neither have a just sense of the value of property, nor just apprehensions of the modes in which it may be laid out in the best manner. Little sums will in their view be incapable of answering any important purpose; and they rarely thing of hoarding them, until the accumulation shall become considerable. They will therefore usually expend them on objects of small consequence even to themselves. On the contrary, if the bestower will become their treasurer, and accumulate for them, and thus convert the shillings which he might otherwise distribute, into a single benefaction of a guinea, they would rarely, probably never, break so considerable a sum for any of those trifling objects upon which the shillings separately given would all have been expended.

It will commonly add much to the benefit of such a distribution, if it should also be made at stated and expected times, so that the object of the beneficence might calculate beforehand. In this case, he would, on the one hand, endeavour to supply his intermediate wants, and, on the other, would regularly fix upon an important purpose for which the expected benefaction would be laid out. In this manner they will learn to overcome their own want of economy, and acquire a degree of prudence in the management of their pecuniary concerns, to which otherwise they would be strangers through life.

5. The best mode of communicating pecuniary assist-

ance to such sufferers as have sufficient health and capacity, is to employ them.

By this I intend, that we should furnish them with such means and such directions as may be necessary to enable them to earn so much of their subsistence as can be brought within their reach by their own industry. Most of the poor would choose to support themselves, if it were in their power. He who puts it in their power delivers them from the painful consciousness of being burdensome to others; places them in a degree of independence, which is rationally pleasant; and in many instances enables them ultimately to earn more than a mere subsistence; and thus teaches them in the only effectual manner how to provide for themselves. In addition to all this, he brings them within the pale of character and reputation, and renders them useful to themselves and to mankind. In this particular, men of active and extensive business are furnished by Providence with peculiar advantages for becoming important benefactors to mankind as well as to individuals.

6. Our beneficence is often rendered to others much more usefully by personal exertions in their behalf, than by mere contribution of money.

There are innumerable cases of suffering, of which property cannot become the relief. Of this nature are those of sickness, pain, sorrow, disgrace, decrepitude, friendlessness, the necessity of countenance, a broken heart, and all that variety of anguish of spirit which repects our salvation. In all these, and in many other cases, the kindness needed is not pecuniary bounty, but those good offices which are suited to the nature of the suffering. Very many persons, perhaps almost all those who are in easy circumstances, much more willingly contribute their property than their personal services. To give a small sum of money, is often considered as an easy piece of self-denial, when a personal effort is regarded as a serious sacrifice.

But it is to no purpose to contribute money for the relief of distress, where we know that it will not produce the relief. The duty demanded by our circumstances, the benefit needed by those whom we profess to befriend, is always that of course which will effectuate relief for the calamity actually endured. Everything else here is comparatively of no value.

Let it also be remembered, that the benefit communicated in these cases by our good offices is real, while that intended by our bounty is imaginary; and that, in proportion to the self-denial which our kindness may demand, will be the amiableness and the worth of the disposition by which it is rendered. Even in cases where the relief of suffering is to be accomplished by pecuniary bounty, it will often be true that he who in his own person solicits contributions, is a greater benefactor than any of those who furnish them, even without supposing him to contribute at all.

But in a great multitude of cases, some of which have been specified, property cannot be the means of relief. Property cannot watch with the sick, nor administer remedies for their diseases, nor heal a wounded spirit, nor comfort mourners, nor restore resolution to the discouraged, nor withdraw a wanderer from vice and ruin, nor place his feet in the way of life. If we are really charitable, we shall endeavour to do all these and the like kind offices. If we are unwilling to do them, it is because we are destitute of charity.

7. We are bound to make this communication of beneficence a part of our system of life.

When once it is determined by us, that the performance of this duty is one great end for which we live, and that a considerable part of our time, our labours, and our substance, is to be employed in this manner, much of our native reluctance to it may be regarded as being overcome. Whatever we do habitually, however irksome it may be at first, will in the end be willingly done. At first we think of little beside the difficulties which will attend the performance. As we proceed, the employment itself gradually becomes pleasant; and we also realize more and more the various pleasures by which it is attended. At the same time, whenever any conduct becomes part of our system of action, as we regularly expect to adopt it, we make a regular and constant preparation for the performance. In the present case, for example, when it has become an habitual object to bestow upon the poor pecuniary bounty; we shall so regulate our expenses as continually to be in possession of the means of this bounty, and shall not be unprovided when the occasions for charity occur. If personal assistance is the beneficence demanded, we shall so adjust our business, as to be able, without serious inconvenience, to perform the kind offices which this duty may require. Universally, of whatever nature the good to be done may be, we shall in this case be prepared to do it, and that as a part of the business of life.

On the contrary, he who performs acts of charity only in a desultory and occasional manner, will find himself unready to fulfill such of its demands as he will acknowledge to be real and obligatory, will halt between the duty and the sacrifice which it will cost, and will often persuade himself, in opposition to the first dictates of his conscience, that in the existing case he may be lawfully excused.

In addition to what has been said, it ought to be diligently remembered, that we were not made for ourselves, that we were made for the glory of our Creator and the good of our fellow creatures; and that it is our supreme interest, as well as our indispensable duty, to fulfill this exalted end of our being. We are ever to keep before our eyes, that it is always unnecessary and usually undesirable for us to be rich; that when in the course of honest industry we become rich, we are peculiarly obligated to 'do good, to be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate;' and that, in this manner, we shall 'lay up in store for ourselves a good foundation against the time to come.' Still farther we are bound to realize, that our property belongs to God; that to us it is a mere gift of his bounty; that there is no good in it, unless we gratefully rejoice in the loving-kindness of the Giver, and do good in our life; and that then only we are entitled to 'enjoy the good of all our labour.' Finally, we are to realize that God is especially glorified when good is done to mankind.

If these interesting considerations are continually kept in view and brought home to the heart, it seems hardly possible that we should not be well prepared to perform all those actions which are included under the comprehensive name of charity.

IV. *Among the numerous motives to the performance of this duty, I shall select the following:—*

1. We shall preserve ourselves from the deplorable passion of avarice.

Cast back your eyes for a moment on the exhibition made of this attribute in the preceding Discourse, and tell me, Which of you is willing to subject himself to the miserable bondage of its domination? Which of you is willing to sustain the character, which of you to perform the actions, which to receive the reward? Can any character be more unfit for a rational being, more odious or more contemptible in itself, or, in proportion to its means, more mischievous to mankind? How emphatically true is it, that 'the love of money is the root of all evil;' that those who love it, 'fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition;' that they are 'seduced from the faith; and pierce themselves through' (or, as in the original, all around) 'with many sorrows?' Let every one of you who is a child of God, let every one of you who intends to become a child of God, 'flee these things, and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, and love.'

But nothing seems better fitted to prevent, or to root out, this wretched passion, than an habitual performance of the duties of charity. He who accustoms himself to give freely, and to act kindly to others, especially to the poor and suffering, from whom he can rationally hope for nothing again, can scarcely fail in the end of being willing to give, and to give liberally. For a truly charitable man to be covetous is impossible.

Let me add, that in this manner also we shall be secured from the imputation of avarice. Nothing will sooner or more perfectly destroy a good name than this imputation; nothing more certainly awaken the hatred and the scorn of our fellow men; nothing more certainly preclude us from any rational or desirable influence over them.

2. By a faithful performance of these duties, we shall secure to ourselves the esteem of our fellow men.

'A good name,' says Solomon, 'is better than great riches.' Among all the things which are done by man, nothing more certainly assures us of the best reputation, than a regular and cheerful performance of charitable offices. Not only do the wise and good, but men of all inferior descriptions also, readily acknowledge the worth of beneficence, peculiarly when administered to such as are in distress. Excellence in other forms is often doubted, denied, disrelished, and calumniated. In this it seems always to be respected. The character acknowledged is not merely good; it is the best. The hardest heart acknowledges its worth; and the most niggardly tongue vibrates in its praise. How often, when the eye is wandering over published accounts, even fictitious ones, of beneficence administered to the poor and friendless, does the tear of tenderness and sympathy start, and the bosom warm with pleasure at this display of evangelical excellence! Whose voice does not delight to sound the praises of Howard; and how little do nobles, heroes, and princes appear at his side!

In the possession of such a character, we of course acquire a happy influence over our fellow men; and this influence is the chief means of our usefulness. An individual acting alone can do little towards promoting the well-being of his fellow men; while the same individual, by means of extensive influence, may become an important public blessing. Although therefore reputation, considered merely as a gratification of our pride, is of little consequence; its value, as the means of usefulness, is inestimable. In this view, 'a good name' is indeed 'rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favour than silver and gold.'

3. In the performance of these duties, we insure to ourselves the approbation of our own consciences.

This is always the consequence of performing our duty; yet there are some duties from which it springs in a peculiar degree. Among these, the administration of charity obviously holds a high station. As there is something eminently lovely in beneficence, to the eyes of those who look on, so it is seen to be thus lovely by the eye of the benefactor. It is a glorious character of God, that 'he is good, that he doeth good, and that his tender mercies are over all his works.' This character we never so directly and peculiarly resemble, as when we do good with the spirit of the gospel. Of this resemblance, and the beauty of it, the mind is conscious, of course; and surveying the divine image instamped upon itself, beholds its lustre and loveliness with a delight which is independent, serene, and incomparably superior to everything which the world is able to give or to take away.

4. It secures the approbation of God.

Concerning this truth there can be no debate. Multitudes indeed suppose nothing else to be necessary for this purpose; and seem willing to consider it as supplying all deficiencies of repentance, faith, and love to God, even when their beneficence is that of the hands, and not that of the heart. This undoubtedly is an error, and a very dangerous one. Still it is certain, that evangelical beneficence will secure to us the divine approbation; for he in whom it is found will certainly possess every other evangelical attribute. In an eminent degree is it obedience to very numerous commands of the gospel, and, in a degree no less eminent, is it an object of scriptural promises. 'Blessed is he that considereth the poor: the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble; the Lord will preserve him and keep him alive, and he shall be blessed upon the earth; the Lord will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing. He hath dispersed; he hath given to the poor; his righteousness endureth for ever.'

5. It is a striking resemblance to the character of the Redeemer.

'Jesus Christ,' saith St Peter, 'a man who went about doing good.' How exact a description is this of our Saviour's life! To pass by the divine doctrines which he taught, how entirely were all his miracles directed to this single end! He healed the sick, he fed the hungry, he comforted the sorrowful, cleansed the leprous, cast out devils, and restored soundness to the lame, sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, and life to the dead; and still more wonderful were his sufferings. All the contradictions which he endured from sinners, all the agonies of the garden and the cross, and all the humiliation of the grave, he endured solely for the purpose of rescuing wretched apostates, condemned and ruined, from final perdition. How lovely, how glorious a character! 'Mine elect,' saith God the Father, 'in whom my soul delighteth:'—'my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.' What angel would not delight to make such a character his pattern! What Christian would not follow his example!

6. It will secure a divine reward.

It is a most remarkable fact, that in our Saviour's account of his administrations at the final day, he has founded his approbation of good men, and their ever-

lasting reward, upon their performance of the duties of charity. 'Come, ye blessed of my Father,' will the Judge of the quick and the dead say to them on his right hand, 'inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee; or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in; naked, and clothed thee; or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily, I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.'

On the other hand, the cause expressly assigned for the condemnation of the wicked at the same awful day, is their omission of these very duties. How delightful then will it be, to go from this world with a consciousness that the duties of charity have been all performed by ourselves! How melancholy, how dreadful, to stand before the Judge with a conviction that they have been all neglected!

SERMON CXXXI.

THE LAW OF GOD.—THE DECALOGUE.—THE TENTH COMMANDMENT.—AVARICE.

They that will be rich, fall into temptation, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil; which, while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.—1 Tim. vi. 9, 10.

In the two preceding Discourses, I examined the nature and benefits of contentment, the immediate object of injunction in the tenth command; and of charity, a duty which it obviously implies. The subject which next offers itself to consideration is the covetousness which is the immediate object of prohibition in this precept. This I shall discuss under the two general heads of avarice and ambition.

The former of these shall occupy the present Discourse.

The spirit of covetousness extends indeed both its views and desires to the objects of sensuality, as well as to wealth and distinction. But, beside that these are not commonly considered as the proper objects of covetousness, I have already discoursed so extensively concerning several sensual gratifications, as to render it unnecessary again to bring them into a particular examination.

In the present discussion, it is my design to consider,

I. *The folly,*

II. *The guilt,*

III. *The mischiefs of avarice.*

All these subjects are directly mentioned in the text. Of those, who 'will be rich,' it is said, that they 'fall into many foolish lusts.' These lusts are also said to be 'hurtful,' and to 'drown men in destruction and perdition.' It is farther said, that 'the love of money is the root of all evil. Some, who had coveted after it,' in or before the days of St Paul, he declares, 'erred,' or were seduced, 'from the faith; and pierced themselves through' (περιεπειραν, pierced themselves all around) 'with many sorrows.' Here we find the folly, guilt, and mischiefs of avarice asserted in the strongest as well as the most explicit terms. What is thus testified by St Paul, the common sense of mankind has in every age and country attested in the most ample manner. All nations, wherever wealth has existed, have declared covetousness to be eminently foolish, sinful, and mischievous. A stronger specimen of this testimony can hardly be given, than in the appropriation of the name *Miser* (a wretch), to the avaricious man.

The proofs which I shall give, at the present time, of the folly of avarice, are the following:—

1. The pursuits of the avaricious man are attended by many unnecessary anxieties, labours, and distresses.

The mind of an avaricious man is always the seat of eager desire. So peculiarly is this the fact, that the words *covetous* and *covetousness*, although originally signifying any inordinate desire, denote in common usage, when unqualified by other phraseology, the inordinate desire of wealth; and are equivalent to the words *avaricious* and *avarice*. This fact, more strongly than any reasoning could, proves that the love of riches is usually in an eminent degree, inordinate. But whenever our desires sustain this character, the mind becomes proportionally anxious. Our attainment of the coveted object is, in most cases, necessarily uncertain. Between the fear of losing, and the hope of acquiring it, the mind is necessarily suspended. As these desires are continually exerted, the suspense becomes, of course, continual also. A state of suspense is always a state of anxiety. Here the anxiety is regularly great and distressing; because the desires are incessant, eager, and sufficiently strong to control all the powers of the mind.

But this anxiety is unnecessarily suffered. All the prudence and industry which can be lawfully exerted for the acquisition of wealth, may be employed, and all the property which can be lawfully acquired, may be gained, without the exercise of a single avaricious feel-

ing, and without the sufferance of a single avaricious anxiety. The contented man often becomes rich to every desirable degree, amid the full possession of serenity, peace, and self-approbation.

Nor are the labours of the avaricious man of a less unfortunate nature. His mind is continually strained with effort. The strength of his desires goads him into an unceasing course of contrivances to gratify them. His thirst for property drives him to an incessant formation of plans by which he hopes to acquire it. The fear of lessening what he has acquired hurries him into an endless and wearisome train of exertions to secure himself from losses. Thus, a course of mental toil is voluntarily assumed by him, resembling, not the independent labours of a freeman, but the drudgery of a slave. The mind of an old miser is thus in a continual state of travail, and struggles through life under the pressure of an iron bondage.

A mind hurried by eager schemes of effort is always a tyrant to the body. Accordingly, the bodily labours of the miser commence before the dawn, worry him through the day, and scarcely permit him to lie down at night. A mere dray-horse, he is destined to a course of incessant toil. The only changes of life to him are from dragging loads, to bearing burdens; and, like those of the dray-horse, they are all borne and dragged for the use of others.

To the pains springing hourly from this unintermitted toil are added the daily reproaches of conscience; the sufferings of disease and accident, to which such a life is peculiarly exposed; the contempt of those around him; the denial of their pity to his sufferings; and their universal joy in his mortification.

2. The wishes of the avaricious man are followed by innumerable disappointments.

The property which he covets he often fails to acquire. His plans, although formed with his utmost sagacity, and with extreme care, are not unfrequently frustrated. His debtors become bankrupt. His hard bargains are avoided. His deeds, or other obligations, are defective. His agents are often unskilful, often unfaithful; and while they are employed merely because they will serve him at a cheap rate, frequently make this service distressingly expensive. Storms also will blow, in spite of his wishes. Shelves will spread, and rocks will stand in the way of his ships, as well as in the way of others. The gain which he looks for will often only appear to excite his most anxious desires, and mock him with the most painful disappointment.

Scarcely less is he wounded, when the gain in view is partially acquired. The advantage of a bargain, the amount of a crop, or the profits of a voyage, are less than his expectations have promised. As his calculations are all set high, and made by the hand of ardent desire, they of course overrun his success. But moderate success frustrates immoderate desire little less than absolute disappointment.

Should we even suppose his success to equal his expectations, he will be still disappointed. He covets wealth, for the good which he supposes it will confer. This good is not the supply of his wants, the communication of conveniences, or the ministration of luxuries. Luxuries and conveniences he has not a wish to enjoy; and his wants might be supplied by a tenth, a twentieth, or even a hundredth part of what he possesses. Personal importance, influence, and distinction, constitute eminently the good which the miser expects from his gains. But this object he often fails to accomplish; and, in the measure which he expects, always. Some of those around him will, in spite of both his wishes and labours, be richer than himself. Others will possess superior understanding; and others superior excellence. Some or all of these will acquire more reputation, weight, or influence than himself. Thus he is compelled to see men who are his rivals, whom he hates, or whom he either dreads as being more, or despises as being less, rich than himself, raised above him in the public estimation; while his own mind is left to the ranklings of envy, and the miseries of disappointment. At the same time, he is frequently stung by the severities of well-founded censure, lashed by the hand of scorn, and set up as a mark for the shafts of derision. He is also without friends, without commiseration, without esteem. He who would gain esteem, must deserve it. He who would 'have friends must show himself friendly.' He who would find commiseration, must commiserate others.

3. The good which the avaricious man actually gains is uncertain.

Wealth is the only good which he seeks. If this then is lost, he loses his all. Nothing can be more unwise than to centre all our views, wishes, and labours in uncertain good. But the good of the miser is eminently uncertain. No truth is more attested by the experience of man, than that 'riches make to themselves wings as an eagle, and fly away towards heaven.' The dangers to which wealth is exposed are innumerable. The schemes of its possessor, in spite of all human sagacity, will at times prove abortive. Flaws will at times be found in the written securities with which he attempts to guard his gains. The formation of them will often be committed to unskilful, because they are cheap, hands. Incompetent and unfaithful persons will at times be trusted because they offer peculiarly advantageous terms. Houses, notes, bonds, and deeds, will at times be consumed by fire. Crops will fail. Cattle will die. Ships will be captured or providentially lost. The owner and his family shall be sick. Debtors will abscond, or become bankrupt; and swindlers will run away with loans, which, in spite of avaricious prudence, they have obtained. In every case of such a nature, the miser's regrets are throes; his disappointments are agonies. The instinctive language of his heart is, 'Ye have taken away my gods; and what have I more?'

But avarice often amasses wealth for its heirs. Solomon hated all the labour which he had undergone to acquire riches, because he should leave them 'to the man who should come after him;' and knew not 'whether he would be a wise man, or a fool.' This uncertainty attends every man who amasses wealth. His destined heir or heirs may be wise and prudent; inclined to such expenses only as are useful; and prepared to preserve their inheritance undiminished for those who shall come after them. But they may die before they receive their patrimony, and leave it to the possession of prodigals; to men who will expend it for purposes which the original owner most abhorred; and in a manner so rapid and wanton, as would, if he were living, scarcely leave him the possession of his reason. The intention of all men who lay up property for their

children, unquestionably is to do them good. How often is this intention defeated! The property accumulated is designed to make them rich. How often is it the very means of making them poor! It is bequeathed to make them happy. How often is it the cause of their ruin! How often is a splendid inheritance the source of idleness, profusion, negligence, gambling, rash adventure, and speedy beggary! To harass one's self through life, merely to promote these miserable ends, is certainly, if any thing is, 'vanity and vexation of spirit.'

4. The avaricious man incapacitates himself to enjoy the very good which he seeks.

In order to enjoy any kind of good, it is indispensable that we should experience some degree of contentment, at least during the period of enjoyment. But 'he that loveth silver, will never be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance, with increase.' The desire of gain enlarges faster than the most successful and romantic acquisitions; and, were pounds to be accumulated as rapidly as the most favoured children of fortune multiply pence, the eager mind would still overleap the limits of its possessions, and demand new additions to its wealth with accelerated avidity. As these desires increase, the fear, the reluctance to enjoy what is accumulated, are proportionally increased. The miser, instead of furnishing himself with more gratifications, and enjoying them more highly, as his means of indulgence are increased, lessens them in number and degree; and tastes them with a more stinted parsimonious relish. His habitation, his dress, his food, his equipage, all become more decayed, mean, and miserable continually; because he feels less and less able to afford, first conveniences, then comforts, and then necessaries. 'Although he wanteth nothing for his soul of all that he desireth; yet God giveth him not power to eat thereof.' A rich miser who lives like a beggar, is only a beggar dreaming that he is rich.

II. *The guilt of avarice may be illustrated in the following manner:—*

1. The disposition is in itself grossly sinful.

This truth the Scriptures have exhibited with peculiar force. 'Covetousness,' saith St Paul, 'is idolatry.' Every person who has read his Bible knows that idolatry is marked in the Scriptures as a pre-eminent sin; as peculiarly 'the abominable thing,' which God says, 'My soul hates.' Its enormity I have illustrated in a former Discourse. It will therefore be unnecessary to expatiate upon it here. I shall only observe, as we are taught by St Paul, 'that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ, and of God.'

Common sense has long since pronounced the avaricious man to be an idolater, in the adage, proverbially used to describe his character; that 'he makes gold his god.' Plainly, he prefers wealth to every other object; and consecrates his heart, his talents, and his time to the single purpose of becoming rich. To this object he evidently postpones the real God; and neither renders to him, nor while avarice predominates can render, his affections or his services. With such 'love of the world,' the 'love of the Father' cannot be united. But how sordid, how shameful, how sinful, is it thus to worship and serve a contemptible creature more than the Creator, 'who is blessed for ever! Amen.'

By this disposition he in whom it dwells is unfitted for all his duty to God. Our duty to God is performed, if performed at all, from that supreme love to him which is enjoined in the first and greatest command of the moral law. But the heart of the avaricious man cannot thus love God, because he renders this love to the world. He cannot worship God, because he worships gold. He cannot serve God, because he serves Mammon. Thus his heart is alienated from his Maker, and his life employed in a continual and gross impiety.

2. Avarice speedily destroys the tenderness both of the heart and of the conscience.

To be 'without natural affection' is, in the estimation of the Scriptures, as well as that of common sense, to be eminently and hopelessly sinful. But nothing sooner hardens the native feelings of the heart than the love of riches. Open to them, the soul is sealed up to everything else, and loves nothing in comparison with them. Soon and easily it becomes callous to all the objects of tenderness and endearment; forgets the neighbour, the poor, and the distressed; and neglects even its nearest friends and relations. To such a heart poverty petitions, distress pleads, and nature cries in vain. Its ears are deaf, its eyes blind, and its hands closed. In vain the unhappy petitioner approaches with the hope of finding relief. Instead of meeting with the tear of sympathy, and the gentle voice of compassion, he is driven from the gate by the insults of a slave, and the growl of a mastiff.

With tenderness of feeling vanishes also tenderness of conscience; that inestimable blessing to man; the indispensable means of piety and salvation. The continual increase of the appetite for wealth continually overcomes its remonstrances, and gradually diminishes its power. Conscience, often vanquished, is vanquished with ease. Avarice accomplishes this defeat every day and every hour. Soon therefore its voice, always disregarded, ceases to be heard. Then religion and duty plead with as little success as friendship and suffering pleaded before. All the motives to repentance, faith, and obedience lose their power; and might with equal efficacy be addressed to blocks and stones.

To the miser nothing is of any value but wealth. But wealth, conscience cannot proffer, the Scriptures do not insure, God does not promise. Therefore conscience, the Scriptures, and God are of no value to him. To riches, to bargains, to loans, to amassing, to preserving, he is alive. To reformation, to piety, to salvation, he is dead.

3. The life of the avaricious man is an unceasing course of injustice.

It is an unceasing course of fraud. Few such men fail of being guilty of open dishonesty, the natural and almost necessary consequence of a covetous disposition. Should we suppose him to escape this iniquity, and, fixing his standard of morality as high as any avaricious man knows how to fix it, to make the law of the land his rule of righteousness, he will still live a life of fraud. His only scheme of action is uniformly to get as much as that law will permit; and it will permit, because it cannot prevent, frauds innumerable. Every hard bargain, as I have formerly observed, is a fraud; and the bargains of this man, unless his weakness forbids, or Providence prevents, are all hard. But his life is spent in making such bargains; and is therefore spent in fraud.

It is also an unceasing course of oppression. The

bargains which I have already specified are not fraudulent only, they are cruel. They are made, in innumerable instances, with the poor and suffering; and fill his coffers out of the pittance of want, and the gleanings of the widow and the fatherless. With an iron hand, he grasps the earnings of the necessitous; and 'snatches and devours on the right hand, and on the left.'

In this oppression his own family take their full share. His coffers indeed are rich; but himself and his family are poor. Often are they denied even the comforts of life; and always that education and those enjoyments which wealth is destined to supply. Their food is mean and stinted. Their clothes are the garb of poverty. The education which they receive is such as forms a menial character, and fits them only for a menial condition. Their comforts are measured out to them, not in streams, but in solitary drops. When they are settled in life, the means of business and enjoyment are supplied to them with so parsimonious a hand, as to cut them off from every useful plan, and every comfortable expectation. If hope at any time shines upon them, it shines only to be overcast. By their parent they are continually mocked with the cup of Tantalus; which they are permitted indeed to touch, but not to taste. When he leaves the world, and is compelled to impart his possessions to them, they find themselves, by a stinted education and shrivelled habits, rendered wholly unable either to enjoy their wealth themselves, or make it useful to others.

4. The covetous man is almost of course a liar.

The great design of the avaricious man, which fills his heart, spreads through his life, and controls all his conduct, is to get as much as he can; at least so far as it can be done legally and safely. This is the utmost point of honesty ever aimed at by an avaricious man. If this be attained, such a man always regards himself as being really honest. But in this he is wonderfully deceived. His favourite principle conducts him regularly to unceasing fraud, and regularly issues in a course of lying. As it is his aim always to sell for more and buy for less than justice will permit, he of course represents the value of his own commodities to be greater, and that of his neighbour's to be less, than the truth. As he spends most of his life in buying and selling, or in forming schemes to buy and sell, in this manner; he employs no small part of it either in actual or intentional lying. To compass the same object also he is equally tempted to misrepresent his own circumstances, the state of the markets, the quality and quantity, the soundness, weight, and measure of the commodities which he sells; and, so far as may be, of those which he buys. Thus the horse, the house, or the land which he is about to buy, is, according to his own account, poor, defective, and of little value. But as soon as he chooses to sell it, it has, according to his own account also, wonderfully changed its nature; and become excellent, free from every defect, and of very superior value. Yet, with this chain of falsehoods always hanging about his neck, the miserable wretch is frequently so blind as not to mistrust that he is a liar.

5. All these, and all other sins of the avaricious man, speedily become gross and rank habits.

I know of no disposition which sooner or more effectually makes a man blind to his own character, than avarice. The miser rarely, if ever mistrusts that he is a sinner. He thinks himself only a rich man. He does not dream that he is an oppressor, a liar, and a cheat; but merely supposes himself to be prosperous, sagacious, and skilled in business. With these views he will naturally entertain no thoughts of repentance; and no suspicion that it is necessary for him. His conscience, it is to be remembered, has in the mean time lost its power to remonstrate and to alarm. His heart also is so entirely engrossed by schemes of accumulating wealth, or is rather so absolutely possessed by the demon of avarice, as to have neither time nor room for the admission of a thought concerning reformation. He is left, therefore, to the domination of this wretched appetite; and becomes fixed and hardened in all his sins, without a check, and without resistance. There is probably no more obdurate heart than that of avarice; and no more hopeless character. Every passage to it appears to be closed up, except one; and that is opened only to gain.

III. *The mischiefs of avarice are innumerable.*

A few of them only can be even mentioned at the present time. These I shall consider as personal, private, and public.

Among the personal mischiefs of avarice are to be reckoned all the follies and all the sins which have been already specified, so far as their influence terminates in the avaricious man himself. They are not sins and follies only; they are mischiefs also; as indeed is every other sin and folly. As mischiefs, their combined efficacy is very great, malignant, and dreadful; such as would be deliberately encountered by no man but a profligate; such as would make a considerate man tremble.

To these let me add the guilt and misery of discontentment and envy. However fast the wealth of the avaricious man may increase, to whatever size the heaps may swell, his accumulations always lag behind his wishes. Indeed they never keep pace with what he feels to be his due. In his own view he has a right to be rich; and he regards the providence of God as under a species of obligation to make him rich. To these claims his wishes furnish the only limit; and whenever they are not satisfied, as is always the case, unless in the moment of some distinguished success; he becomes fretful, impatient, and angry at the dispensations of Providence. He may not, indeed, accuse God of injustice, face to face; but he murmurs at his Providence under the names of fortune, chance, luck, the state of things, and the course of events. Against these, and through these against God, his complaints are loud, vehement, bitter, full of resentment, and full of impiety.

Amid the troubles derived from this source he cannot fail, whenever he looks around him, to find some men happier, as well as more prosperous, at least in some respects, than himself. This man may be richer; that, though inferior in wealth, may possess a piece of land, a house, a servant, which, although a darling object of his covetous desires, he may be unable to obtain; a third may have more reputation; a fourth may have more influence; a fifth may be better beloved. Towards any or all of these, his envy may be directed with as malignant a spirit as his murmuring against God. It is not easy to conceive of a mind more wretched, or more odious, than that which makes itself miserable at the sight of happiness enjoyed by others; and pines at the thought of enjoyments which are not its own. This

spirit is the vulture of Prometheus, preying unceasingly upon his liver; which was ever renewed, that it might be for ever devoured.

With envy, discontentment, its twin-sister, perpetually dwells. The wretch, whose heart is the habitation of both, is taught and influenced by them to believe, that God is his enemy, because he does not minister to his covetousness; and that men are his enemies, because they enjoy the good which God has given them. Even happiness itself, so delightful, wherever it is seen, to a benevolent eye, is a source of anguish only to him, unless when locked up in his own coffers.

The grovelling and gross taste of the miser is, in my view, also eminently pernicious. To be under the government of such a taste is plainly to be cut off from all rich and refined enjoyment. The miser endeavours to satiate himself upon the dross of happiness. But he neither discerns nor seeks for the 'fine gold.' The delicious viands proffered to intelligent and immortal minds by the beneficence of God, are lost upon a palate which can satiate itself upon garbage. The delightful emotions of contentment, gratitude, and complacency towards his Maker, the sweets of a self-approving mind, the charming fruition of tenderness and sympathy, the refined participation of social good, and the elevated satisfaction which springs instinctively from the beneficent promotion of that good, can never find an entrance into a heart, all the avenues to which are barred up by the hand of avarice. But to lose these blessings is to lose infinitely.

At the same time, the miser wastes of course his day of probation. His life is wholly occupied by the pursuit of wealth. Of sin and ruin, of holiness and heaven, he has not time even to think. His life is too short for the accomplishment of his main object. Suns for him rise too late, and set too soon. Too rapidly do his days succeed each other, and too early do they terminate their career. His last sickness arrests him while he is counting his gold: and death knocks at his door, while he is in the midst of a gainful bargain. Thus he is hurried and goaded through the journey of life by his covetousness; and finds no opportunity to pause, and think upon the concerns of his soul; no moment in which he can withdraw his eye from gain, and cast a look towards heaven. 'It is easier,' saith our Saviour, 'for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.'

Thus it is evident, that 'they that will be rich, fall into temptation, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition;'—that 'the love of money is the root of all evil;'—and that 'such as covet after it, pierce themselves through with many sorrows.'

The private mischiefs of avarice are those which affect unhappily the interests of families and neighbourhoods.

To these little circles, formed to be happy, and actually the scenes of the principal happiness furnished by this world, the miser is a common nuisance. To his family he presents the miserable example of covetousness, fraud, oppression, falsehood, and impiety; and the most humiliating and distressing living picture of an abandoned worldling, forgetting his God and forgotten by him; worshipping gold; ever craving and devouring, but never satisfied; denying himself and his household the comforts of life, and imparting to them the necessaries only in crums and shreds; living a life of perpetual meanness and debasement; wasting the day of probation; 'treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath;' advancing onward to his final account, without an effort or a thought of preparation for this tremendous event; and, all this while irresistibly endeared to them by the strong power of natural affection.

On the neighbourhood, the miser inflicts the complicated, harassing, and intense evils of continually repeated fraud and oppression. Wherever such a man plants himself, sufferings spring up all around him. To the young, the ignorant, the thoughtless, and the necessitous, he lends money at exorbitant interest, and with tenfold security. The payment he discourages, until the amount has become sufficient to enable him with a suit to enclose their whole possessions in his net. To the poor and suffering also he sells at unconscionable prices the necessaries of life. Notes, bonds, and mortgages given by persons of the same description, he buys, at an enormous discount. Of estates left intestate he watchfully seeks, and with art and perseverance obtains the administration. When others are obliged to buy, he sells; and when others are obliged to sell, he buys. In this manner his loans are almost instantaneously doubled; and property mortgaged to him for a tenth part of its value is swallowed up. The estates of widows and orphans melt away before his breath, as the snow beneath the April sun. The possessions of all around him move only towards his den. The farm and the house, the garden and the cottage, the herd on the one hand, and the widow's cow and ten sheep on the other, go down together into this open sepulchre. Over the miserable beings who cannot escape his fangs he reigns with a despotic and wolfish dominion. All around him tremble at his nod; and, should any one retain sufficient energy to question his pleasure, or dispute his control, he points his eyes to the jail, and hushes every murmur to silence, and every thought to despair.

Nor does he less injure society, although the injury is ordinarily less observed, as being less felt, by corrupting both his family and his neighbourhood. His example emboldens, his skill instructs, and his success allures those who are witnesses of his life to pursue the same course of villany and oppression. All the sagacious sharpen their cunning by his practical lessons. The intrepid become daring by his example. The greedy become ravenous by his success. Thus the spirit of avarice is caught, its villanies are multiplied, and a poisonous scion engrafted upon every stock in the neighbourhood. His own sons, if not broken down by his hard-handed parsimony, or induced by their sufferings to detest it, and rush into the opposite extreme of profusion, become proficients in all the mysteries of fraud and oppression: not instructed and led only, but drilled into the eager, shrewd, and gainful pursuit of wealth. From him they learn to undervalue all rules of morality, except the law of the land, to violate the dictates of compassion, to burst the bonds of conscience, and to regard with indifference and contempt the will of God. In his house, as in a second Newgate, young men soon become old in villany; and, with a heart prematurely hardened into stone, and hands trained to mischief by transferred experience, are turned loose to prey upon the vitals of society.

The public mischiefs of avarice are not less numerous; and are of incomprehensible magnitude. It was one of the glorious characteristics of the men recom-

mended by Jethro to Moses, to fill the stations of rulers, that 'they hated covetousness:' a characteristic indispensable to him, who would rule justly, and be a 'minister of God for good to his people. When avarice ascends the chair of state, mingles with the councils of princes, seats herself on the bench of justice, or takes her place in the chamber of legislation; nay, when she takes possession of subordinate departments, particularly of those which are financial in the administration of government, her views become extended, and her ravages terrible. The man over whom she has established her dominion sees, even in the humblest of these stations, prospects of acquiring wealth opening suddenly upon him, of which he before never formed a conception. In the mysterious collection of revenues, the mazy management of taxes, the undefined claims for perquisites, the opportunities of soliciting and receiving customary bribes, and in the boundless gulf of naval and military contracts, he beholds new means and new motives for the exercise of all his talents, fraud, and rapacity, and for the speedy acquisition of opulence, crowding upon him at once. The alluring scene he surveys with the same spirit with which a vulture eyes the field of blood. Everything on which he can fasten his talons here becomes his prey. The public he cheats without compunction; individuals he oppresses without pity. There is sufficient wealth in the world to supply all its inhabitants with comfort. But, when some become suddenly and enormously rich, multitudes must sink into the lowest depths of poverty. To enable a single farmer of revenues, or a single contractor, to lodge in a palace, to riot at the table of luxury, and to roll on wheels of splendour, thousands have sweat blood, and wrung their hands in agony. But what is all this to him? He is rich, whoever else may be poor. He is fed, whoever else may starve. The frauds and ravages of public agents, which find palliation, countenance, and excuse from the fact that they have become customary, constitute no small part of that oppression which has awakened the groans and cries of the human race, from the days of Nimrod to the present hour.

But avarice is not confined to subordinate agents. Often it ascends the throne, and grasps the sceptre. The evils of which it is the parent in this situation, are fully proportioned to its power, and outrun the most excursive wanderings of imagination. A large part of the miseries entailed on mankind by oppressive taxes at home, and ruinous wars abroad, are created by the lust for plunder. This fiend hurried the Spaniards to America, and stung them into the perpetration of all those cruelties which laid waste the empires of Mexico and Peru. The same foul spirit steered the slave-ships of America and Europe to the African shores; tore from their friends, children, and parents, ten millions of the unoffending natives; transported them in chains across the Atlantic; and hurried them to the grave by oppressive toil, torture, and death. Everywhere and in every age she has wasted the happiness, wrung the heart, and poured out the blood of man. Relentless as death, and insatiable as the grave, she has continually 'opened her mouth without measure; and the glory, the multitude, and the pomp' of cities, states, and empires have descended into the abyss!

SERMON CXXXII.

THE LAW OF GOD.—THE DECALOGUE.—THE TENTH COMMANDMENT.—AMBITION.

Mind not high things.—Rom. xii. 16.

The subject of the preceding Discourse, you may remember, was *avarice*. In the present, I shall consider the other great exercise of a covetous spirit, viz. *ambition*.

Ambition is an affection of the mind, nearly related to pride and vanity. Vanity is the self-complacency which we feel in the consciousness of being superior to others. Pride is the same self-complacency united with a contempt for those whom we consider as our inferiors. Ambition is the desire of obtaining, or increasing, this superiority. Vanity usually makes men civil and complaisant. Pride renders them rude, imperious, and overbearing. Vanity chiefly subjects men to the imputation of weakness, and excites mingled emotions of pity and contempt. Pride is often attended with a kind of repulsive dignity; is rather seen to be deserving of contempt, than realized as the object of it; sometimes awakens awe; and always creates hatred and loathing. Vain men are always ambitious; proud men generally: but they sometimes appear satisfied with their present envied superiority to all around them. Ambitious men are frequently vain, and sooner or later are always proud. Vanity rests chiefly on personal attributes. Pride, in addition to these, fastens on everything which is supposed to create distinction.

This love of superiority is the most remarkable exercise of covetousness; and, united with the discontentment and envy by which it is regularly accompanied, appears to constitute the principal corruption of the human mind. It is impossible, without wonder, to observe the modes in which mankind exercise it, and the objects in which it finds its gratification. They are of every kind, and are found everywhere. We are proud and vain of whatever, in our own view, raises us above others; whether a gift of nature, an attainment of our own, or a mere accident. Our pride and vanity are excited by the possession of personal beauty, strength, or agility; by a lively imagination, clear judgment, and

tenderness of feeling; by patrimonial wealth, and distinction of family; by the fact, that we live in the same neighbourhood, or even in the same country, with persons of eminence; that we know them; or even that we have seen them. No less commonly are we proud and vain of bodily feats, graceful motions, and becoming manners; of our gains; of our learning, inventions, sallies of wit, efforts of eloquence, and exploits of heroism; of the employments to which we are devoted; of the taste which we display in our dress, entertainments, manner of living, building, and planting: of our industry, prudence, generosity, and piety; of our supposed interest in the favour of God; nay, even of our penitence and humility. We are proud also of the town in which we were born; of the church to which we are attached; of the country in which we live; of the beauty of its surface, the fertility of its soil, and the salubrity of its climate. In a word, these emotions are excited by everything from which a roving, eager imagination, and a corrupt heart, can elicit the means of personal distinction.

So far as these gratifications of pride are not in our possession, but are yet supposed to be attainable, or so far as they are supposed capable of being increased, when already possessed by us, they become objects of ambition. We eagerly covet them, and labour strenuously to acquire them.

In the humble circles of life, the first, and very frequently the last aim of this desire of superiority, is to rise above those who are in the same humble station. To be the first in a village would, it is said, have been more acceptable to Cæsar himself, than to have been the second in Rome. Most men certainly raise their ambition no higher than this very limited superiority. Neither their views, nor their circumstances, permit them to grasp at more extensive and more elevated objects. Persons who move in a larger sphere are apt to look down with contempt and pity, upon the lowly struggles for pre-eminence which spring up in the cottage, and agitate the hamlet, without remembering that they are just as rational, and just as satisfactory, while they are less distressing, and less guilty, than their own more splendid and violent efforts to obtain superior consequence.

Minds of a more restless cast, of more expanded views, and more inordinate wishes, never stop voluntarily at such objects as these. The field of distinction is co-extended with the globe. The means by which it may be acquired are endless in their multitude, and their application: and the prize is always ready to crown the victor. It cannot be wondered at, that minds of such a cast should therefore enter the race, and struggle vigorously to gain the prize.

I have remarked, that the means of distinction are endless in their multitude, and their application. The objects from which it is immediately derived, are, however, comparatively few. These are chiefly wealth, splendour, learning, strength of mind, genius, eloquence, courage, place, and power. To these are to be added, those remarkable actions which excite the admiration and applause of mankind.

Among the objects most immediately coveted by ambitious men, especially by those whose ambition has been peculiarly ardent and insatiable, fame, splendour, place, and power have held the first rank. Splendour has been sought as the means of fixing and dazzling the eyes of their fellow men; place and fame as being partly the means of distinction, and partly the distinction itself; and power, as involving in its nature the most decisive and acknowledged superiority; as including place, fame, and splendour; and as furnishing all the earthly means of distinction. Into the chase for these objects the great body of mankind have entered, whenever they have found an opportunity. The humble have striven for little places, and the show which was intended to excite the stare of a neighbourhood. The aspiring have aimed at stations of high political consequence, and struggled to set the world agape. Men of limited views have confined their labours to the attainment of a character which should circulate, with respect, through a village; or be engraved with marks of distinction upon a tombstone; while the lofty-minded have demanded a name which should sound through the world, and awaken the wonder of future generations. The powers of subaltern magistracy have satisfied multitudes; while others have panted to grasp the sceptre of the monarch, and the sword of the conqueror.

The text is directed against this spirit in every form and degree. 'Mind not high things,' says St Paul to the Christians at Rome. The English word 'mind,' appears very happily to express the meaning of the original term, φρονουντες;—*Give not your minds to high things with either attention or desire.* It will be easily seen, that this precept cuts up by the roots both the spirit and the consequences of ambition. If we pay not the regard here forbidden to the objects of ambition, it is plain, that we shall neither cherish the spirit, nor pursue the conduct which it dictates. It is hardly necessary to observe, that the precept is directed to us with the same force and obligation as to the Christians at Rome.

The reasons for this prohibition are of the most satisfactory and sufficient nature. As proofs of this truth I shall allege the following:—

1. Ambition is a primary part of our rebellion against the law and government of God.

In the first discourse on the tenth command, I observed, that 'an inordinate desire of natural good seems to be the commencement of sin, in a being originally virtuous.' The two great branches of this spirit, or the two great modes in which it operates, are ambition and avarice. Of these, ambition is without a question the most universal, and the most powerfully operative. It extends to more objects, exerts itself in a far greater variety of modes, occupies, so far as we can judge, the minds of much greater multitudes, is more restless, vehement, and, if possible, more craving. In every just consideration it holds, of course, the primary place.

God has assigned his place and duties, his situation and enjoyments, to every intelligent creature. Impatience with regard to this situation, and the duties which it involves, discontentment with the enjoyment which it furnishes, and those inordinate desires for the stations and allotments of others, out of which impatience and discontentment spring, are, I think, evidently the first risings of the mind against its Maker. In these emotions, the mind declares that its Maker's government is, in its own view, unreasonable and unjust; and that his dispensations are such as to make it justifiably unwilling to regard them with obedience and submission. Thus it arraigns the wisdom and goodness of Jehovah,

and withdraws itself from allegiance to the Ruler of all things. Ambition, then, the principal branch of this spirit, is the original rebellion against the government of God. Accordingly, the principal ingredient in the first transgression was the ambition of our first parents to become 'as gods, knowing good and evil.' A precept which forbids the assumption of so dangerous a character, and the pursuit of such shameful conduct, can need no additional proof of its rectitude. Still, that which is unnecessary to produce conviction, may be useful for the purpose of making impressions on the heart. I observe, therefore,

2. Ambition is fatal to the happiness of the ambitious man.

It is proverbially acknowledged, that envy and discontent are only other names for misery. Yet these wretched attributes are always attendant on ambition. No mind can be contented whose desires are ungratified. When those desires are eager, it will be still more discontented; and when he who cherishes those desires, sees the good which he covets in the possession of others, he cannot fail to be envious. But the desires of an ambitious man are always ungratified. That they are eager, needs no proof; and eager desires invariably overrun the measure of the expected enjoyment. When it is attained, therefore, it falls regularly short of the expectations and wishes; and thus the mind regularly fails of being satisfied, even when its efforts are crowned with success. The happiness of heaven, we are taught, will be commensurate to the utmost desires of its inhabitants. In this world ardent wishes were never satisfied, nor high hopes ever indulged without disappointment.

The man who enters the career of political advancement, never acquires anything like satisfaction, until he sees, with absolute conviction, that he can gain nothing more. Then indeed he may sometimes sit down quietly, because there is nothing within the horizon of his view to rouse his energy to new hopes and new exertions. But his quiet is only the stagnant dulness left by disappointment—the paralytic torpor of despair. At first he aims at an humble office. He attains it; and with new eagerness raises his views to one which is higher. He attains this also; and, more eager still, bends his efforts to the acquisition of a third. The acquisition of this only renders more intense his thirst for another. Thus he heats himself, like a chariot-wheel, merely by his own career; and will never cease to pant more and more ardently for promotion, until he finds his progress stopped by obstacles which neither art nor influence can remove.

In the same manner, the candidate for literary eminence commences the chase of fame with wishes usually moderate. His first success, however, enlarges his views, and gives new vigour to his desires. Originally, he would have been satisfied with the distinction of being celebrated through a village. Thence he wishes to spread his name through a city, thence through a country, thence through the world, and thence through succeeding generations. Were sufficient means of communication furnished, he would be still more ardently desirous to extend his fame through the planetary regions, and from them to the utmost extent of the stellary system. Were all the parts of this immeasurable career possible, his mind at the end of it would be less contented than at the commencement; and would find, with a mixture of astonishment and agony, that the moment when the strife was terminated, the enjoyment which it promised was gone.

In the pursuit of power this truth is still more forcibly illustrated. He who, with distinguished political talents, devotes himself to this acquisition, hurries with increasing vehemence from petty domination, through all the grades of superior sway, until he becomes a Cromwell, or a king. He who aims at the same object through a military progress, starts from a school, in the character of a cadet, and pushes through the subordinate offices to the command of a regiment, a brigade, a division, and an army. With an ambition, changing from desire into violence, from violence into rage, and from rage into frenzy, he then becomes a consul, a king, an emperor, a monarch of many crowns and many realms; and burns with more intense ardour to go on, subduing and ruling, until the earth furnishes nothing more to be ruled or subdued. Thus the ambition, which at first was a spark, is soon blown into a flame, and terminates in a conflagration. Alexander subdued and ruled the known world. When he had finished his course, he sat down and wept, because there was no other world for him to conquer.

Thus it is plain, that the desires of ambition must ever be ungratified because they increase faster than any possible gratification, and because they increase with a progressive celerity; expanding faster at every future, than at any preceding period of enjoyment. Though 'all rivers run into this ocean,' still it 'is not full.' Although millions continually crowd into this grave, still it says not, 'It is enough.' As avarice would never cease to crave, until it had gorged the riches of the universe; so ambition would never rest, until it has ascended the throne of the Creator.

But, after all its accumulations, there will be wealth which avarice cannot grasp. After all its achievements, there will be heights which ambition cannot climb. Discontentment therefore and murmuring towards the God who will not give the coveted enjoyments, and envy towards the created beings who possess them, will rankle in the insatiable bosom, and annihilate the comfort which might otherwise spring from the mass of good already acquired. Ahab on the throne of Israel made himself miserable because he could not lay his hands on the humble vineyard of Naboth. Haman, an obscure captive, was elevated to the second place of power and distinction in the empire of Persia, comprehending at that time almost all the wealth and people of the known world. Yet, at this height of power and splendour, in an assembly of his family and friends, while he was reciting to them 'the glory of his riches, the multitude of his children, and all the things wherein the king had promoted him, and how he had advanced him above the princes and servants of the king;' when he said, 'More over, Esther the queen did let no man come in with th king unto the banquet that she had prepared, but my self; and to-morrow am I invited unto her also with the king:' this aspiring, haughty wretch could add 'Yet all this availeth me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate.'

Our first parents became discontented with their ver nature; and under the influence of ambition wished t become 'as gods.' In this monstrous wish they have been often followed by their descendants. Several of the Persian emperors, Alexander the Great, and seve-

ral of the Roman emperors claimed divine honours, and demanded sacrifices and libations. The bishops of Rome also have arrogated to themselves the peculiar titles of Jehovah;* and have accordingly granted absolutions of sin, and passports to heaven. Nay, they have abrogated the commands of God, substituted for them contrary precepts, ascended the throne of the Redeemer, assumed the absolute government of his church, permitted and interdicted its worship at their pleasure, claimed the world as their property, and declared all mankind to be their vassals. Beyond all this, they have given, openly and publicly, indulgences, or permissions to sin. Thus has this 'man of sin,' this 'son of perdition, exalted himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped.' Thus has he, 'as God, sat in the temple of God, showing himself to be God.'

With all these boundless demands of enjoyment, however, this unvarying claim to the exclusive possession of natural good, ambition never performed a single duty to God, or to man. To a mind under the control of this passion, moral good has no charms, and never becomes the object of either complacency or desire. By such a man his own soul is neglected and forgotten; his fellow men are neither befriended nor loved; and his God is neither worshipped nor obeyed. All his talents and all his time are employed, with unceasing drudgery, solely to adorn, gratify, and exalt himself. Of this wretched idol he regards the earth as the shrine, and the skies as the temple. To this idol he sacrifices all that he is, and all that he has; and demands from others every offering which he can claim, and they can give. In homage to this idol he makes every duty give way, and, so far as is in his power, bends all the interests of his fellow men, and those of the universe, and sets it up as a rival to God himself.

In such a mind how can the sense of duty be kept alive? How can he whose attention is thus fascinated by personal greatness and distinction, whose soul is swollen by the consciousness of personal superiority, find either inclination or leisure for so humble an employment as the performing of his duty? In such a mind how can repentance even begin? How can such a mind comprehend the necessity of relying on the Redeemer for acceptance with God? How can such a mind realize either the importance or the existence of moral obligation; or feel itself bound to obey the will of its Creator? Given up to sin, not from negligence only, from inconsideration, or heedless propensity, but from settled design, from ardent choice, from laborious contrivance, how can such a mind furnish room for the admission of humility, dependence, the fear of God, submission to his will, contentment, benevolence, equity, or compassion? But where these attributes are not, no duty can be performed.

To his own family, indeed, he may be thought to render some of those services which are obviously required both by reason and revelation. All men are commanded to 'provide for those of their own house;' and for his own house the ambitious man actually provides; but not in such a manner as either to perform his own duty, or benefit his family. He labours indeed to make them great; but not to make them wise, just, or good. His children he regards merely as heirs; and not as moral beings, placed during the present life in a state of trial, and destined in a future world to a state of reward. They are therefore taught, governed, influenced, and habituated to no duty, and to no real good. His only object is to invest them with a superiority resembling his own; that they may be decent companions to him while he lives, and inherit his grandeur after his death. They are therefore educated to be in all respects as bad as, and in most worse than, himself. The great point of instruction which thay receive, from the cradle to the end of his life, is, that all things, human and divine, are to give way to the pursuit of personal distinction. He who educates his family in this manner, cannot be believed to perform of design a single parental duty.

As the ambitious man regards not the real interests of his own family, it cannot be believed that he will exercise any greater tenderness for those of his fellow men. I have already remarked that his mind can furnish no room for the admission of benevolence, equity, and compassion. Without these attributes, it is hardly necessary to observe, no duty to mankind can be performed.

To God, this lofty-minded being cannot be expected to render any part of that homage which he demands from all other beings to himself. The only language of his heart, while looking down from the height to which he imagines himself raised by a series of prosperous efforts, is, 'I will ascend into heaven: I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will ascend above the height of the clouds; I will be like the Most High.' What submission, what obedience, what worship, can co-exist with this language and the thoughts from which it springs?

At the same time, the ambitious man surrounds himself with a host of temptations. The 'unclean spirit' which originally dwelt in his heart, after having 'gone out, and walked in dry places, seeking rest, and finding none;' after saying, 'I will return to my house, whence I came out; has already entered it again, and found it empty, swept, and garnished,' for his reception. Already has he gone, and taken 'with himself seven other spirits, more wicked than himself; and they have entered in,' and taken final possession of this convenient residence. His temper, his ruling passion, his course of life holds out a welcome to every temptation, a call to every sin, a summons to every fiend. His mind is a cage of unclean and furious passions. His purposes demand for their accomplishment the continual intervention of falsehood, fraud, injustice, and cruelty, of impiety and irreligion. The 'sins' of such a man, instead of 'following after' him, march before him in regular array; and fight, maraud, and plunder, to fulfill his designs, and to satiate the malignity of those evil spirits who have taken up their final habitation in his bosom.

3. Ambition is the source of numerous and terrible evils to mankind.

To comprehend the import of this truth, even in the imperfect manner in which it can be comprehended by us, it would be necessary to recur to the history of the human kind. In all ages, and in all nations, this vast record has been little else than a delineation of the miseries which this malignant passion has produced. It has been a tale of sorrows and groans, and sighs and tears. The earth has rung throughout its immense regions with the melancholy murmur; and the walls of

* Dominus, Deus noster, Papa.

heaven have echoed back 'mourning, lamentation, and woe.' In a short discourse like this, were it to be changed into a mere vocabulary, the very names of the various sufferings wrought by ambition could not be alphabetically recited. A loose and general specification of a very few of these evils is all that can be accomplished, and therefore all that will be attempted.

Among the several adventurers in the field of distinction, none appears so likely to be harmless, as the candidate for literary fame. Learning is an object naturally so useful, and the pursuit of it an employment so quiet, and so little ominous to the public peace, as to induce us very easily to believe that ambition here, at least, would be innoxious and unalarming. Should this, however, be our conclusion, we should find ourselves not a little disappointed. There has been a period, of which but too many traces still remain; a period in which it was fashionable, and therefore an object of ambition, to be a free-thinker. Literary men of this description trumpeted so loudly and so incessantly the learning, genius, and philosophy of themselves and their coadjutors; vapoured with so much parade concerning their superiority to superstition, their independence, their liberality, and their exemption from prejudice; and promised so magnificently to rescue their fellow men from the mists of error, and from the bondage of the mind, that the young, the ignorant, and the silly, dazzled by these splendid pretensions, became ambitious of this distinction, and, without examination or conviction, became free-thinkers in numerous instances, merely that they might have the honour of being united to this cluster of great men. The men themselves, finding that they had become great in the estimation of others by means of these lofty pretensions, went on, and became still greater by increasing their pretensions. By the mere dint of study and reflection, they claimed to understand and teach the will of God concerning the duty and salvation of men; to explore the future designs of Omniscience; and to prescribe rules of justice and propriety, according to which, if they were to be believed, God himself was bound to conduct his administrations to mankind. The Scriptures they not only discarded, but loaded with every calumny, and every insult. The Redeemer of the world they insulted even more grossly than the ancient Jews had done; stained his character with vice and infamy, annihilated his mediation. In the mean time, they poured out a torrent of immoral principles which they dignified with the name of philosophy, and which they proposed as proper rules to direct the conduct of men. By these principles the faith of mankind was perplexed, their morality unhinged, the distinction between virtue and vice destroyed, the existence of both denied, and the bonds of society cut asunder. Men, of course, were let loose upon each other without the restraint of moral precept, without the checks of conscience, without the fear of God.

The late revolution in France, that volcanic explosion, which deluged the world with successive floods of darkness and fire, had all its materials collected, and all its flames kindled by men of this description. It is not intended, that literary consequence was the only distinction sought by those who were the prime agents in producing this terrible shock of nature. The lust of power had undoubtedly its full share in bringing to pass this astonishing event. But the desire of fame had its share also. Had not the principles of the French nation been deeply corrupted, their morals dissolved, and their sense of religious obligation destroyed by the pen of sophistry, it is incredible that they should at once have burst all the bonds of nature and morality, transmigrated in a moment from the character of civilized men, into that of wolves and tigers, and covered their country with havoc and blood.

In the career of political distinction the progress is usually more rapid, and the change more astonishing. In this career, men of fair moral reputation and decent life, when seized by the disease of ambition, lose suddenly all their formed apparent principles, and are changed at once into office-hunters and demagogues. To obtain a place, or to acquire suffrages, they become false, venal, and treacherous; corrupt and bribe others, and are themselves corrupted and bribed; become panders to men of power, and sycophants to the multitude; creep through the serpentine mazes of electioneering; and sell their souls for a vote or an appointment, in the dark recesses of a cabal.

Their rivals also they calumniate with all the foul aspersions which ingenuity can invent, malignity adopt, obloquy utter, or falsehood convey. The more virtuous, wise, and respected these rivals may be, the more artful and incessant will be their calumnies; because from such men they feel the danger of defeat to be peculiarly alarming. Wisdom and worth therefore are pre-eminently the objects of their hatred and persecution; and fall by the scythe of ambition, as by the scythe of death.

The people at large, in the mean time, are duped by every false tale, which the cunning of these men enables them to invent, terrified by every false alarm, corrupted by every false principle, and misled into every dangerous and fatal measure. Neighbours in this manner are roused to jealousy, hatred, and hostility against neighbours; friends against friends; brothers against brothers; 'the father against the son, and the son against the father.' Truth and justice, kindness, peace, and happiness, fly before these evil genii. Anarchy, behind them, summons her hosts to the civil conflict. Battles are fought with unnatural rage, and fell violence; fields are covered with carnage, and drenched in blood; until there are none left to contend, and the country is converted into a desert. Then despotism plants his throne on the ruins, and stretches his iron sceptre over the miserable relics, of the nation. Such was often the progress of political ambition in the ancient and modern republics of Europe; and such, there is no small reason to fear, may one day be its efficacy on our own happy land.

When, instead of the love of peace and political distinction, the passion for power and a determination to rule has taken possession of the heart, the evils have been far more numerous, extensive, and terrible. These evils have been the chief themes of history in all the ages of time. It cannot be necessary, that they should be particularized by me. In some countries of Asia and Africa, the candidate for the throne secures his possession of that proud and dangerous eminence by imprisoning for life every heir, and every competitor; in others, by putting out their eyes; and in others, by murdering them in cold blood. Thus nations are by this infernal passion shut out from the possibility of

being governed by mild, upright, and benevolent rulers. Ambition knows no path to a throne but a path of blood, and seats upon it none but an assassin. The adherents to an unsuccessful candidate, although supporting their lawful prince, and performing a duty which God has enjoined, and from which they cannot be released, are involved in his ruin. Prisons are crowded with hundreds and thousands of miserable wretches, guilty of no crime, but that of endeavouring to sustain the government, and resisting usurpation. The axe and the halter, the musket and the cannon, desolate cities and provinces of their inhabitants, and thin the ranks of mankind to make the seat of the tyrant secure. Not one of these unhappy wretches was probably worse, all were probably better, men than he who bathed his hands in their blood. Cæsar fought fifty-six pitched battles, and killed one million two hundred thousand human beings, to secure to himself the Roman sceptre. More than three millions of such beings have been slaughtered to place the modern Cæsar in the undisputed possession of his imperial greatness. To all these miserable sufferers God gave life, and friends, and comforts, with a bountiful hand. Why were they not permitted to enjoy these blessings, during the period allotted to man? Because ambition was pleased to put its veto upon the benevolent dispensation of the Creator; because, to satiate one man, it became necessary to sacrifice the happiness of millions better than himself; because such a being could be pleased to see himself seated on a throne, although it was erected in a stall of slaughter, and environed by a lake of blood!

SERMON CXXXIII.

THE LAW OF GOD.—MAN'S INABILITY TO OBEY THE LAW OF GOD.

Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.
ROM. viii. 7.

In a long series of Discourses, I have examined the law of God, or the preceptive part of the Scriptures. This examination I have distributed into two great divisions: the first involving that summary of the law, which Christ informs us contains the substance of all that is enjoined in the Old Testament; the second, including the Decalogue, in which this summary is enlarged from two precepts to ten; and the duties which it required are more particularly exhibited. In both of these divisions I have considered, as I found occasion, those comments also of Christ, the prophets, and the apostles, which explain and enforce the various requisitions. The importance of these precepts does more than justify, it demands, the extensive place allotted to them in this system, and the attempts which have here been made, to recommend them to the faith and the obedience of this assembly. The end of all useful speculation is practice. The use of all truth is, ultimately, to regulate the conduct of intelligent beings. Those which are called the doctrines of the Scriptures, are necessary and profitable to mankind in two respects. The first is, that they involve immediate practical duties to a vast extent; the second is, that by teaching us our character, situation, and relations to God and each other, and the character of God, together with his relations to us, they show us the foundation of all our duty; the reasons of it, the motives to it, and the manner in which it is to be performed. Most of these things are unfolded to us by the precepts of the Scriptures. They are also attended by some advantages, which are peculiar to themselves. They declare our duty directly; and declare it in the form of law. An authoritative rule is given in each of them, announcing the will of the Lawgiver, requiring our obedience, and prohibiting our disobedience, with rewards and penalties annexed to every precept; not, indeed, annexed to every precept in form; but so as to be always easily present to the eyes of those for whom the law was made. Instruction communicated in this manner, is attended by a force and efficacy of which all other teaching is incapable.

From these considerations arises the importance of inculcating much and often, the preceptive part of the Scriptures from the desk. I well know, that preaching of this nature has been opposed and censured by individuals, in several classes of Christians. By Antinomians it may be consistently censured. As these men suppose themselves released from the law of God, as a rule of duty, by the gracious dispensation of the gospel, they have considered the preaching of the law as useless, and even as mischievous. Such sermons as have urged the religious and moral duties of man, they have styled 'legal sermons,' and those who have delivered them 'legal preachers.' By this language they have intended to insinuate, or openly to declare, that the design of such preaching was the establishment of the doctrine, that we are justified by works of law; and the subversion of the evangelical doctrine, that we are justified by grace, through faith in the Redeemer. That men have urged obedience to the precepts of the Scriptures with this design, I shall not question, any more than that the same men have pursued the same design by descanting on the doctrines of the Scriptures; and even on those which are purely evangelical. But that inculcating the practical duties which are required of mankind in the Scriptures is, in this sense, legal preaching, I wholly deny. If this is its true character, Christ himself was a legal preacher. This glorious person in his own discourses has given these precepts, expatiated upon them, and urged obedience to them upon

mankind, in a vast multitude of forms, to a great extent, and with unrivalled force and beauty. His sermon on the mount is an illustrious and pre-eminent example of this nature.

This error, it must be owned, has not been confined to Antinomians. Zealous men, enrolled by themselves in other classes of Christians, and deluding themselves, almost of course, by the warmth and haste with which they decide concerning every subject, have entertained similar views, and adopted similar language. I would ask these men, to what purpose were the precepts of the Scriptures given? Why are they so often, so variously, and so forcibly, urged upon mankind? I would ask them, Whether 'all Scripture is,' or is not, 'given by inspiration of God;' and whether it is, or is not, all 'profitable,' not only 'for doctrine, reproof, and correction,' but also 'for instruction in righteousness?' If this inquiry must be answered affirmatively concerning the Old Testament, it cannot be answered negatively concerning the New.

There are those who, on the contrary, confine most or all of their Discourses from the pulpit to the precepts of the Scriptures; and either wholly, or chiefly, leave the doctrines which they contain out of their preaching. Such preachers are equally censurable with their adversaries. No justification can be pleaded for the conduct of either. This separation cannot lawfully be made by either. God has united them; they cannot therefore be disjoined by man. He, who preaches a part of the gospel, cannot be said to preach the gospel which Paul preached. He may not indeed utter doctrines or precepts contrary to those of Paul: but he purposely avoids preaching the whole gospel of Paul: and, although not guilty of denying or subverting either the truths or the injunctions given us by the apostle, yet, for mutilating the system he merits severe reprehension.

Such preachers as profess the doctrines of the reformation, have been frequently charged with neglecting to a great degree the duty of inculcating the morality of the gospel. In solitary instances the charge may have been deserved. That it is generally just, there is not a single reason to believe. I regard it as one of those general charges which fall everywhere, and rest nowhere; the refuge of weak and unworthy minds, when they wish to indulge a spirit of bitterness, by uttering severe imputations, and yet dare not fasten them upon individuals, for fear of being required to support them by evidence. So far as my knowledge of preachers extends, those who are sometimes called evangelical, inculcate the practical duties of mankind with more frequency and more earnestness than most other men. They do not, indeed, preach the morals of heathen philosophy: but they preach the cordial, principled morality of the gospel, springing from the faith, 'without which it is impossible to please God.'

In my own view, this preaching is indispensable to mankind: and I cordially unite with the excellent Doddridge in saying, 'Happy would it be for the church of Christ, if these important doctrines of practical religion were more inculcated, and less of the zeal of its teachers spent in discussing vain questions, and intricate strifes about words, which have been productive of so much envy and contention, obloquy and suspicion.'

The next subject which offers itself to our consideration in a System of Theology, is *the nature of that inability to obey the divine law, which is commonly acknowledged to be a part of the human character.* It is hardly necessary to observe, that scarcely any moral subject has been more a theme of contention than this. It is no part of my design to recount the clashing opinions which have been formed concerning it, or the controversies to which it has given birth. Metaphysical discussion has for ages lavished upon it all its subtilties. As I neither claim the reputation, nor enjoy the pleasure furnished by disquisitions of this nature, I shall not attempt to add any subtilties of my own to the mass which has already been accumulated. That ingenious men have, in several instances, thrown considerable light upon this difficult topic, I readily admit; and can easily believe that it may be illumined still farther. It will be a prime part of my own design not to environ it with darkness and perplexity. A plain tale is always attended by this advantage, that it may be easily understood. That which I shall utter will, I hope, be accompanied by the important additional advantage, that it will be true.

In the text we are informed, that 'the carnal mind is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.' The words translated, 'the carnal mind,' are το φρονημα της σαρκος, 'the minding of the flesh.' To mind, is to regard with attention, respect, or desire. Here it plainly signifies that general course of desires which is exercised by mankind, in certain circumstances, towards certain objects; and which, in the preceding verse, is declared to be a state of spiritual death; or to terminate in future, everlasting death. It is obviously the prevailing characteristical course of desire; the whole 'minding of the flesh.' In the next it is declared to be 'enmity against God.' What is intended by 'the flesh,' is explained to us by Christ, John iii. 6. 'That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.' In other words, that which is born of man is possessed of the proper character of man. There are but two kinds of births mentioned in the Scriptures; and both these are expressed by our Saviour in this passage; viz., the natural birth, and regeneration. All that which experiences the natural birth, and that only, is declared by Christ to be 'flesh;' as that which experiences the spiritual birth, or regeneration, is declared to be 'spirit.' The moral character here intended is strongly indicated by our Saviour, when he informs us, that 'that which is born of the flesh (only) cannot,' and that 'that which is born of the Spirit,' can 'see the kingdom of God.' This moral character is still more particularly delineated by St Paul, Gal. v. 19—23. 'Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like. Of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.' It will hardly need proof, that the former of these classes of affections and actions, and such as these, are characteristical of man in his natural, unrenewed state; nor that the latter are exhibited by the Scriptures as constituting the true character of the children of God.

That the affections here mentioned 'are not subject to the law of God,' will not admit of a question; since they are the very things forbidden by that law. That they cannot be thus subject, while they continue to exist, is equally evident. Nor is it less certain, from the proofs given both by revelation and experience, that where the soul is not renewed by the Spirit of God, they continue to exist through life. Revelation teaches us, that, 'unless a man be born again of the Spirit' of God, he will continue to sustain the fleshly or natural character while he lives; and that all those who 'receive' Christ, and become the children of God, 'are born, not of the blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.' Experience shows also, with a regular testimony, that the native moral character of man continues, in the ordinary course of things, the same through life.

The nature of this inability to obey the law of God is, in my own view, completely indicated by the word indisposition, or the word disinclination. To elucidate this position I observe,

1. That the divine law originally requires nothing but affection.

'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart; and thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.' Here love to God and man is the only thing expressly required. But it hardly needs to be observed, that to be inclined, or disposed, to love God and our neighbour, is to possess that character, out of which all direct exercises of love spring of course. He therefore who possessed this character, would, whenever his mind was active at all, exercise the affection which is here required. He would be and do all which the law enjoins, when considered in this point of view: for his disposition and his exercises would be the very things which are enjoined. Indisposition, or disinclination, to obey, then, is the only difficulty in the way of obedience; and, with respect to this subject, the only inability of man.

2. When the divine law, in its various precepts, requires external actions, as well as affections; if our disposition accord with the precept, the action will of course be performed.

I speak here of such actions as are in our power; for the law of God never requires any other.

For example: Children are required to honour their parents; particularly to support them, when from their age or infirmity, they are unable to support themselves. It will not be doubted, that if children are disposed thus to support them, they will actually furnish the support. Men are forbidden to steal. The case, it may be confidently affirmed, was never known, and never will be, in which a man inclined upon the whole to obey this command, or entirely disinclined to steal, was guilty of theft. Mankind are forbidden to murder. No man absolutely indisposed to murder ever perpetrated this crime. As in these so in all other cases; as with respect to these precepts, so with respect to all others; active obedience follows inseparably the disposition to obey. Wherever the inclination accords with the precept, the tongue, the hands, and the feet, conform of course, and entirely, to its decisions.

3. If an angel were to descend from heaven, and reside upon the earth; he would, if he preserved his present disposition, obey the divine law as truly and as perfectly as he does now.

If an angel were in this world, and were to possess exactly the same disposition which he possesses in the heavenly world, he would obviously feel and act in the same manner. In other words, he would be an angel still. Were we to suppose his faculties lessened to the measure of ours, so that his understanding and other natural powers, should in no respect exceed those of men; still, if his angelic disposition remained, he would perfectly obey the divine law. He would 'love God with all the heart, and his neighbour as himself.' Should we suppose him to be lowered down still farther, to the level of a child, and to possess no natural powers superior to those usually found in children; he would, nevertheless, if he retained his angelic disposition, continue to be perfectly obedient. Should any person question this, let him remember, that the child Jesus is in the Scriptures pronounced to have been holy and perfectly obedient from the womb, and throughout all the successive periods of his life. When his faculties were in the earliest stages of their progress, he as perfectly obeyed, as he did after he began his public ministry. It cannot then be rationally doubted, that the angelic disposition, whatever might be the natural powers which it governed, would be, and would accomplish all that is meant by perfect obedience to the law of God. Of course, the real and only reason why we perform not this obedience is, that we do not possess such a disposition as that of angels. Our natural powers are plainly sufficient; our inclination only is defective.

4. This disinclination to obedience is still so obstinate and enduring, that it is never relinquished by man, except when under the renewing influence of the Spirit of God.

I have already observed, that those who receive Christ, and become the children of God, are declared by St John to be 'born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God;' and by our Saviour, to be 'born of the divine Spirit.' The following passage from the prophet Ezekiel, chap. xxxvii. 24—28, will, I suppose, prove beyond a doubt, if not beyond a cavil, that this disposition is changed only by God himself: 'For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land. Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes; and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.' In this passage God declares that he will gather the Israelites out of all countries into their own land: that he will cleanse them from all their filthiness; that he will give them a new heart, and a new spirit; that he will take away their stony heart, and give them a heart of flesh: that he will put his Spirit within them, and cause them to walk in his statutes; that they shall be his people; and that he will be their God. When all this is accomplished, he says, 'Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good; and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities, and for your abominations.' Here, the renovation of the human heart is described by sprinkling clean water; cleansing them from all their filthiness; giving them a new heart; putting in them a new spirit;

taking away their stony heart; giving them a heart of flesh; putting the Spirit of God within them; and causing them to walk in his statutes. All this, God says, and that in the plainest terms possible, he himself will do for them. As consequences of it all, God says, that they shall remember their own evil ways; shall loathe themselves in their own sight for their iniquities; and shall keep his statutes, and do them. As a farther consequence, he says, that 'they shall be his people,' and that he will be 'their God.' The nature of this renovation cannot here be mistaken. It consists in having a new heart, differing from that which they originally possessed, as a heart of flesh differs from a heart of stone. It is also a heart cleansed from the filthiness of sin, and inclined to walk in the statutes and judgments of God. It is also a heart which will induce him to whom it is given, to remember his own evil ways, to loathe himself for his own iniquities, and to keep the judgments, or commands of God, and do them. That this is the moral character exhibited everywhere in the Scriptures, as required by the law of God, as unpossessed by man in his original or natural state, and as given him in what is called the new birth, cannot, if the words be allowed to have their own meaning, or any meaning consistent with their use elsewhere in the Scriptures, be questioned. But of this change in the Israelites at the period specified, God, in the most determinate language, declares himself to be the efficient. Of this change then, he certainly will, and man certainly will not, be the efficient. But if God will be the author of this change in the Israelites, he is unquestionably the author of it wherever it is experienced. Thus it is completely evident from the Scriptures, that the natural disinclination of man to obey the divine law is so obstinate, that it will not be overcome or removed by itself.

The proof of this truth from experience is, I acknowledge, less decisive, than that from revelation; and is formed by an induction of too many particulars, as I observed in a former Discourse, to be adduced on such an occasion as the present. The evidence furnished by reason and experience concerning this doctrine must be merely auxiliary. Concerning subjects of this kind, concerning the agency of voluntary beings, the nature of causation universally, and the manner in which causes operate metaphysically considered, our knowledge must be confessed to be very imperfect. It deserves our attention, however, that the whole evidence furnished by experience goes to support this doctrine. All men of plainly acknowledged piety, so far as my information extends, have agreed in attributing their own renovation to the agency of the Divine Spirit. To this attribution they have been led also by a deep and solicitous attention to facts existing in their own minds. Although these facts have been greatly diversified in many respects, yet such men testify with a single voice, that they have been greatly alarmed on account of their guilt and danger; that, with an obvious or secret, but ultimately discovered, reliance on their own efforts, they have laboured with great earnestness to escape from both; that in the end they have clearly discerned all these efforts to be vain; that, with a full conviction of their own insufficiency, they have cast themselves upon the divine mercy; realizing that all their sufficiency for the great purpose in view must be of God. In this situation, they unitedly testify, they found, commencing in them sooner or later, a disposition, not perceptibly connected, as an effect, with any efforts of their own, prompting them to loathe themselves for their iniquities, to confide in Christ as their Saviour, to love and fear God, and to 'keep his commandments, and do them.' This disposition, also, they unitedly declare, irregularly but really increased as they advanced in life; while the propensity to disobedience lessened in the same manner. Now, let me ask, Is it credible, that all these men should radically err with respect to this subject? Is it credible, that they should all mistake the facts? Is it credible, that all should draw from them the same, and yet a false conclusion? This supposition involves another, which must, I think, be reluctantly admitted by every religious man; viz., That God in accomplishing the salvation of mankind orders things in such a manner, as that those who are renewed are, to say the least, in almost all instances deceived with respect to the author of their renovation; and that, while employed, not with integrity merely, but with deep solicitude, in exploring the state of their own minds and lives. According to this supposition, not only must their apprehensions concerning these important facts be false, and, so far as I can see, necessarily false, but all their emotions of gratitude, and all their ascriptions of praise to their Creator, for his agency in effectuating this happy change in their character, must be also false and unfounded. These ascriptions were begun in the early days of religion. Prophets and apostles set the example. All that was morally good in themselves, or in others, they attributed to the efficacious grace of God. In this attribution Christians have followed them throughout every succeeding age. Thus, according to this supposition, a succession of false, and therefore indefensible, ascriptions of praise has ascended to God from the great body of pious persons in all the ages of the church; which yet they could not honestly, and in consistence with the best views which they were able to form, have failed to render.

At the same time, no instances have occurred in which men have by direct efforts of their own, without the efficacious influence of the Divine Spirit, changed their moral character from sin to holiness. Not only have no such instances occurred which have been clear and unequivocal, and such as might be supposed to decide this point in favour of the supposition; but no collection of instances can be found, which lean towards it, in a sufficient degree to render it probable. The whole stream of evidence, furnished both by the public and private history of experimental religion, is against the opinion which I have endeavoured to disprove, and in favour of that which I have asserted.

Whatever may be the judgment formed by the spirit of controversy, and cold metaphysical investigation, concerning this part of the subject, the doctrine will be readily admitted by all men who are afflicted by a deep sense of their guilt, and struggle hard to obtain a release from their sinful character; and by all who, having thus suffered and thus struggled, have felt themselves in the end actually released from the dominant control of a sinful disposition.

This doctrine is elucidated by experience also in another instance. God, who requires our faith, repentance, and obedience to his law, has set before us numberless and most powerful motives to engage our compliance; motives which all sober men will acknow-

ledge ought to persuade us, motives which are obviously of infinite import. Why do not men who believe the gospel to be the word of God, and who have these motives presented to them, clearly and forcibly, from sabbath to sabbath, believe, repent, and obey? No answer, it is presumed, can be given to this question, which will accord with the supposition against which I contend.

5. There is yet no more difficulty in obeying God, than in doing anything else, to which our inclination is opposed with equal strength and obstinacy.

A child is equally unable to obey a parent, against whom his will is as much opposed, as to obey God. This inability of children to obey their parents does not, indeed, commonly last through life. But while it lasts, the child can no more obey his parent, than his Maker. In both cases his inability is, I apprehend, of exactly the same nature. Sometimes also it continues while he lives. In such cases it is, in all respects, the same: equally obstinate, equally enduring, equally preventing him from doing his duty. If, in this case, his filial duty be urged upon him in its religious nature, as required by the law of God; his opposition to perform his duty to God and his parent will be found exactly coincident; to be the same indivisible thing, and to be regarded as the same obduracy of heart.

These considerations will, to a considerable extent, explain many scriptural passages which relate to this subject. 'No man,' saith our Saviour, 'can come unto me, except the Father, who hath sent me, draw him.' The true meaning of this, he appears to me to explain in a parallel declaration to the Jews: 'Ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life.' That he who is willing to come to Christ, will actually come to him, we are taught by Christ himself in the last chapter of the Apocalypse: 'Whosoever will' (or is willing, ὁ θελων), 'let him come, and take the water of life freely.' From these passages it is evident, that every one who is willing, has the full permission of Christ to come to him, and partake of his blessings. Indisposition to come to Christ, is therefore the true and the only difficulty which lies in our way. Those who cannot come, therefore, are those, and those only, who will not.

The words *can*, and *cannot*, are used in the Scriptures just as they are used in the common intercourse of mankind, to express *willingness* or *unwillingness*. Thus we customarily say, that we cannot lend, or give, or assist, or pay a debt; when we mean nothing more, than that we are disinclined to these offices. Thus, Samuel says to God, 'How can I go? If Saul hear it, he will kill me.' That Samuel could have gone to Bethlehem, if he had pleased, needs no proof. As soon as his fear of Saul, which had made him unwilling, was removed, he went without any difficulty; 1 Sam. xvi. 2. 'How can this man give us his flesh?' said the Jews to our Saviour; John vi. 52: that is, How can he be willing to give us his flesh? 'This is a hard saying; who can hear it?' John vi. 60. The answer is, every one that is willing. 'Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized?' Acts x. 47. 'Can ye drink of the cup that I shall drink of?' Mark x. 38. 'Can the children of the bride-chamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them!' Mark ii. 19. 'Can a maid forget her ornaments; or a bride her attire?' Jer. ii. 32. 'Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb?' Isa. xlix. 15. 'Can I hear any more the voice of singing-men, and singing-women?' 2 Sam. ii. 35.

In all these and the like instances, there is plainly nothing meant but inability of disposition, or a strong disinclination to the thing proposed. This is both the natural and universal language of men; found equally in their conversation and their writings. Children speak this language almost as soon as they begin to speak at all; and on every such occasion utter it more naturally than any other language. If the Scriptures would be intelligible to the great body of mankind, they must speak in the same manner. In this manner, therefore, God has directed them to be written.

REMARKS.

1. From these observations it is evident, that the disobedience of mankind is their own fault.

Wherever we understand the nature of our duty, and are hindered from performing it by disinclination only, conscience and common sense pronounce us to be guilty. Thus they have ever pronounced. The decision has been given in all ages and countries, in every conceivable form of language and conduct, with a universal acknowledgment of its soundness, in the most definite terms, and with the highest solemnity.

2. The degree of our inability to obey the divine law does in no case lessen our guilt.

Certainly, he who is more disinclined to obedience, is not less guilty than he who is less disinclined. Disinclination to obey is our inability, and our sin. The greater our disinclination is, the greater plainly, not the less, is our sin.

3. These observations teach us the propriety of urging sinners to immediate repentance.

Their present state is a state of extreme guilt and danger. Of this it is the duty of every minister to produce, as far as may be, a strong conviction in their minds. Equally is it his duty to show them, what is equally true, that they are under the highest obligations to repent immediately. They are now, they always have been, sinners. Every sin of which they have been guilty demanded their immediate repentance. The only reason which they can allege for delaying their repentance, is the very reason why they have hitherto refused to obey the divine law; viz., their disinclination. But this is their sin; and sin is itself that which demands their repentance, instead of being a justification of their delay.

But it will be objected, that the sinner cannot, or, in the very language of this discourse, will not, repent of himself. Why then should he be urged to immediate repentance? I will give the answer. So long as the sinner feels himself in any degree excused in delaying this duty, there is every reason to fear that he will be more and more at ease, and more and more disposed to delay. His views will be false and dangerous, and his conduct will eagerly accord with his views. But a full conviction of his duty will create in him a sense of danger, a conviction of his guilt, and a trembling anxiety concerning his future being. In this situation he will naturally, and almost necessarily, commence those efforts of solemn reflection, that deep attention to the word of God, and those attempts to supplicate for mercy, that conviction of his helplessness, and that strong sense of the absolute necessity of being sanctified by the Spirit of grace, which, in the usual providence of God, precede regeneration.

SERMON CXXXIV.

FAITH AND REPENTANCE NECESSARY TO RESTORE US TO OBEDIENCE.

And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you; but have showed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house, testifying, both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance towards God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.—Acts xx. 20, 21.

In the preceding Discourse I examined the inability of mankind to obey the divine law. It is evident that, if we are ever to be restored to divine favour, we must first be restored to a spirit of obedience. The manner in which we may obtain this restoration becomes therefore the next subject of our inquiry.

St Paul in the context, declares to the elders of the church of Ephesus, and appeals to them for the truth of the declaration, that he had not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God concerning their salvation. This, he farther asserts, he did by teaching them both publicly, and from house to house, at all seasons, and amid many temptations and sorrows. While he served the Lord with all humility of mind, and many tears, he confidently avers, 'that he kept back nothing, which was profitable unto them;' or, in other words, taught them everything which was profitable. Of course he taught everything which was profitable to mankind at large, as creatures of God, and candidates for immortality. All this, however, he sums up in the second verse of the text in these two phrases: 'Repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.'

We are not, indeed, to suppose that, in the literal sense, St Paul taught nothing but faith and repentance to the Ephesian Christians. There can be no reasonable doubt that he taught the Ephesians generally, what he taught the Christian world at large, and particularly the things contained in the Epistle which he wrote to the church at Ephesus. The meaning of his declaration in the text is, I apprehend, merely that he had taught the doctrines concerning faith and repentance, as preeminently the means of salvation. That this view of the subject is just, is sufficiently evident from the context. Here the apostle teaches the elders, to whom his speech was addressed, many things besides these doctrines; and declares that he had heretofore instructed them in the great duty of communicating good to others, as the amount of all that which they owed to their fellow men. The religion of the gospel is the religion of sinners: as the religion of the law is that of virtuous beings. The gospel is a scheme of restoration to beings who have rebelled against their Maker, and are condemned by the law which they have broken to suffer the punishment due to their sins; but who yet in consistency with the character and government of God, may be forgiven. It is a scheme by which these beings may be restored to their allegiance, to a virtuous character, and to the divine favour. If such beings are ever to be restored to the favour of God, if they are ever to obtain the privileges of good subjects of the divine government, it is evident that they must, in some manner or other, be restored to the character of good subjects. In other words, if they are ever to possess the rewards of obedience, they must be previously possessed of the spirit of obedience. Whatever accomplishes for them, or becomes the means of accomplishing, this mighty change in their circumstances, must to them be of inestimable importance. As the gospel contains the religion of sinners in the situation above mentioned, this importance must belong to the gospel. In a particular manner must it be attributable to such doctrines or duties in the gospel, as are peculiarly necessary, and absolutely indispensable. From the place which faith and repentance held in the preaching of St Paul, it is plain, that they are the important things in question; the immediate and indispensable means of our restoration to obedience, and to the consequent enjoyment of the divine favour.

This truth is abundantly exhibited in many forms throughout the different parts of the New Testament. In Mark i. 14, 15, is contained the following declaration: 'Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled; and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent ye, and believe the gospel;' or, as in the Greek, 'believe in the gospel.' In this passage we have evidently the substance of our Saviour's preaching; and this is repentance, and faith in the good tidings of the divine kingdom, or the glorious dispensation of mercy to sinners through the Redeemer.

In Acts ii. 37, 38, we are informed that the Jews, being 'pricked in their hearts' by the preaching of St Peter, particularly by his pungent exhibition of their guilt in crucifying Christ, inquired of him and John, with extreme solicitude, what they should do to obtain forgiveness and salvation. St Peter answered them, 'Repent, and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins.' To be baptized in the name of Christ, is, as every one who reads the gospel knows, a public and most solemn profession of faith in him, as the Redeemer of mankind. St Peter, therefore, in this answer makes in substance the same declaration with that of St Paul in the text.

When the jailor inquired of Paul and Silas, Acts xvi. 30, 31, 'What he should do to be saved,' they answered, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, with thine house.'—'Without faith,' St Paul declares, Heb. xi. 6, 'it is impossible to please God.'—'He that believeth on the Son,' saith John the Baptist, John iii. 36, 'hath everlasting life. He that believeth not the Son shall not see life: but the wrath of God abideth on him.'—'He that believeth on him,' saith Christ to Nicodemus, John iii. 18, 'is not condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned already.'

Christ, in Matt. ix. 13, declares the end of his coming to be to 'call, not the righteous, but sinners,

to repentance.' When therefore sinners repent, the end of Christ's coming is fulfilled. In Acts v. 31, he is said by St Peter to be 'exalted as a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance unto Israel, and remission of sins.' Remission of sins is, of course, consequent upon repentance. In Acts xi. 18, it is said, 'Then hath God granted to the Gentiles repentance unto life.' In 2 Cor. vii. 10, St Paul declares, that 'godly sorrow worketh repentance unto salvation.'— 'Except ye repent,' says Christ to his disciples, Luke xiii. 3, 'ye shall all likewise perish:' and again, 'There is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons that need no repentance,' Luke xv. 7.

In this passage, and indeed in many others, remission, life, and salvation are indubitably and inseparably connected with faith and repentance. Sometimes they are connected with both conjointly, and sometimes with one. The account given of the subject is, however, in all instances the same: because he who possesses one of these Christian graces, is of course, and always, possessed of the other. On the contrary, without these, life, remission, and salvation are plainly declared to be unattainable. It is evident, therefore, that faith and repentance are the attributes supremely required by the gospel; the immediate fulfilment of its two great precepts; in the possession of which mankind are assured of eternal life, and without which they are exposed to eternal death. To produce and perpetuate them in the soul, is visibly the great object, so far as man is concerned, which Christ came into the world to accomplish. In other words, they are that essential obedience to the gospel, to which salvation is promised and given, as a reward; 'not of debt,' but of the free and sovereign grace of God.

Having, if I mistake not, placed this truth beyond every reasonable doubt, and thus shown the way in which mankind, although sinners, condemned by the divine law, and incapable of justification by their own works, may yet be gratuitously justified, return to their obedience, and be reinstated in the divine favour; I shall now endeavour to explain the nature of this subject; and to exhibit the manner in which the doctrine is true.

The foundation of all religion is the existence, character, law, and government of God. This glorious and perfect Being, as the Creator, Preserver, and Benefactor, of the universe, is, of the most absolute right, the Ruler of the work which he has made, and the Lawgiver of all his moral creatures. The law which he has prescribed to them demands all their duty, and regulates all their moral conduct. Man, who is of the number of these moral creatures, is placed under this law; and justly required by his Maker to 'love him with all the heart, and to love his neighbour as himself.' In the progress of these Discourses, it has, unless I am deceived, been clearly shown, that man has utterly failed of performing this duty; that he is therefore condemned by the law to the sufferance of its penalty; that the law knows no condition of pardon, escape, or return; that man cannot expiate his sins; and that, if left to himself, he must therefore perish.

In this situation, as has been heretofore explained, Christ interposed on the behalf of our ruined race; and made an atonement for our sins, with which the Father is well pleased. This atonement, the Scriptures have assured us God has accepted; and, having thus provided a method in which he can be just, and yet justify those who were sinners, is ready to extend the blessing of pardon and salvation to this apostate world.

Accordingly, Christ has announced himself to sinful men as their Saviour; and proffered to them deliverance, both from their sin and their condemnation. The conditions on which this proffer has been made, are repentance towards God, and faith towards himself, as the Lord and Saviour of mankind. In order to understand, so far as we are able, the propriety and necessity of these conditions of our restoration, it will be useful to attend to the following considerations:—

1. Sincere, exalted, and enduring happiness cannot be enjoyed by any beings, except those who are virtuous.

This great and fundamental truth in that philosophy which explains the nature and interests of moral beings, has, it is believed, been completely evinced in this series of Discourses. It has been shown, that a sinful mind is at war with itself, its fellow creatures, and its God; that it must, of course, be subject to reproaches of conscience, to perpetual disquiet, to consciousness of the divine anger, and to the loathing and contempt of all good beings. It has been shown, that such a mind must be a prey to tumultuous passions, vehement desires, which are not and cannot be gratified, and endless disappointments in the pursuit of a selfish interest, which can never be promoted, without sacrificing the glory of the Creator, and the happiness of his creatures.

It has been proved, that its chosen enjoyments are in their nature vain, transient, delusive, little, base, and contemptible; inconsistent with real excellence, dignity, and self-approbation; and incompatible with the well-being of others, whose interests are singly of equal importance, and united are immeasurably deserving of higher regard.

From these considerations it is unanswerably evident, that a sinful mind cannot be happy; for with such affections, and their consequences, happiness is plainly inconsistent. The mind, which is not at ease within, cannot derive happiness from without. 'A wounded spirit who can bear?' especially when wounded by the arrows of an angry conscience. If then God is pleased to communicate happiness to him who is a sinner, it is indispensably necessary that he should first remove the sinful disposition, whence all these evils immutably flow.

2. The only possible method of removing sin from a moral being, is to make him the subject of evangelical repentance.

So long as the soul loves sin, it must be the subject of that vile and guilty character, which we denominate moral turpitude, depravity, and corruption; together with all its consequences. For the love of sin is preeminently this character. While this love continues, he in whom it exists will perpetrate, of course, all those which we customarily call sins, or sinful actions. He will also love sin continually, more and more; and perpetrate it with more and more eagerness, and hostility to God. From all the knowledge which we possess of moral character, it seems plainly to be its nature, whether virtuous or vicious, to become more and more fixed in its habits, and intense in its desires. So long therefore as the love of sin prevails in the mind, the situation of the sinner must be hopeless, with regard to

his assumption of a spirit of obedience, and his attainment of consequent happiness.

The repentance of the gospel is formed of the hatred of sin, sorrow for it, a disposition to confess it to God, and resolutions to renounce it. From this definition it is manifest, that evangelical repentance is the direct removal of sin from the soul of the sinner. By the hatred of sin, which it includes as a first principle, the soul is withdrawn from the practice of it. By the sorrow, it is warned of the danger and evil of returning to it again. By the confession of it to God, the soul is brought into near, full, and most endearing views of the glorious goodness of its heavenly Father, in forgiving its iniquities; and most happily prepared to watch, and strive, and pray that it may offend him no more. By his resolutions to forsake it, the penitent is fortified against future indulgences, and prepared to assume a life of filial obedience. In all these things we cannot, I think, avoid perceiving, that evangelical repentance is the direct and the only means of removing sin originally from the heart, and consequentially from the life, of a moral being; and that thus it is absolutely necessary to prepare men for obedience to the law of God, and a general conformity to his character and pleasure. To such beings as we are, it is therefore indispensable, if we are ever to become the subjects of real and enduring happiness.

3. For this great end it is also necessary, that we should be united to God.

The relations between the Creator and his intelligent creatures are not only near and important, but indispensable also to the happiness of such creatures. Out of them arises a great part of all the thoughts, affections, duties, and enjoyments of which they are capable. These are also the foundations on which all other valuable thoughts, affections, duties, and enjoyments rest; and are necessary to their existence, as well as their worth. In the relation of children only do we, or can we, apprehend the endearing and glorious character of Jehovah, as the common, most affectionate, and most venerable Parent of the virtuous universe; feel towards him the various filial affections; and perform the various filial duties which are included under the general name of piety. In the same relation only can we enjoy the peculiar and pre-eminent happiness of loving and glorifying him as 'our Father who is in heaven.' In this relation only do we also receive and feel the unnumbered proofs of his parental tenderness, and unlimited mercy.

As children of God, and by means of the filial views and affections which in this character we entertain, we begin first to understand and to feel that we are brethren. This character is the true inlet to all the fraternal regards of virtuous beings, and to the endless train of spiritual sympathies and social endearments which spring up in sanctified minds, and which with new strength, purity, and delight, will for ever grow and flourish in the heavens above.

But without union to God, no relation, whether natural or moral, can be of any use to ourselves. Without this union, the blessings flowing from these relations cannot begin. When minds do not coincide with him in their views, and are not united to him in their affections and character, he cannot with propriety give, nor they possibly enjoy these blessings. The nearest relation to God, if unperceived, unfelt, and unacknowledged, is, in the apprehension of the soul which sustains it, nothing. It is the cordial, grateful sense of such a relation, the welcome, delightful recognition of it, which makes it the foundation of all this good. With such a sense, with such a recognition, the soul draws nigh to God with affections harmonizing with his pleasure, and with views coinciding with all his revealed designs. Separated from God, the soul can entertain no such views, and can feel no such affections towards him. Nor can it perform any duties, nor realize any rational or lasting enjoyment. In such a state of separation, it is a plant on which the beams of the Sun of Righteousness cease to shine; and is of course chilled, shrunk, and destroyed.

4. Faith in Jesus Christ is the only possible union between man and his Maker.

God in the covenant of redemption has promised to receive, justify, and save for ever, all who are Christ's at his appearing: that is, all who become his by a voluntary surrender of themselves to him. But the only method in which man ever does or can surrender himself voluntarily to Christ, is the exercise of faith, or confidence, in him as the Saviour of the world. This is the only method of becoming his, which is proposed to us by Christ himself. 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved,' is the sole language of the Scriptures concerning this subject. On this, however, I need not insist; because I have heretofore, if I mistake not, satisfactorily proved the doctrine at large. Still it may be useful to consider the nature of the subject with some degree of attention and particularity, as being capable, at least in my view, of illustrating the doctrine in an impressive and edifying manner.

Christ offers to save sinners who are condemned and perishing, and who are therefore utterly unable to save themselves. In this offer he declares himself able, willing, and faithful, to 'save to the uttermost, all that will come unto God by him.' Now it is impossible for us to come to him, or to God by him, unless we confide in this as his true character, and in the declarations by which he makes this character known to us. It is impossible for us to receive his instructions, as the means of knowledge and guidance to us in the path of duty and salvation; his precepts, as the rules of our obedience; or his ordinances, as the directory of our worship; unless we confide in the character of him who has taught them, as a wise and faithful teacher. It is indispensable, that we confide in him as a teacher, who knows, and who has told us, that which is true, right, and safe for us in these immensely important concerns. It is indispensable, that we believe in him, and trust in him, as vested with all the authority necessary to this character of a divine instructor: and regard him, as certainly and fully disclosing the will of God concerning our duty and salvation. Unless we can confide in these things, we can never receive his instructions as rules either of our faith, or of our practice. Without these things they would all dwindle at once into mere philosophy, mere advice, mere opinions, to obey which no person would or could feel the least obligation.

His atonement, in the same manner, would be nothing to us, unless we could cordially believe it to be efficacious, sufficient, and acceptable in the sight of God. It is only because we regard it as the atonement of so glorious, sufficient, and acceptable a person, that

it possesses in any sense the character of an atonement. Accordingly, the Socinians, who consider Christ as a mere man, generally do, and, if they would be consistent with themselves, must believe that he made no atonement, but was merely a martyr, or witness to the truth.

Christ also requires us to commit our souls to his care and keeping; or, in other words, to become his by voluntarily surrendering ourselves into his hands, and looking for safety and happiness to his protection, mercy, and truth. This we cannot do in any other manner, nor by any other means, beside the exercise of confidence in him. Who would commit his everlasting well-being to a person in whose kindness and truth, in whose power and wisdom, he did not confide? No man ever did or could commit himself, or his interests, even in this world, to any person whatever, unless in the exercise of confidence. How much more difficult, how contrary to the first principles of our nature, how absolutely impossible, must it then be to commit our eternal interests, ourselves, our all, to a being in whom we do not entirely confide?

In the exercise of evangelical faith, or confidence, in the character of Christ, we become united to him, according to the declarations of the Scriptures, and according to all the views which reason can form of this subject, in a very near, most desirable, and most delightful union. He himself says to his disciples, John xv. 4, 5, 'I am the Vine; ye are the branches. Abide in me; and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye except ye abide in me.' St Paul says, 'We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones:' and again, 'Now ye are the body of Christ, and members one of another,' 1 Cor. xii. 27; and again, Col. i. 18, 'He is the head of the body, the church.' The whole church also, both in heaven and on earth, is exhibited as gathered under one head, that is, Christ; Eph. i. 10. But our Saviour himself has given us the most sublime and glorious exhibition of this subject, which was ever made to mankind, in the following passage of his intercessory prayer: John xvii. 20—23, 'Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also, which shall believe on me through their word: that they all may be one: as thou Father art in me, and I in thee; that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me, I have given them; that they may be one even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me: that that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me; and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.' This transcendent, this divine union, here exhibited to us as being of all possible importance, is, and can be, accomplished for mankind only by evangelical faith, or confidence, in Christ.

5. To the happiness of the soul it is also indispensable, that it should always obey its Creator; and of this obedience, evangelical faith is the only source.

That obedience to God is necessary to the happiness of rational creatures, and that their uniform obedience is necessary to their uniform happiness, has been already proved under the first head of this Discourse. If sin is fatal to happiness, and incompatible with its existence; it follows, of course, that obedience is indispensable to happiness. Obedience and disobedience are the only two possible moral states of an intelligent being. If then disobedience creates misery, obedience of course creates happiness.

It may, however, be useful, to consider this subject somewhat farther. It was shown in a former Discourse that God, and God only, knows what conduct will produce or insure happiness; and that he only is always, invariably, and infinitely disposed to have that conduct exist. He only possesses the authority also, and the power to require it of his creatures. Hence, he only can be the uniform and efficient Director of his creatures to their real good. If then creatures are to be happy at all, it is indispensably necessary that they obey his directions, and conform to his pleasure, as the only possible rule of right, the only possible way to real and universal good. All who wander from this path are soon lost in a wilderness of error, distress, and despair; and will never find their proper home.

But we cannot obey God, except from confidence in his character, as a perfectly wise, just, and good Teacher and Lawgiver, who has instructed us in our true interest; a Lawgiver, who has prescribed wise, just, and benevolent precepts to regulate our duty. Unless we consider his precepts 'concerning all things to be right,' we can never voluntarily obey them. Confidence therefore in the character of God, and in his instructions and precepts, as flowing from that character, and partaking of his wisdom and rectitude, is the true and only possible source of that spontaneous obedience which is acceptable to him, virtuous in us, and indispensable to all our real good.

Thus, if I am not deceived, 'repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ,' are the substance of the means by which sinners are delivered from sin, reinstated in the character of children, restored to the favour of God, entitled to eternal life, and prepared for everlasting obedience and enjoyment in the heavens above.

REMARKS.

1. From these observations it is evident, that the objections made by infidels against evangelical repentance, as mean-spirited and contemptible, are groundless.

Mr Hume observes, that 'self-mortification, self-denial, and humility, stupify the understanding, sour the temper, and harden the heart.' Whatever produces these consequences by its proper efficacy is undoubtedly, in its nature, vicious or sinful, since the consequences themselves are plainly of a sinful nature. Self-denial, self-mortification, and humility, are all essential ingredients of genuine repentance; and without them such repentance cannot exist. A just, clear, and humble sense of our guilt and unworthiness is the very basis on which everything else contained in repentance is founded. With such a sense of our character, it is impossible that we should not endeavour to mortify those inclinations, and deny ourselves that gratification of them, which together have constituted our guilt, our odiousness, our debasement, and our danger. The humble thoughts which we thus experience, and the humble emotions by which they are accompanied, are the only just thoughts concerning our character, and the only proper emotions with respect to ourselves, so far as this character exists. Every opinion, every feeling not accordant with these, is false and groundless: the silly dream of a vain and silly mind. A little self-knowledge, a very limited degree of candour, united with a

very moderate self-examination, would convince any mind of the visionary nature of such opinions, and the absolute impropriety of such feelings.

Proud and vain men have, however, always despised humility, and regarded it as deserving their contempt. Still, it is unquestionably the first honour which belongs to our nature, and the beginning of everything else which is really honourable in man. All sin is shame: and, let it be remembered, there is nothing shameful except sin. The very pride, the very vanity, from which these decisions of infidels spring, is itself gross sin, and not less shameful than the other exercises of the same spirit. All men see and declare this, under the guidance of mere common sense; and, although each cherishes it in himself, every one hates, despises, and condemns it in his fellow men. How little would Christ have merited, how plainly impossible would it have been for him to have gained, that exalted estimation which he now holds in the minds of angels and of men, had he been a proud and vain, and not a meek and lowly, Redeemer! How infinitely distant is the character of this glorious Person from that of Alexander, or that of Cæsar! The character of these men is fitly imaged by the smoke ascending from the bottomless pit; while the aspect of the Saviour is that of 'the sun, shining in his strength.'

But, aside from these considerations, repentance, however reprobated by haughty-minded men, is in itself real good, and essential to all other real good. It is the only possible removal of sin, the worst of all evils, and the source of every other evil. It is the only possible security against the resumption of that guilty, debased, and shameful character. It is the commencement of virtue in the soul, and indispensable to its very existence. It is real dignity in itself, and the beginning of all real dignity. It is plainly the only solid basis of peace of conscience, and well-founded self-approbation. By Hume it was seen, so far as he saw it at all, only at a distance; and through the false optics of philosophical pride. It was therefore erroneously seen, understood, and represented. Neither this writer, nor his companions in infidelity, appear to have discerned the distinction between the repentance of a mercenary slave, regretting his faults merely from the expectation of punishment, and the ingenuous contrition of a child sorrowing for his disobedience, loathing his guilt, and returning with a new and better heart to his filial character and duty.

2. We see how groundless the objection of Godwin is to the Scriptures; viz., That they lay an improper and unwarrantable stress on faith.

Faith, it is well known, is the great condition of acceptance with God proposed in the gospel; as unbelief is of final rejection. To this scheme Godwin objects, as unreasonable and absurd. But if the account here given of this attribute be just, the absurdity will be found to lie, not in the scriptural scheme, but in the objection. It has, if I mistake not, been shown in this discourse, that without union to God, and cordial obedience to his will, we cannot enjoy rational and enduring good; and that without evangelical faith, no such union, and no such obedience, can exist. The faith of the gospel is therefore of all possible importance to man, of as much importance as his whole well-being, involving everything which is desirable or useful. Had the Scriptures therefore laid less stress upon this subject, it would have been an unanswerable objection to the religious system which they contain.

The contrary character of distrust, which is plainly the native character of man, is obviously a complete separation of any intelligent being from his Maker. It is impossible that such beings should exercise any of those affections with which alone they can glorify their Creator, or cordially obey him, so long as they distrust his moral character. Equally impossible is it that they should possess the enjoyment which alone can fill the wishes, or is suited to the nature, of an immortal mind. The distrust of a friend makes us unhappy here. The distrust of God would make us miserable for ever.

The faith of the gospel deserves, then, all the importance which is given to it by the Scriptures. The place which it ought to hold in the estimation of all men is pre-eminent. By every preacher it ought to be insisted on, by every man it ought to be pursued, as of all possible consequence to obedience and salvation. The preacher who does not thus inculcate it is unfaithful; the man who does not acquire it is undone.

SERMON CXXXV.

THE MEANS OF GRACE.—ORDINARY MEANS OF GRACE.—PROOFS THAT THERE ARE SUCH MEANS.

For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, ye have not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel.—1 Cor. iv. 15.

The preceding Sermon finished the observations which I originally proposed to make concerning the Law of God; the inability of man to obey it; and the means of his restoration to obedience, and to the consequent favour of God.

The next subject, in the order of these Discourses, is, The means, in the application of which, men usually obtain faith and repentance, and thus become entitled to eternal life.

Before I begin the discussion of this subject, I request my audience to call to mind the import of the last discourse, together with others which have been delivered

concerning the same subjects. I wish it to be remembered, that, in my view, evangelical faith and repentance are indispensable to the existence of any moral good in the soul of man, and are in all instances the beginning of that good. Particularly, they are the commencement of obedience to the law of God; the foundation of real and enduring happiness to such as are, or have been, sinners; and are, obviously, the immediate duty of all men. He therefore who does not teach these doctrines, omits, in my apprehension, the soul and substance of the gospel.

With these things premised, I observe, that in this passage of Scripture, St Paul declares himself to have 'begotten' the Corinthian Christians 'in Christ,' and thus to have been a cause of their being regenerated, or born again. That the new birth is the birth here referred to, will not be disputed. Nor can it be questioned, that St Paul was, in some manner and degree or other, concerned in effectuating it, without a peremptory denial of his veracity and inspiration. It is farther declared by him, that 'he had begotten them through the gospel.' It is therefore certain, that the gospel also was, in some or other manner, or degree, concerned in effectuating the new birth of the Corinthian Christians.

If the apostle, as a minister of the gospel, was concerned in effectuating the new birth of the Corinthian Christians, it will follow, by unobjectionable analogy, that other ministers are also, in the like manner or degree, concerned in effectuating the regeneration of such as become Christians under their ministry. Farther: If the gospel was thus concerned in the regeneration of the Corinthian Christians, then it is also equally concerned in that of Christians in general.

But if ministers of the gospel be, in any manner or degree, concerned in producing this change in the moral character of men, they are just so far means of producing it. Of consequence also they are, according to that course of divine providence, in which they are thus instrumental, necessary to this change, just so far as they are means of producing it.

It is not here intended, that God could not, if he pleased, produce this change in the human character without these or any other means. Nor is it intended, that in some cases he does not actually thus produce it. It is unquestionably in the power of God to effectuate this change with infinite ease, in any manner which he shall think proper. Nor have we any proof that he has not in many instances renewed men without connecting the renovation with any means whatever. But it is here intended, that this is not the usual course of his spiritual providence; and that, in that course, means are really employed to bring men into the heavenly kingdom. It is farther intended, that these means are so far necessary, as that, without them, this important end would not, in the ordinary course of providence, be accomplished.

If God has thought proper to conduct his spiritual providence in such a manner as to constitute it a regular and orderly course of events; then our own views of it are to be formed so as to accord with this constitution, and to admit it as a part of the evangelical system. Our conduct also is to be referred and conformed to this constitution. With it we are to expect other things to accord. Particularly, we are to expect salvation for ourselves and others according to this plan, and not according to a different one. Just views of this subject will therefore be easily seen to claim no small importance in the estimation of those who wish to be saved.

In the particular investigation of this subject, I propose,

I. *To show that there are means of grace.*

II. *To show what they are.*

III. *To explain their influence.*

IV. *To answer the principal objections to this scheme of doctrine.*

I. *I shall attempt to show that there are means of grace.*

This position I shall endeavour to establish in the following manner:—

1. I allege, as evidence of its truth, the direct declarations of Scripture.

The text is an explicit and forcible declaration of this nature. In this passage the apostle asserts in the most unequivocal manner, that he was a cause, and the gospel another, of regeneration to the Corinthian Christians: not a cause in the efficient sense, but the instrumental. In other words, he declares that himself and the gospel were means of their regeneration. It cannot be said here, that the apostle and the gospel were to these Christians means of edification; or of their advancement in holiness, after they were regenerated. This subject is not even hinted at in the passage. The birth is not any part of the growth, subsequent to itself. To beget, is not to nourish, or cause to grow. It is to contribute to the original existence of the thing begotten, and not to its subsequent improvement. The apostle and the gospel then, contributed to the regeneration of these Christians, and were means of bringing it to pass.

In Phil. 10, St Paul declares the same truth in the same language. 'I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds.'

In the Epistle of St James, chap. i. 18, that apostle says, 'Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we (the first-converted Jews) should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures.'

On this passage I shall make two remarks. The first is, that St James uses the same language to denote the regeneration of the Jewish Christians, which St Paul uses to denote that of the Corinthian Christians. If then the terms in St James denote regeneration, which will not be denied, they denote the same thing in the text. But the passage in St James is unquestionable proof that God regenerated the persons spoken of in this passage. Equally undeniable proof is furnished by the text, that St Paul was either the agent, or the means, of regeneration to the Christians in Corinth. But God is the only agent, or efficient cause, of regeneration. If we deny the fact, that St Paul was the means of regeneration to these persons, as asserted in the text, we must, according to the same principles, deny the fact, that God was the efficient cause of regeneration, as asserted by St James. The same rules of construction will oblige us to admit both these propositions, or to reject them both. The language is the same; and that it ought to be interpreted by the same rules of construction cannot be doubted.

The second remark is this: St James declares that God had regenerated him, and his fellow Christians, by the word of truth; that is, by the gospel. The gospel

was therefore, certainly, the means of accomplishing this event.

St Peter, in his first Epistle, chap. i. 23; speaking of himself and those to whom he wrote, says, 'Being born again,' or regenerated, 'not of corruptible seed, but by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.' In this passage St Peter declares, that Christians are born, or regenerated (διὰ λογου), by means of the word of God. Of course, he declares that they were not regenerated without the instrumentality of the word of God. What is true with respect to this subject, of the Christians to whom St Peter wrote, will not be denied to be true of Christians universally.

In 1 Tim. iv. 16, St Paul says, 'Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in so doing thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.' That Timothy would, in fact, both save himself and those who heard him, cannot be denied, unless we charge St Paul with falsehood. But if Timothy was not in this case an instrument, or a means of salvation to them, the declaration cannot be true. For God is the only efficient cause of salvation to any man.

In Rom. iii. 1, 2, St Paul says, 'What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way; chiefly because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.' In this passage St Paul declares that the Jews had much advantage over the Gentiles; and that this advantage lay 'chiefly' in the fact, 'that unto them were committed the oracles of God.' If the possession of the oracles of God was of great advantage to the Jews, we naturally ask, in what respect was it an advantage? Plainly in this: that the oracles of God contributed, or were capable of contributing, to their salvation, and consequently to their regeneration. Of what possible advantage could the oracles of God be to unconverted men, and of such only is the apostle here speaking, unless they contributed in some manner and degree or other to their conversion? This question, it is believed, admits of no answer.

In Rom. x. 14, the same apostle says, 'How then shall they call on him, in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him, of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?' Every person at all acquainted with language, knows that these questions have exactly the same import with that of strong negative declarations; and that the apostle has here, in the most forcible manner asserted, that men cannot call on him in whom they have not believed: nor believe in him of whom they have not heard: nor hear without a preacher. In other words, he declares the preaching of the gospel to be, in the ordinary course of providence, indispensably necessary to the faith of mankind in Christ, just as that faith is indispensable to the invocation of his name in prayer.

That the apostle understood these questions in this manner, is unanswerably evident from his own conclusions, subjoined in the seventeenth verse: 'So then, faith cometh by hearing; and hearing by the word of God.'

These passages, it is believed, are sufficient, if any passages can be sufficient, to decide the question. It would be easy to multiply quotations of the same import to a great extent; for this is the common language of the Scriptures. But as a long course of quoting and commenting necessarily becomes tedious, I shall conclude this part of the discussion, by repeating, in a very summary manner, a few other passages and phrases, which directly indicate, in other forms, the same truth.

The Scriptures are called the 'word of salvation;' the 'word of life;' the 'word of faith;' the 'word of wisdom;' the 'word of knowledge;' the 'word of reconciliation;' and the 'sword of the Spirit.' None of these appellations, it is apprehended, could be given to them with propriety, unless they were in truth means of salvation to men. They are called the 'word of God, which inwrought effectually' in the Thessalonians, 'when they first received it,' 1 Thess. ii. 13. They are said by God himself, speaking to the prophet Jeremiah, to be 'as a fire, and as a hammer, that breaketh the rock in pieces,' Jer. xxiii. 29. They are asserted by St Paul to be 'quick (or living) and powerful; sharper than any two-edged sword; piercing even to the dividing asunder of the soul and spirit; and to be a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart,' Heb. iv. 12. Our Saviour says to the Jews, 'It is the Spirit that quickeneth;' and, to explain his meaning, subjoins, 'The words which I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.'

It is said, that when 'the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them who believe,' 1 Cor. i. 21.

St Paul declares the gospel to be 'the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth,' Rom. i. 16.

From these passages it is evident, that the Scriptures, in their customary language, declare themselves, particularly as preached to mankind, to be means of salvation.

2. I argue the same doctrine from the commission given by Christ to his apostles.

This commission is recorded, Matt. xxviii. 19, in these words; 'Go, ye, disciple (that is, make disciples of) all nations; baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.'

The word, μαθητευσατε, rendered 'teach' in the common translation, is literally rendered *disciple*. Διδασκω is the proper term to denote *teaching*. Μαθητευω denotes to make a person a *disciple*, in the same sense, in which the apostles, and their contemporary Christians, were disciples of Christ. A disciple, as the term is used in the New Testament, is a person who receives, approves, and voluntarily conforms to the doctrines and precepts of his instructor. Such were the disciples of the Pharisees; such were those of John the baptist; and such were those of Christ. Christ, it will be admitted, commissioned the apostles to make real disciples of those to whom they preached, and not disciples in pretence and profession merely. But every real disciple is regenerated.

The nations to whom the apostles were sent, were Jews and heathens, and of course were unbelievers and sinners. Christ therefore commissioned the apostles to make disciples of unbelievers and sinners. It will not be denied, that he commissioned them to do that which, in the ordinary progress of things, could be done: and which they, so far as they faithfully obeyed his commands, did actually accomplish. The apostles therefore did really in the proper sense make disciples of these sinners.

Accordingly, St Paul says, that he desired to 'have fruit among the Romans as he had had among the other Gentiles,' Rom. i. 13. He speaks of himself and Apollos, as 'ministers by whom,' that is, by means of whom, 'the Corinthians believed,' 1 Cor. iii. 5. He says that he and his companions 'received grace and apostleship, for the obedience of faith among all nations,' Rom. i, 5. St Peter, Acts xv. 7, says, that 'God had chosen, that the Gentiles by his mouth should hear the gospel and believe.' Everywhere also, in the book of Acts, both Jews and Gentiles are exhibited as having believed and turned to God by means of the preaching of the apostles and their coadjutors.

Thus the commission was fulfilled exactly, according to its tenor; and the gospel actually became the means of faith and salvation to those to whom it was preached.

But this commission was given to all succeeding ministers, as well as to the apostles; and is the very authority under which they now preach, and perform all the other duties of the ministerial offices. All that was here said to the apostles, is in the very same sense said to them. It is equally their business and duty to make disciples of mankind, wherever Providence presents them an opportunity; and to baptize them when made. Of course, they as really make disciples of unbelievers and sinners, and are as really means of faith and salvation to mankind.

The very fact of giving this commission is in itself decisive proof of this truth. It was undoubtedly given with sincerity and benevolence on the part of Christ. Of course, it was intended by him, that the design expressed in it was really formed in his mind, and will be faithfully accomplished. This design is completely expressed in the commission itself. As the apostles were directed to disciple all nations, or to make disciples everywhere: so it was the design of Christ, that disciples should everywhere be made by them. In this business they were to have a real agency. It therefore follows irresistibly, that they had a real agency in it; such an agency as that, without their exertions, these men would, in the established course of things, never have become disciples.

3. The same doctrine is proved by the whole course of facts relating to the existence and progress of Christianity in the world.

Wherever the gospel has been preached and read, mankind have actually been made disciples of Christ. In every age and in every country to which the gospel has come, there have been many such disciples. In those countries, on the contrary, where the gospel has not existed, such disciples have not been made; or, at least, evidence of their discipleship has not been furnished to their fellow men. I speak here, it will be remembered, of the ordinary course of God's spiritual providence. That exceptions to this assertion may have existed, I am not disposed to deny. That they must have been comparatively few, is I think clearly evident from the fact, that no satisfactory reasons have appeared, even to the mind of charity itself, to believe them numerous. If God has pursued, in countries unenlightened by the gospel, a different system of dispensations from that which we have been contemplating, it must be admitted, that we have no evidence of this fact; or at least none which can be pronounced satisfactory. The Scriptures certainly give us very little information of this nature; and the history of mankind furnishes still less. Without limiting the mercy of God, or attempting to investigate his spiritual providence with respect to nations who have not the gospel, it may safely be concluded, that the instances which they furnish of apparent renovation are very few.

A benevolent man, who casts his eye over the western wilderness, and surveys with attention the moral conduct of its inhabitants, will find very little of this nature to satisfy his wishes or his hopes. Independently of the moral effects produced upon these nations by the labours of missionaries, he will find sin prevailing and ravaging, in all the forms of turpitude compatible with their circumstances, and in every degree not forbidden by their poverty, ignorance, and imbecility. Our Saviour has taught us, that we are to discern the character of men by their fruits. This equitable and decisive rule of judging is no less applicable to these nations than to ourselves. But what are the fruits produced by these men? Certainly they are not such as are 'meet for repentance;' such as spring from confidence in God; such as indicate, even remotely, the influence, or even the existence, of real virtue. After the most charitable and indulgent allowance for their ignorance; after all the palliations which the most benevolent mind can elicit from their moral disadvantages; their fraud, treachery, cruelty, pride, implacability, and revenge, present a picture of depravity which it is impossible not to understand and acknowledge. No penitents, in the mean time, are visible among them. No symptoms of reformation are found. On the contrary, one unvarying, sluggish, gloomy stream of corruption appears to have flowed heavily onward from remote generations to the present hour; and to wind its Lethean course through all these nations, wherever and however situated.

On the ground once inhabited by these people, the New England colonists have dwelt almost two centuries. Among them religion has generally prevailed. The proof is that which has been already mentioned. They have brought forth the fruits specified in the gospel, as evidences of a virtuous character, in instances whose number it would be difficult to limit. Whence this mighty difference in nations planted on the same soil, and living under the same climate? The only satisfactory answer is, that the people of New England have possessed the gospel and its ordinances, have built churches, settled ministers, attended the public worship of God, read the Scriptures, and educated their children 'in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.' None of these things were possessed or done by their savage predecessors. In a word, the people of New England have had the gospel; the savages have not.

In those countries also where the gospel has been enjoyed, and disciples have actually been made, all or almost all persons of this character have become disciples by means of the gospel itself. Such persons, with scarcely an exception, probably without an exception, when conversing on their regeneration, declare that everything in their own minds, which yields them consolation or hope, is in their view fairly referable to the truths of the gospel, presented to them in some form or other. A vast multitude date all their hopes from the preaching of the gospel; and feel completely assured, that 'faith,' if it has come to them at all, has come 'by hearing,' as hearing has 'by the word of God.' Others

attribute this blessing to the indirect influence of preaching, operating upon their minds through a succession of events. Others ascribe it to an early religious education, making deep impressions on their minds, in the happy period of childhood. Others still attribute it to the reading of the Scriptures, to the reading of religious books, to the religious conversation of good men, or to the life and conduct of such men. In these several ways the truths of the gospel are often exhibited with peculiar strength, beauty, and efficacy. The mode in which they are conveyed to the mind is of no other importance than as it renders the truths themselves more explicit, or more impressive. The truths are the substance and the soul of this interesting process.

As the language of all such persons concerning this subject is the same, it must I think be admitted to be true. Their number has been too great to allow the suspicion, that they can all have been deceived. They have lived in so many ages and countries, have been of so many different characters, have received so widely different educations, have lived in so widely different circumstances, and have entertained in other respects so widely different opinions, as to render it incredible that they should all have been prejudiced concerning this subject, and impossible, that they should have united in exactly the same set of prejudices. At the same time, multitudes of them have been eminently distinguished for wisdom, candour, and self-knowledge. It cannot be reasonably supposed, that immense numbers of such men should, with respect to such a subject, be uniformly deceived in exactly the same manner. Beyond all this, it appears, at least to me, to be an indefensible imputation upon the character of God, to suppose that he would in this case leave his children to false apprehensions, and suffer them universally to believe that this mighty blessing came to them all in a way which was imaginary, and by means to which it was in no degree attributable.

From these considerations it may, I think, with the highest probability be concluded, that mankind are sanctified through, or by means of, the truth of God.

To all that has been here alleged, it may, however, be objected, that in the Scriptures our sanctification, particularly our regeneration, is ascribed directly and solely to the agency of the Holy Ghost; and that the doctrine contended for in this Discourse contradicts this part of the scriptural scheme.

To this objection I answer, that the doctrine for which I contend is as plainly asserted, and in as many passages of the Scriptures, as that which is alleged in the objection. If, then, we deny the former of these doctrines, we shall do violence to as many and as plain scriptural declarations, as if we deny the latter. Our dislike of the doctrine asserted in this Discourse, will in no degree justify us in rejecting or contravening those passages of Scripture in which it is asserted. They stand upon their own basis; the authority and inspiration of that Divine Spirit, who, while he challenges this agency to himself, has been pleased to attribute also this instrumentality to his word. His declarations we are bound to receive as we find them; and cannot alter the obvious meaning, with any better warrant than we can challenge for altering the words which contain that meaning.

It may be farther objected, that this doctrine robs God of his peculiar glory in regenerating the soul of man.

To this I answer, that we are at the best, incompetent judges of this subject; and are therefore unable to determine satisfactorily in what manner God will be most glorified. If God has thought proper to give us such an account of the subject as has been here specified, it will be found, in the end, that he is more glorified in the manner conformed to these declarations, than in any other. The psalmist, under the unerring influence of inspiration, says to God, 'Thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name.' Should it prove one of the ways in which God magnifies his word, that it is constituted the means of regeneration to mankind; there can be no reasonable doubt that it will be found, in the end, perfectly consistent with the most perfect glorification of his name.

The truth, however, is, that neither of these answers is at all necessary to satisfy us concerning these objections. The Spirit of God is in truth the only agent in renovating man; or, in other words, the only efficient cause of his renovation. This, however, he would be in as perfect a degree, if he were supposed to employ means in accomplishing this change of character, as if he were supposed to accomplish it without them. The supposition, that an agent, if he employ means to effectuate his purposes, will on this account cease to be, or be at all less, an agent, is built upon no known principles of truth or evidence.

The farmer and gardener turn their soil, and plant their seeds: the rain descends upon them, and the sun shines; but all these things do not make them spring up and yield their increase. God must still interpose with his creative power, to produce these desirable effects; or a crop will be expected in vain. God therefore is the sole agent and author of the crop; yet the farmer and the gardener, the ground and the seed, the rain and the sunshine, are all means of its existence. Without these means, there would, according to the established order of things, be no crop. Of course, they are means of its existence, and means indispensable.

It may be said, that these cases are not similar. If this should be said, it would, I think, be said rashly; for Christ himself, St Peter, St James, and St Paul, have all chosen this allusion to illustrate this very subject. See the parable of the Sower. See also, 1 Cor. iii. where Paul declares himself to have planted, Apollos to have watered, and God to have given the increase.

With regard to the other objection, it is obvious that, so far as we can see, the glory of regenerating man is all ascribed to God, and all ascribed in the manner most honourable to him; is attributed to his Spirit as the efficient cause, and to his word as the means. If he has in fact, as, if I mistake not, I have proved, declared that this is the manner in which he has chosen to accomplish this work; we need not fear that in giving this account of it we shall detract from his character.

REMARK.

If the scheme of Discourse which has been here exhibited is just, it will follow, that the gospel is to be preached to sinners.

My audience may perhaps wonder that any evidence should be thought necessary to prove this assertion. If I am not misinformed, however, the assertion has not

only been questioned, but denied. That such should have been the fact, is certainly wonderful in my view, as well as in that of others.

When the gospel was first preached by Christ, the whole world, with very few exceptions, was in a state of sin. The Gentiles were so generally of this character, that, as a body, they were styled, by St Paul, 'sinners of the Gentiles,' Gal. ii. 15. To the Gentiles, however, Paul was sent directly by Christ to preach the gospel. The extraordinary commission of this apostle deserves to be here repeated: 'Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee; to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God; that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them who are sanctified by faith that is in me,' Acts xxvi. 17, 18.

Here it is to be remarked, that St Paul was sent to the Gentiles, not only to preach the gospel, and 'to open their eyes;' but 'to turn them also from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God.' Accordingly, he 'was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision; but showed first to them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent, and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance.'

These declarations made by St Paul are unanswerably evinced to be true by the history of his life. In the very manner here recited he preached to both Jews and Gentiles the glad tidings of salvation; and persuaded men everywhere to renounce and forsake their iniquities; and thus actually opened their eyes, and turned them from darkness to light.

The beginning of the preaching of Christ, as recited in the gospel according to St Mark, is in these words; 'The time is fulfilled; the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Repent ye, and believe the gospel.' The people therefore whom he addressed had not hitherto repented nor believed. Of course they were sinners. In the whole history contained in the Gospel and in the Acts, there is not, so far as I recollect, a single instance recorded, in which we have any satisfactory proof that even an individual sinner was regenerated without the influence of divine truth upon his heart On the contrary, these writings are full of examples, in which the efficacy of this truth is asserted directly, as having been indispensably concerned in producing this change in man.

The same doctrine is also amply exhibited, as it respects the Jewish church. Of the priests, the ordinary ministers of that church, whose proper office was to teach the Scriptures to the Israelites, God says in the prophet Malachi, 'The law of truth was in their mouth; and they turned many away from iniquity.' This declaration is a complete history of the fact in question, so far as the present subject is concerned, throughout all the preceding ages of the Jewish church.

What was true concerning the periods contained in the scriptural history, has been equally true, so far as we have any information, of the periods which have since elapsed. Ministers have everywhere, and in every age of the Christian church, preached to sinners; and sinners under their preaching have been turned to God. In all these facts the duty of ministers at the present time is distinctly seen and gloriously encouraged. He who would preach as the priests preached, as Christ preached, as the apostles preached, will proclaim the tidings of salvation to sinners; and will urge them unceasingly to faith, repentance, and holiness. Upon his preaching, if faithfully conducted in this manner, and accompanied by his own prayers, and those of the Christians around him, he may confidently look for the blessing of God.

SERMON CXXXVI.

THE MEANS OF GRACE.—ORDINARY MEANS OF GRACE.—WHAT THEY ARE; AND WHAT IS THEIR INFLUENCE.

For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet ye have not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel.—1 Cor. vi. 15.

In the last Discourse, I attempted to prove, that there are means of grace and salvation: the first subject, then proposed for discussion. I shall now endeavour,

II. *To show what they are.*

III. *To explain their influence.*

The means of grace may be distributed into a greater or less number of divisions, without any material disadvantage. At the present time it will, however, be useful to mention only those which are of peculiar importance.

Of these, the gospel, by which I here intend the Scriptures at large, is ever to be regarded as the sum: for it plainly involves them all. The gospel is especially to be considered as being efficacious to salvation, when it is preached: this being that institution of God, to which his peculiar blessing, 'life for evermore,' is especially annexed in the gospel itself. Still, it is ever to be remembered, that in every lawful, serious use of its instructions, precepts, warnings, threatenings, invitations, and promises, it is possessed of the same general nature and influence.

When we speak of the means of grace, in the plural, we always intend, either different modes of applying the gospel, or some or other of its precepts, or ordinances, to the human understanding, or affections; or the performance of some act, or series of acts enjoined in the Scriptures.

It will be proper farther to observe, that the phrase

which I have here used, is commonly employed to denote both the means by which, in the usual course of providence, grace is originally obtained; and the means of increasing it, when once obtained.

Under this head are included,

I. *The preaching of the gospel.*

II. *The reading of the Scriptures.*

III. *Prayer.*

IV. *Correspondence with religious men.*

V. *Religious meditation;* particularly *self-examination.*

VI. *The religious education of children.*

To these may be added, as efficacious to the same end, although differing in several respects from all those already mentioned, the instructive and monitory, the merciful and afflictive, dispensations of Divine Providence, to ourselves and others. It ought to be remembered, that I consider none of these as means of grace, in any other sense than as they display, and impress upon the mind, the truth of God.

In the Scriptures all these things appear to sustain the character which I have attributed to them.

'The law of the Lord,' says St David, 'is perfect; converting the soul: the testimonies of the Lord are sure, making wise the simple.'—'Search the Scriptures,' says our Saviour to the Jews, 'for in them ye think ye have the words of eternal life.'—'How shall they believe,' says St Paul, 'in him, of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? So, then, faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.'—'God be merciful to me, a sinner!' said the publican, 'who went up to the temple to pray:' and our Saviour informs us, that 'he went down to his house, justified rather than the Pharisee.'—'He that walketh with wise men,' says Solomon, 'shall be wise.'—'Examine yourselves,' says St Paul, 'whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves: know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you except ye be reprobates? This exhortation is obviously given to persons supposed by the apostle to be, individually, of different moral characters; and is plainly given to them all, whatever their character might be. 'Stand in awe,' said David to his enemies, 'and sin not: commune with your own heart upon your bed; and be still.'—'Keep thy heart,' said David to Solomon, 'with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.'—'Train up a child in the way he should go,' says Solomon, 'and when he is old he will not depart from it:' and again, 'The reproofs of instruction are the way of life.'—'Fathers,' says St Paul, 'train up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.'

These and many other passages, of a nature generally similar, I consider as directing, either mediately or immediately, the conduct of sinners. Most of them are so obviously of this character, as apparently to admit of no dispute. A part of them may, I am aware, admit of objections to this construction. But, if these were to be given up, the rest would, I apprehend, be abundantly sufficient to answer the purpose for which they have been quoted. That they are directed to such objects as I have termed means of grace, will not be questioned.

With the instruction furnished us concerning this subject by the word of God, we are bound to unite that also which is exhibited to us by his providence. If certain measures have been customarily crowned with success in the pursuit of salvation; and other measures, or the omission of these successful ones, have terminated without that success; then we are warranted to conclude, that the course which has been heretofore successful, will be so again. We are warranted to conclude, that what God has usually blessed, he may confidently be expected to bless; and that the conduct which has been regularly followed by impenitence and unbelief, will produce hereafter no other consequences.

But, so far as men can judge, one general course of conduct has, in fact, been usually crowned with success in this mighty concern, from the beginning. The preaching and hearing of the gospel, and the diligent, anxious use of those which I have styled means of grace, have been actually followed by faith, repentance, and holiness, from the promulgation of the gospel to the present time. The same things may therefore be reasonably expected to produce the same consequences hereafter.

III. *I shall now endeavour to explain the influence of these means on mankind.*

Before I begin this explanation, I wish to remark, that although I should fail of giving a satisfactory account of this subject, the failure would, in no degree, affect the truth of the doctrine. If the evidence alleged has been sufficient, and the conclusions have been fairly drawn; then the doctrine is true. Nor will my ignorance, or that of any other person, concerning the manner in which the event referred to is accomplished, and the doctrine true, make any difference with respect to the principal point. We know perfectly the existence of many facts; while of the manner in which they are accomplished, we are unable to form any adequate conception.

The influence of the means of grace upon mankind may, if I mistake not, be explained under the two general heads of instruction and impression.

These I shall now consider in the order already specified.

1. The means of grace become such by instruction.

It will be universally acknowledged, that men, according to St Paul's declaration, cannot 'believe on him, of whom they have not heard; nor call on him, in whom they have not believed.' If God, the Father or the Son, be unknown; it is plain, that he can neither be trusted, invoked, nor obeyed. There can be no known relation in this case between the creature and the Creator; and therefore, on the part of the creature, no known or possible duty to the Creator. 'Where there is no law, there is no transgression;' and where there is no knowledge, either actual or possible, of a law, there is, in the fullest sense, no law. The knowledge of God, therefore, his law, and our obligation to obey it, is indispensable even to our possible obedience, or disobedience.

When mankind had fallen, and Christ had made an expiation for their sins; it was equally and absolutely necessary, in order to their acceptance of Christ, which then became their duty, that they should know this glorious Person, in such a sense as to enable them to exercise faith in him as their Redeemer. Without such knowledge, it is naturally impossible for us to believe in him at all. The same things are equally true of every religious duty and subject. We cannot perform any duty, however well disposed, unless it be known to us: nor be required to perform it, unless such knowledge be attainable.

Thus, it is evident, that the gospel is indispensable to the very existence of Christianity in the mind of man: and, as the gospel cannot be of any possible use to man, unless known by him; so the knowledge of the gospel is indispensable to the existence of faith, repentance, and holiness.

It is indeed perfectly obvious, that God can, with infinite ease, reveal the fundamental truths, and all other truths of the gospel, to any man immediately, as he did to St Paul. This, however, is not to be expected; as it is certainly no part of his ordinary providence. In the usual course of that providence, men are taught the gospel by preaching, reading, and other modes of instruction. These, or some of these, are therefore indispensable, in the usual course of things, to the existence of Christianity in the minds of men. Hence, in one respect, the gospel is said to be 'the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth:' and hence, in the same respect, it is said, that, 'when the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.'

In the same manner religious education, meditation, correspondence with religious men, and the reading of religious books, become thus far means of salvation to mankind. In all these ways the word of God is made known to mankind: and all of them have, and were designed by God to have, their peculiar advantages.

Among the things most necessary to be known by us, in order to our salvation, our own hearts or moral characters, hold a primary place. I know of no manner in which he who feels himself to be whole, can realize that he needs a physician. To the existence even of a wish for deliverance, the sense of danger or distress is absolutely necessary. If we are now conscious of being holy, or of being safe, we certainly can never desire renovation, forgiveness, or expiation; nor seek for a deliverer to save us. While such a consciousness continues, no reason can be perceived by the man who experiences it, why he should look for salvation from Christ, any more than why an angel who has never fallen, should look for salvation from the same source. But sin, and the moral distress and danger occasioned by it, have their seat in the heart. If then the heart be unknown, these will also be unknown; and the mind will never seek nor wish for deliverance from them. Of course, it cannot, and will not, expect its salvation from the Redeemer.

The knowledge of the heart is extensively communicated by the Scriptures: so extensively, that without them mankind will never understand their true moral character in any such manner as to produce any evangelical benefit. But all the scriptural communications of this nature will be useless to us, unless we apply them to ourselves. This application can never be made to any purpose, unless we 'commune with our own hearts.' Self-examination is the direct, and in many respects, the only mode in which we apply the scriptural accounts of our moral nature to ourselves. Without such examination we may indeed admit the scriptural accounts concerning human nature generally; and believe that other men are sinners, in the manner and degree there exhibited. But we shall never realize that these accounts, in their whole extent, are applicable also to ourselves. Particularly, we shall form no just apprehensions of our odiousness in the sight of God, of the extent of our condemnation by his law, or our exposure to final perdition. The necessity of such examination is therefore absolute.

Farther: when we have in fact become convinced of our sin and our danger, we are still equally unconvinced of our indisposition to return to God by evangelical repentance and faith. All mankind appear originally to believe their conversion to God to be so absolutely in their power, as that, whenever they shall make serious and earnest attempts to accomplish it, they shall accomplish it of course, and without any peculiar divine assistance. Whatever opinions they may imagine themselves to form concerning this subject, they still believe, and if they ever become penitents, will find themselves to have believed, that whenever they shall resolve upon the exercise of faith and repentance, as necessary to their moral character and true well-being, they shall certainly repent and believe. In this way they feel in a great measure secure of salvation. It is a secret, which probably no professed believer in the doctrines of free grace ever discovers, before he has made attempts of this nature, that, with all his apprehended orthodoxy, he still places his ultimate reliance on himself; and realizes no necessity for any peculiar assistance from God. Among the things which he feels to be thus absolutely in his power, prayer, that is, evangelical and acceptable prayer, is always one. Nothing in the ordinary course of things, not even his own speculative belief to the contrary, will ever persuade him, that he will find any difficulty in praying to God, until after he has seriously made the trial. His own efforts to pray will usually be the first and the only means of changing this opinion, and of convincing him that he has essentially mistaken his real character.

Actual attempts at prayer, at exercising faith and repentance, and at forming efficacious resolutions of obedience, furnish in this case a kind of instruction, not easily supplied by anything else. Conviction of the practicability or impracticability of any measures of the insufficiency of our own powers, and of the certain failure of our efforts, is wrought only by the trial of these measures, powers, and efforts. A loose, general, uninfluential belief may be otherwise entertained. But a conviction which will be felt, will be gained only in this manner. I know not whether, in all ordinary cases, this conviction is not indispensable to the attainment of holiness.

In the conduct and character of religious men, the actual existence of religion is often, perhaps usually, first seen and believed. In the same manner are the dignity and beauty, and the excellence of religion usually first discerned and acknowledged. The truth also, and especially the importance, of many primary doctrines of the gospel, and the chief part of what is commonly intended by experimental religion, are all principally learned and realized by means of their conversation.

These may serve as specimens, sufficient for the present purpose, of the instruction acquired in the use of the means of grace.

2. Means of grace become such by the impressions which they make on the heart.

To a person at all versed in human nature it is perfectly evident, that in every case where men are to be moved to any serious exertion, mere conviction will often be inefficacious. The intellect is not the motive

faculty of the mind. The will, in which term I include all the affections, gives birth to every effort which the mind makes concerning the objects of the present or the future world. But the mere conviction of the intellect is of itself rarely sufficient to move the will, or engage the affections. Something farther is in a particular manner necessary to engage man in the serious pursuit of spiritual and eternal objects, or to make him realize any serious interest in these objects. The mere proof, that a doctrine is true, is usually but one step towards persuading us to exertion of any kind. In addition to this, it is commonly necessary for the same end, that our imagination be roused, and our affections awakened and engaged.

In accordance with these observations, mankind, in their customary language, regularly express the different states of the mind, when it is merely convinced, and when it feels the truth of which it is convinced. To see a truth, and to feel it, are familiar expressions in our language, which denote ideas widely different from each other. So different are they, that we commonly see, without feeling at all; and therefore without being moved to exertion by what we see. All men use, all men understand this language; and thus prove that there is a solid foundation in the nature of things for the distinction which it expresses.

In accordance with this scheme, eloquence, both in speaking and writing, has ever been directed to the imagination, and to the passions, as well as to the intellect; and that kind of eloquence which has been employed in moving the heart, has been considered as possessing a higher and more influential nature, than that which is addressed merely to the understanding. Hence, eloquence itself is commonly considered, rather as the power of persuasion, than the power of conviction.

That we are capable of being moved to a sense of spiritual objects, altogether different from a cold, unimpassioned conviction, as truly as to such a sense of temporal objects, cannot admit of a rational doubt. Every minister of the gospel, every moralist, and every other man, who labours to amend the human character, even those who deny the doctrine for which I am contending, prove that they adopt this opinion, by using to the utmost of their power the means of impression for this end, as well as those of conviction. In this conduct they show, more evidently than is possible by any other method, that they realize this difference, and to avail themselves of it, employ these means.

The Scriptures themselves are universally formed in this manner. They are everywhere filled with instruction; but they are also filled everywhere with persuasion. Instead of being a cold compilation of philosophical dogmas, they are filled with real life, with facts, with persons, with forcible appeals to the imagination, and with powerful applications to the heart. With these the instruction is everywhere interwoven. By these it is continually imbodied. In the Bible no affection of the human heart is unaddressed. Our hope and fear, our love and hatred, our sorrow and joy, our desire and aversion, nay, our taste for beauty, novelty, and sublimity, for moral glory and greatness, are all alternately and most forcibly appealed to, in order that the whole man, as a being possessed of imagination and affections, as well as of understanding, may be alarmed, allured, and compelled, to return from sin, embrace holiness, and live for ever.

Now the Scriptures were published to a world of sinners, and with the most merciful design of bringing them to repentance and salvation. To them, in a peculiar manner is a great part of the Scriptures addressed. They are profitable in all their parts; and are contrived by Infinite Wisdom so as best to compass the end for which they were written. They teach, that we may see, they impress, that we may feel, divine truth in the most profitable manner.

In the promotion of this end, all the means of grace conspire. By an early and well-directed religious education, such truths as children can understand are conveyed to their minds with a force eminently impressive, and singularly lasting. The state of the mind itself is here peculiarly favourable to the design of making deep impressions; and has hence been particularly regarded by God in those precepts which enjoin such an education at this period. The efficacy of these impressions is strongly declared in that remarkable passage, already quoted from the Book of Proverbs: 'Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old he will not depart from it.'

What is true of religious education is also true of all the means of grace which I have specified. Public worship is plainly formed with a particular design to affect the heart of man by those truths which are taught in the house of God. The day, the place, the occasion, are all in the highest degree solemn and interesting. The numbers united in the worship, necessarily communicate and receive the strong feelings of sympathy; and regard the subjects of instruction with emotions widely different from those which could be experienced in solitude. The nature of the ordinances is also in a singular degree solemn, awful, and affecting. In a word, everything pertaining to the subject is in the happiest manner fitted to move the mind, and deeply to instamp on it the truths of the gospel.

Prayer, in the like manner, is eminently fitted to teach, and not only to teach, but to make us feel, the various doctrines of religion. Prayer, in every form, is a service peculiarly impressive. In the church, in the family, and in the closet, it is attended by pre-eminent advantages. When we retire to our 'closets,' and 'shut the door' on the world, and all which it contains; and 'pray to our Father, who is in secret,' we are withdrawn from all external things; are fixed in our own concerns: our guilt, our danger, our helplessness; our dependence on God alone for hope, sanctification, and deliverance; and our absolute necessity of being interested in Christ, as the only expiation for sin, and the only safety to man. We bring God before us, 'face to face;' and 'see eye to eye.' The awful and transcendent character of this great and glorious Being rises up to our view, in a manner resembling that in which the Israelites contemplated it at the foot, or Moses on the summit, of Mount Sinai. The nearness of the judgment is realized with singular force, and the approach of the final recompense anticipated with profound awe, and most salutary apprehensions.

Among the things which, in the attempts to perform this duty, are deeply impressed on the soul of the sinner, his own inability to pray in a manner acceptable to God, is one of the most important and affecting. No sinner realizes this truth before he has made the attempt in earnest. Nor does anything appear to lay low the pride, and annihilate the self-righteousness of the hu-

man heart in the same effectual manner. When he attempts to pray, and in the very act of attempting it finds clear and practical proof that his prayers are selfish, cold, and heartless, he first begins to feel in a useful manner his absolute dependence on God for every good disposition. Prayer is naturally the last hope, the last consolation of man. So long as we can ask for mercy, we never feel entirely unsafe. But when the soul becomes satisfied by actual trial that its prayers are such as itself condemns; it becomes also satisfied, that its only ultimate dependence is on the mere mercy of God.

Prayer also in the same effectual manner opens to the view of the soul, with peculiar power, its whole moral state; its guilt, its exposure, and its ruin. All these things, when brought up to view in its converse with God, in making them the subjects of its own confessions and requests, and in revolving them with the most solemn and interesting meditation, all enhanced by a realizing sense of the presence of God, are felt by the soul with a peculiar energy, usually followed by happy effects.

Each of the other means of grace which I have specified has its own, and that a very desirable, power of affecting the heart. We are so formed as to be capable of deep impressions in various ways, and from many different sources. Each way has its peculiar efficacy; and every source is copious in its influence on the mind.

The great objects concerning which these impressions are especially needed, and are actually made, are the guilt and danger of sin; the glorious mercy of God in redeeming, sanctifying, and forgiving sinners; the absolute dependence of the soul on him for all good, both natural and moral; and his willingness to communicate both through Jesus Christ. These united and thoroughly understood, constitute those views and awaken those emotions which, together, are commonly styled convictions of conscience; or, to speak perhaps with more precision, that awakened state of the conscience which usually precedes regeneration; and which, in the ordinary course of God's providence, seems indispensable to its existence. Converse with as many religious men as you please concerning this subject, and every one of them will declare that he has passed through a state of mind substantially of this nature; and will inform you that it anteceded every hope of reconciliation to God, and every exercise which he has believed to be genuine religion in itself. Such then may be deemed one of the laws of the moral or spiritual Kingdom; a law which appears to be formed with supreme wisdom, and with supreme benevolence to the sinner. If he were never to entertain such a sense of sin, if he were never to have such apprehensions of his danger, if he were never thus to feel his dependence on his Maker, he could not I think form any just views of the nature or greatness of his deliverance; nor of the goodness of God in rescuing him from destruction, sanctifying his soul, and blotting out his transgressions; nor of the importance or excellence of that holiness with which he is endued; nor of the nature and glory of that happiness to which he will gain a final admission. In a word, it seems indispensable that such a state of mind should precede his regeneration, in order to enable him, throughout all his future being, to understand what God has done for him and to feel the gratitude actually felt by the minds, and joyfully expressed in the praises, of the first-born.

Some persons, when considering this subject, appear to feel as if regeneration could not be absolutely attributed to the spirit of truth, unless it was accomplished altogether without the employment of means. But this opinion is plainly erroneous. The very means themselves are furnished entirely by this Divine Agent. When furnished, all of them united would prove wholly insufficient without his creative influence. No man in his sober senses ever mistrusted that ploughing and sowing, rain and sunshine, would produce wheat. The almighty power of God, after all these things have operated to the utmost, is absolutely necessary even to the germination of the seed, and still more obviously to the perfection of the plant. In the same manner, whatever means may be employed in bringing man from sin to holiness, and whatever may be their influence, the creative power of the Divine Spirit is absolutely necessary to accomplish his renovation. All that can be truly said in this case is, that this glorious person operates in one manner, and not in another.

The human soul is not regenerated in the same manner with that in which the dust of the ground was originally made into a human body. In this case, a mere act of divine power, unconnected with everything else, accomplished the effect. But, before renewing man, God is pleased in the usual course of his spiritual providence to instruct him, to alarm, to invite, to promise, and to persuade. To prove the usefulness of these means, nothing more seems necessary than to observe that they always precede or attend our renovation; that is, always in the usual course of providence. It is the soul which is thus taught, alarmed, and allured, upon which descends the efficacious grace of the Holy Spirit; and not the soul uninstructed, unawakened, thoughtless of its guilt, and devoted only to the pursuit of sensual objects. The whole history of experimental religion, both within and without the Scriptures, is, unless I am deceived, a complete confirmation of this truth.

But to the existence of this state of the soul, the means of grace, as I have described them, and their influence, appear to be indispensable. By the instructions which they communicate on the one hand, and the impressions which they make on the other, concerning spiritual objects, they appear, whenever employed with seriousness, fervour, and perseverance, to bring the soul into this interesting and profitable situation. It is, I conceive, with reference to this fact, that God says, 'Is not my word as the fire, and as the hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?' With reference to this fact, Christ says, that 'his words are spirit and life;' and that 'they will make men free from the bondage of corruption.' With the same reference, Paul declares the gospel to be 'the power of God unto salvation;' and 'the word of God' to be 'quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword.' From this power of the gospel was derived the fact, that the Jews who crucified Christ were in such numbers 'pricked in the heart' by the preaching of St Peter, and cried out, 'Men and brethren, what shall we do?'

All the efficacy which I have attributed to the means of grace does not, I acknowledge, amount to regeneration, nor insure it. But it amounts to what St Paul terms 'planting' and 'watering.' The 'increase' must be, and still is, given by God only. In the same manner, God must create the grain; or the husbandman, after all his ploughing and sowing, after all the rain

and the sunshine, will never find a crop. Still, these are indispensable means of his crop; so indispensable, that without them the crop would never exist. As truly, in the ordinary course of providence, there will, without the use of the means of grace, be no spiritual harvest. There will be no instructions given, no impressions made, and no realizing convictions of guilt, danger, and dependence produced: and without these, there will be no regeneration of the soul, and no title obtained to eternal life.

SERMON CXXXVII.

THE MEANS OF GRACE.—ORDINARY MEANS OF GRACE. OBJECTIONS ANSWERED.

For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel.—1 Cor. iv. 15.

In the first Discourse from these words, I proposed,

I. *To show that there are means of grace;*

II. *To show what they are;*

III. *To explain their influence;*

IV. *To answer the principal objections to this scheme of doctrine.*

The three first of these subjects have been already discussed. I shall now,

IV. *Answer the principal objections to this scheme of doctrine.*

These, as they are customarily alleged, may be considered as chiefly made to two practical inferences, which I shall derive from the two preceding Discourses.

1. It follows, from the observations made in these Discourses, that the means of grace ought to be used by sinners and by Christians, for the purpose of promoting the salvation of sinners.

If there are means of grace and salvation given by God, then they were given for the very purpose of promoting the salvation of sinners. As this was the end which God proposed in communicating them to mankind, it is an end in which all men are bound to rejoice, and which they are plainly obligated to pursue. But unless these means are used by sinners for their own salvation, they will ordinarily be of no benefit to them; and, unless Christians use them also for the purpose of promoting the salvation of sinners, they will fail of their intended effect. Christian ministers must preach the gospel to sinners. Christian parents must educate their sinful children 'in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.' Christians must live, and act, and converse with sinners: otherwise the salvation of sinners will usually be neglected, and therefore will be unattained.

Farther; if there are means of grace, then the appointment of them is wise; the communication of them to mankind, benevolent; and the use of them by those for whom they were appointed, proper. It can hardly be supposed, that God has provided and published means of salvation to mankind, and yet, by his own authority, made it improper that they should be used. According to this scheme, sinners, although expressly commanded to 'flee from the wrath to come,' to 'seek the Lord while he may be found,' and to 'turn from the error of their way,' are yet, by divine authority, precluded from the very measures which alone will, in the usual course of things, produce the effect enjoined.

That Christians are bound to employ the means of grace for the salvation of sinners, will not, I suppose, be doubted. That sinners must employ them also in various respects, is evinced by this very position, as well as by the observations made in the preceding Discourses.

If the gospel is to be preached to sinners, they must hear. If Christian parents are to 'train up their 'children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord,' they must listen to their instructions. If sinners are to become acquainted with the word of God, or even to know whether that which is preached to them is the word of God or not, they must read the Scriptures. If sinners are to be informed of the reality, power, and excellency of religion, they must converse with religious men. If they are to understand and feel their guilt, they must commune with their own hearts. If they are ever to know the real nature of their character and efforts, they must pray. From their own use of the means of grace, almost all their deep impressions of their guilt, danger, dependence on Christ, and absolute need of the regenerating influence of the Spirit of God, must be derived. In a word, if they are to obtain salvation, as most or all other Christians have obtained it; indeed, if they are to obtain it at all, in the ordinary course of providence, they must obtain it in the use of the means of grace. This is the way which God has ever blessed, and will undoubtedly bless hereafter. Nor are we warranted to hope for his blessing in any other manner.

To the proofs of this point, alleged in this and the preceding Discourses, I shall add but one at the present time. God, in the dispensation which he revealed to Moses, required all the Israelites to use continually all the means of grace furnished to them in the then existing scriptural canon. The parent, however sinful he might be, who did not circumcise his man-child upon the eighth day, was by the express law of God punished with the excision of that child. Every male was expressly required to present himself three times a-year before the Lord; that is, at the tabernacle, or in the temple. All were required to keep the appointed

feasts, particularly to celebrate the passover. They were required, without distinction, to offer the various appointed sacrifices, to educate their children religiously, and to seek the law at the mouths of the priests, its ordinary ministers. It is remarkable, that for the omission of these duties they were, in several instances, to be punished with excision; particularly such as did not 'afflict themselves' on the great day of atonement; Lev. xxiii. 29; such as, being ceremonially clean, forbore to keep the passover; such as killed an ox, lamb, or goat, and did not bring it to the door of the tabernacle, to offer an offering unto the Lord; Lev. xvii. 4. Thus the Israelites, and in some of the cases the strangers who resided with them, were not only required, but required under this terrible sanction, punctiliously to use the means of grace, both ordinary and extraordinary.

It is farther to be observed, that the Israelites are nowhere, either in the Old or New Testament, censured for the fact, that they attended on these various means of grace. They are often censured for their impenitence and unbelief, indeed, and the more severely, for solemn services, because the abuse of such privileges obviously enhanced their guilt. But not a hint is given us, either by Christ, the prophets, or the apostles, that they were censurable merely for being present when these means were employed by others, or for being active in employing them themselves for their own good. The gospel, therefore, regards this subject exactly as it was regarded by the law; and has introduced no change in this respect into the divine dispensations.

2. It follows from the same Discourses, that ministers ought to advise and exhort sinners to use the means of grace.

If God has appointed these means, and is daily blessing them, if he has usually, and not improbably always, wherever the gospel has been published, conveyed his spiritual blessings to men in this way; then it cannot be reasonably doubted, that ministers ought to advise sinners to labour in this way to gain eternal life. As to sinners in general, this is the only way in which eternal life will be gained. Refusing them this advice, therefore, is no other than refusing them any advice concerning their salvation.

To this scheme it is however objected,

1. That regeneration, being immediately and solely the work of the Spirit of God, is not at all accomplished by means; and that therefore sinners, however strenuously they may use the means of grace, do in truth nothing towards this change of character.

That the act of regenerating man is an act of the Divine Spirit alone, I readily admit, and fully believe; but I deny the consequence drawn from this doctrine. If I am not deceived, I have, in both the preceding Discourses, particularly in the first, proved it to be an error. The text itself, if I mistake not, is a decisive proof that it is an error. The text asserts, to say the least, that St Paul, by his preaching, contributed to the regeneration of the Corinthian Christians. In an humbler sense he begat these Christians, as truly as God did in a higher sense. But if Paul contributed to the regeneration of these men by his preaching, the men themselves as certainly contributed to their own regeneration by being present at his discourses, by hearing them, by understanding them, and by feeling with strong impressions the truths which he uttered. Had not all this been done by them, St Paul might with exactly the same success have preached to the dead.

In the doctrine for which I contend there is, I apprehend, nothing embarrassing, and nothing which is even peculiar. God, as was observed in the first of these Discourses, is equally the sole agent in the production of a crop. But it would be a palpable absurdity to conclude from this fact, that the crop would come into existence without the labours of the farmer. Were he not to plough and sow the ground, a child knows that not a stalk of wheat would be produced. St Paul contributed as really to the spiritual harvest, as the farmer to the natural one, and in the same sense; for without his labours that harvest would not have existed. Neither Paul nor the husbandman is at all concerned in the creative act of God, employed in each of these cases. But both of them do that, without which this creative act would not exist. Accordingly, where the gospel is not preached, regeneration does not take place; as crops have no existence, where the earth is not cultivated.

2. It is objected, that the use of the means of grace on the part of sinners is itself sinful; and that ministers therefore cannot conscientiously advise sinners to use these means; since this would be no other than advising them to commit sin.

As this in all probability is the objection on which the greatest stress is laid, and that which has contributed most to perplex those to whom, and not improbably those also by whom, it is urged, I shall consider myself as justified in examining it at some length. It is presented in various lights. I will endeavour to follow the course pursued by the objectors themselves.

It is triumphantly alleged, that the Scriptures have decided the point in debate, and established the objection immovably, by such declarations as the following:—'The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord.' Prov. xv. 8. 'The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination; how much more, when he bringeth it with a wicked mind,'* Prov. xxi. 27. 'He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be an abomination.' Prov. xxviii. 9. If then the sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination; if the prayer of the wicked is an abomination; it cannot be lawful for the wicked to pray, nor for a minister to advise him to pray.

I have, I believe, alleged the objection in its full force, and in the very terms in which it is usually alleged. This, at least, has been my design.

It is not pretended, that sinners are in the Scriptures expressly forbidden to pray; nor that ministers are expressly forbidden to advise them to pray. The objection is inferred from other declarations of the Scriptures. Like other inferences, it is, however, to be suspected, until it shall be shown to be certainly and necessarily derived from such declarations. The authority of a certain conclusion, fairly derived from the Scriptures, I admit. But in order to this admission, I must be satisfied that it is certain, and fairly derived from the Scriptures. Let us now examine this inference.

1. The objection is founded on this general doctrine, that, whenever an individual will commit sin in any conduct, he cannot lawfully adopt, nor be lawfully advised to adopt, that conduct.

* Especially when he offereth it to serve some base end.—Hodgson.

But from this doctrine it will follow, that sinners cannot lawfully do anything, while in a state of sin, nor be lawfully advised to do anything. There is as much certainty, that a sinner will sin in all other conduct which he adopts while he is a sinner, as in praying. 'The ploughing of the wicked' is expressly declared to be 'sin,' Prov. xxi. 4. 'The way of the wicked,' that is, his universal course of life, is declared to be 'an abomination to the Lord,' Prov. xv. 9. 'The thoughts of the wicked' are declared to be 'an abomination to the Lord,' Prov. xv. 26. Of course, the wicked cannot lawfully plough, think, nor live in the ordinary course of life, that is, converse, labour, buy, sell, and provide for their families; nor be lawfully advised to do these, or any of these things.

It will be remembered, that all these declarations, and all those quoted in a preceding paragraph, were written by an Israelite under the Mosaic dispensation; and written for men living also under the same dispensation. Yet, in that very dispensation, God required Moses to command all sinners of that nation to labour, to cultivate their own ground, to circumcise their children, to celebrate the passover, to offer sacrifices, to be present at the public worship of God, to hear and learn his word from the mouth of their priests, and to teach all these things to their children. It will not, I presume, be questioned, that Moses, in enjoining these things upon the sinful Israelites, as well as upon the virtuous ones, acted lawfully; or, in other words, was guilty of no sin. But what was lawful for Moses, in this case, is in itself lawful. Accordingly, it was lawfully done by all the ministers who followed him in the Jewish church. It cannot therefore fail to be lawful to Christian ministers, unless it has been plainly forbidden.

It will here be said, that Moses, in requiring this conduct of the sinful Israelites, neither commanded nor authorized them to continue sinners in performing it. This is unquestionably true. So far from allowing them to continue in sin, he required them to perform these various duties from supreme love to God. Equally true is this of the Christian minister, in directing sinners to use the means of grace, or to perform any of the other duties of life. Instead of directing or allowing them to remain impenitent, he directs them to perform every duty with a virtuous disposition.

From this doctrine it will also follow, that it is unlawful to advise Christians themselves to use the means of grace, or indeed to adopt any course of conduct whatever. Both the Scriptures and observation teach us, that Christians continually sin; that they sin in their repentance, in their faith, in reading the Bible, in prayer, in the observance of the sabbath, in their attendence on public worship, in the education of their children, and in the ordinary business of life. Whatever conduct they adopt, we know that they will sin in performing it. On this principle, therefore, they cannot lawfully adopt, nor be lawfully advised to adopt, that conduct. Of course, as our Lord, when he directed the apostles to go and preach the gospel to every creature, knew that they would commit sin in obeying it, the direction itself, according to the scheme which I oppose, was unlawful.

It will here probably be asked, What then shall be done? Shall we advise men to commit sin? To this question I answer, that, according to the spirit of the objection you must either advise them to nothing, not even to repent and believe; or you must advise them to commit sin: for, according to the objection, advising them to anything, even to repent and believe, is advising them to commit sin.

But I apprehend that this account of the subject is as unfounded as the scheme enforced by it is impracticable. God, as it appears to me, deals with mankind (and, if he deals with them at all according to the system of providence which he has established, he must deal with them) as rational beings. As they are all originally sinners, everything addressed to them, either by God or man, must be addressed to sinners. He has commanded and exhorted sinners in his own person, and has required men also to teach and exhort them in his name. In these commands and exhortations two things are included: the act to be done, and the disposition with which it is to be done. The command or counsel sometimes includes both expressly, and sometimes but one. Such commands and counsels as direct to the performance of the act, direct to that act which in the case stated is proper to be done; and imply the disposition with which it should be done. Such as direct the disposition, require that, and that only, which is virtuous. Those, which require the act, regulate both the heart and the external conduct. These, which require the disposition, regulate merely the affections of the heart.

Commands of both these kinds God has evidently given to men as rational beings merely, and often without discriminating at all their moral character. They are given to all men. The duties which these commands enjoin are numberless. They occur every day, and are as obligatory on the sinner as on the Christian. They bind with their whole force every man by whom they are known. Among these are prayer, attending public worship, reading the Scriptures, and industry in our lawful business. God requires every man to perform these various duties of life as they occur. He does not leave him at liberty to defer the performance, until he has discovered whether he is the subject of evangelical repentance. He requires the performance at the time; and, if the individual refuses, God will not hold him guiltless. But, it will be asked, is not every action to be performed from supreme love to God? An answer to this question has already been given. This disposition is implied in every action which God requires us to perform; and God will accept of no performance which does not flow from this source. To such a performance only is an impenitent sinner directed, when he is directed to pray, to read the Scriptures, to worship God in the sanctuary, or to use any of the means of grace.

It will be farther asked, Whether the man, who performs the act merely, can be said to obey the command of God? What is here actually done is easily understood; so easily, as to admit of neither debate nor doubt. The person in question performs the act which God requires. But if he does not perform it cordially, he is not obedient in the cordial or virtuous sense.

I shall perhaps be asked still farther, Whether the man who performs the act merely, is any better for performing it, than if he had neglected or refused to perform it? I answer, that, supposing the man's disposition substantially the same in both cases, he is less sinful when he performs the act, than when he neglects

or refuses to perform it. This I say with confidence because God has said it repeatedly, and in the most unambiguous manner. Of several kings of Judah, who were plainly sinners, particularly of Joash and Amaziah, it is directly said, that 'they did that which was right in the sight of the Lord.' Of Joash it is said, that 'he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, all the days of Jehoiada the priest.' Of Amaziah it is said, that 'he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, but not with a perfect heart;' that is, not with a good or virtuous heart. In other words, these princes performed those external actions which God had required. The same thing in substance is declared concerning several other kings of Judah. But who can doubt, that to do that which is right in the sight of the Lord, whatever it may be which is thus right, is less sinful than to do that which is wrong in the sight of the Lord? Who can doubt, that these declarations are intentionally commendatory; and that they exhibit these princes as thus far less sinful than those, of whom it is said, that 'they did evil in the sight of the Lord?'

The same sentence of God concerning the same subject is given us, in another form, in the cases of Ahab and Jehu. Of Ahab, it is said, that when he heard the words of Elijah, announcing to him the destruction of his family 'he rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his flesh, and fasted, and lay in sackcloth, and went softly.' It is immediately subjoined, 'and the word of the Lord came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, Seest thou how Ahab humbleth himself before me? Because he humbleth himself before me, I will not bring the evil in his days: in his son's days I will bring the evil upon his house.' Jehu was commissioned to destroy the family of Ahab. This commission he punctually executed. When he had finished this work, God said to him, 'Because thou hast done well in executing that which was right in mine eyes, and hast done unto the house of Ahab according to all that was in my heart, thy children of the fourth generation shall sit on the throne of Israel.' Immediately it is subjoined, 'But Jehu took no heed to walk in the law of the Lord God of Israel with all his heart; for he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam, who made Israel to sin.' Here we see both these princes rewarded, and expressly declared by God himself to be rewarded, for external actions merely; for both, in a manner equally express, are pronounced still to be gross sinners. But that which is declared by God to be rewarded by himself, is not so sinful conduct, as that which is either not thus rewarded, or is punished. Of Jehu, God says farther, 'Thou hast done well in executing that which is right in mine eyes.' He who has done well, in executing that which is right in the eyes of his Maker, has not done so ill, as he who has perpetrated that which is wrong in his eyes.

What is thus taught in the Scriptures may be advantageously illustrated by the common experience of ourselves. The person who does those actions which God requires, dishonours his Maker by his life far less, and contributes to the well-being of mankind far more than he who does them not, or who does the contrary actions. To the eye of mankind the actions themselves are often exactly the same; and have exactly the same influence when performed by an unrenewed, as when performed by a renewed man. The actions of an unrenewed man, therefore, may have a very beneficent influence on the interests of mankind, when performed agreeably to those commands of God, which regulate the external conduct of men. According to the scheme here exhibited, the Israelites, as has been observed, were required to be present at the various religious services enjoined by the Mosaic law. Yet God perfectly knew, and all the succeeding prophets and teachers also knew, that the greater part by far of those to whom these requisitions were addressed, were sinners. Still they not only required them to repent and believe, but advised, exhorted, and commanded them also to do all these things. Nor would it have been any vindication to them for omitting the action, that their disposition was not sanctified: nor of the prophet or the priest for not exhorting them to the action, that they could not conscientiously advise sinners to anything beside faith and repentance.

The same scheme is pursued throughout the New Testament. Christ, adopting the very language of the law, directed the ten lepers to go and show themselves to the priest, in order to their cleansing, Luke xvii. 12. Nine of these lepers appear to have been sinners. This Christ knew as well before, as after. Yet he did not think this a difficulty in his way towards giving them this direction.

He directed a collection of Jews, of whom he testifies that they did not believe, to 'search the Scriptures,' for the purpose of discovering his true character; and this, plainly, in order to their faith. John v. 39, 44.

He directed the young ruler, who plainly was not a believer, to 'go, and sell all that he had, and give to the poor, and come, and follow him.'

He directed the Herodians to 'render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's.' They were sinners. But paying tribute was neither repenting nor believing.

He directed the scribe, in the parable of the good Samaritan, to 'go and show kindness to his enemies.' Yet this scribe appears to have been an unbeliever.

He directed Paul also, after he had fallen to the earth, and inquired what he would have him to do; to 'arise, and go into Damascus, where it should be told him what he would have him to do.'

Peter, also, directed Simon Magus to 'repent, and pray that the thoughts of his heart might be forgiven.' It has been thought, that Peter directed him to repent first, and then to pray for forgiveness. This certainly is an unnatural construction of the passage. The obvious meaning is, that St Peter directed both of these things to be done immediately; and without indicating any intention that Simon should wait until after he repented, before he began to pray. Many more examples of a similar nature might be added.

It will not be supposed, that in any one of these directions the objects of them were commanded or advised to commit sin. As rational beings, they were directed to do such things as, in the character of actions, were proper to be done in their circumstances; while a general indication of their duty, as to the disposition with which they were to be done, is unquestionably implied in all these passages.

These passages, however, show that in his preaching and advice a minister is not to confine himself to the mere enjoining of faith and repentance: but is to extend them to any other conduct in itself proper to be pursued:

while he universally teaches these great Christian duties, as the immediate end of all his preaching.

Antecedently to every effort which the sinner makes, he is wholly ignorant whether God will not enable him to obey with the heart. It is also his indispensable duty thus to obey. Whenever advice or exhortation is given to sinners by any minister, he is equally ignorant whether they will or will not obey with the heart, as well as with the outward conduct. He knows also, that it is their duty to obey in this manner. The effort therefore ought to be made, and the advice given.

In this manner I understand all those general commands and exhortations which respect the affairs of sinners. Our Saviour, preaching obviously to a collection of sinners, says, Luke xiii. 24, 'Strive to enter in at the strait gate:' and again, Matt. vii. 14, 'Enter ye in at the strait gate: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, that leadeth unto life; and few there be that find it.' The gate is at the head of the way, leading to the house, into which those who enter at the gate are finally to be admitted. Christ never speaks of heaven as a city, but several times as a house. Those who have not entered are obviously sinners; and to sinners he was obviously preaching in this kindred passage of St Luke. Of the same nature is the memorable passage in Isa. lv. 6, 7, 'Seek ye the Lord while he may be found: call ye upon him while he is near.' The persons here addressed, are in the second verse mentioned as those who 'spend money for that which is not bread, and their labour for that which satisfieth not.' Such persons are obviously sinners. Still they are directed to seek and call upon the Lord.

If then it is still objected, that directing sinners to such acts is directing them to commit sin; the answer is short. God gave these very directions to the Israelites by Moses. Christ also gave the same directions to the Jews. It will not be supposed that he directed them to commit sin.

It may be farther said, that sinners will commit sin in their prayers. If they continue sinners, they undoubtedly will. So will Christians. If this be a reason why sinners should not be advised to pray, it is also a reason why Christians should not be advised to pray.

But it will be replied, that 'the sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord: while the prayer of the upright is his delight. That the prayer of the wicked is in some respects an abomination—of hypocrites universally, of other sinners generally—is not to be questioned. There is plainly nothing holy in the conduct of impenitent men. But it will not follow, that the prayer of every impenitent man is in such a sense abominable to God, as to insure rejection from him. Christ did not tell the young ruler, that his inquiry concerning eternal life was abominable: nor refuse to hear and answer him. On the contrary, the Scriptures inform us, that 'Jesus, beholding him, loved him.' This love was plainly distinct from the general benevolence of Christ to sinners; for with this benevolence he loves all sinners. The young ruler he loved peculiarly, and in a manner in which he did not love the Pharisees, and the Jews generally. Otherwise, the fact would not have been specified. He did not, I acknowledge, love him with complacency; for he was not a Christian. But he loved him peculiarly, with what is called natural affection. In the character of this youth there was a peculiar natural amiableness, such as all men see, love, and acknowledge; and acknowledge often against their own doctrines. The foundation of this love is a train of attributes belonging to man, not as a sinner, nor as a saint, but as an intelligent being. Of this number are native sweetness of temper, frankness, sincerity, simplicity, strongly seen in little children; gentleness, kindness, generosity, and compassion. All these are in themselves amiable in a certain degree; and in this degree they were loved by Christ.

Hence I argue, that, as all Christ's affections were exactly accordant with truth and propriety, so this exercise of affection to the young man was of the same nature, and was perfectly approved by God. Of course, there is at times something in sinners, which, in itself, is not abominable to God; although their moral or sinful character is altogether abominable.

It is not wrong in itself, that sinners should desire food, or raiment, or happiness, or safety from evil. It is impossible, that percipient beings should exist without desiring the two last of these objects; and equally impossible, that men should not desire the two first. The best men, and the worst, desire them alike: and no man is for this conduct ever reproved in the Scriptures. To ask of God for happiness and final safety, is not necessarily insincere, nor guilty, even in sinners. When sinners ask for mere mercy, or mere happiness, or mere safety, they may desire either as truly as saints, although their desires are not virtuous. So far as their desires are merely natural, inseparable from their nature, and sincere, they are not morally wrong; nor are they exhibited in the Scriptures as objects of the divine anger.

Accordingly, the prayer of the publican, who was, I think, plainly a sinner, was not regarded with mere anger by God, and was exactly such a prayer as I have mentioned; a prayer for mere mercy and safety. 'He went down to his house justified rather than the Pharisee,' because he had, in some important respects, a just sense of his character, and a sincere desire to be delivered from the dangers of it; while the Pharisee had neither.

It is in the nature of things proper, that God, who saves no man for his merit, but communicates salvation merely from compassion, should save them who are sensible of their guilt, danger, and distress, rather than those who are utterly insensible, stupid, and careless. The former, in the natural sense, are qualified, and the latter are unqualified, to understand his mercy, the greatness of the love of Christ, and the wonderful work of sanctification; and to feel the evils from which they are delivered, and the blessings to which they are introduced, beyond the grave. Accordingly, sanctification, as I have heretofore particularly observed, is communicated by God to sinners, only when they are convinced of their guilt and danger, and laboriously employed in asking for forgiveness; and not to those who neither feel, nor strive, nor pray. If the prayers of convinced sinners were abominable, in the sense of the objector, could this fact exist? Is not the steady course of Providence a complete refutation of the scheme?

Finally; It will be asked, Do not sinners grow worse under convictions of conscience, and in the use of means?

To this question I answer, that I do not know; neither do my objectors. I do not believe the publican was

justified rather than the Pharisee, because he grew worse under his conviction. Individuals may grow worse; and in one respect all certainly do, for they continue to sin so long as they are sinners; and that, whether they are convinced or unconvinced.

Whether their character and conduct are more guilty in any given instance, and during the periods immediately preceding, I am ignorant; and shall remain so, until I can search the heart, and measure the degrees of depravity. As this is beyond the power of man, the whole inquiry is idle and vain.

Whenever sinners commit the same sins against greater light, they are more guilty than when they are committed against less light. But no man can determine whether this, or anything like this, is the case with a sinner under conviction in a given instance; unless perhaps sometimes the convinced sinner himself. I see no good reason why this question should ever be introduced into theological discourses. The only tendency of such introduction is to perplex and distress.

I have now, unless I am deceived, considered this objection in all its parts, and in all the forms in which it is customarily alleged. I shall now examine how far the objectors are consistent with themselves, in their other conduct towards sinners.

Many of these objectors have children, and educate them religiously, as well as prudently. These children, in many instances, they know to be sinners, so far as this character can be known in any case. Now all these parents advise, and exhort, and command their children to obey them, that is, in their external conduct; to attend their family prayers, to be present at public worship, to learn and repeat prayers to God, and to be earnestly and solemnly attentive to these religious duties. They teach them, in the same manner, to speak truth, to do justice, and to show kindness to all with whom they are concerned. They require them also to labour, to preserve their property, to go regularly to school, to perform errands, and to do many other services. In a word, by the whole weight of their own authority, and that of the Scriptures, they require them to do every useful and desirable act, and to imbibe every useful and desirable habit.

Now it is to be remembered, that these children are sinners, and are known to be sinners. Of course, whatever conduct they adopt, they will commit sin. Of course also, whatever conduct they are advised to adopt, they will, according to the general principle on which the objection is founded, be advised to commit sin. They will as probably, or as certainly, commit sin in executing the commands of their parents, attending public or family worship, going to school, or performing an errand, as other sinners do in praying, or performing any other act, not in itself sinful.

How then can these parents, particularly such of them as are skilled in this controversy, advise their sinful children to pursue these kinds of conduct? Nay, more: how can they exhort and command them, reward them for obeying, and punish them for disobeying? The bare advice or exhortation given to other sinners, and prompting them to pray and strive that they may be saved, is, in the view of these parents, unlawful, and they refuse to give it. But to their own sinful children they not only give advice of the same unlawful nature; but add it to their exhortations and commands, their rewards and punishments.

Suppose the child of such a parent should refuse to obey such a command, or any other, because he was, and because his parent knew he was, a sinner, and could not therefore lawfully do the thing commanded, nor the parent lawfully command him to do it; what could his parent answer, consistently I mean with his own principles? Plainly, he could not reprove the child for his refusal; nor afterwards advise, exhort, or command him to do anything; until after the child should have hopefully become a Christian.

But in this case what would become of children, and ultimately of the world? If children were not advised, what useful thing could they know? If they were not exhorted and commanded, what useful thing would they do,—what useful habit would they establish, or even imbibe? Without such habits, what valuable end of their being could they answer? They would evidently become mere beasts of prey, and make the world a den of violence and slaughter.

In the same manner, and on the same principles, no person intrusted with the government or instruction of mankind, can advise, exhort, or command them, while sinners, to do anything, except to repent and believe. Civil rulers and instructors are daily called upon by their offices to advise, or otherwise direct, such as are plainly sinners. Every law and regulation of a state, or seminary of science, is possessed of this nature; and is a greater transgression on the part of the lawgiver or ruler, than advice can be; because it contains a stronger expression of his will, and a more powerful inducement to the conduct which is prescribed. When parents, therefore, or others, advise, they are, according to the objection, guilty. When they exhort or command, they are more guilty. When they reward, or punish, they are most guilty.

As civil rulers and instructors are obliged, equally with ministers, to do what is right, and to avoid what is wrong; they can no more be justified than ministers in advising, exhorting, or commanding sinners to do anything which is unlawful. Hence, unless their subjects or pupils should first repent and believe, they cannot require them to do anything, antecedently to their repentance. The world, then, must be uninstructed and ungoverned until the millennium; and what is still more to be lamented, the millennium itself, according to the usual course of God's providence, will never arrive.

Among the regulations which exist in all literary institutions, one, ever esteemed of high importance, is the establishment of public prayers. At these, students universally have hitherto been required to be present. But, on the scheme which I oppose, this requisition is altogether unlawful. In every such institution, there is conclusive reason to believe that the great body of the members are impenitent. None of these therefore can, according to this scheme, be lawfully required to attend this worship, nor the public worship of the sabbath. But what would become of a literary institution, if this attendance were not required? What would these very parents say, if it were to be dispensed with in the case of their own children?

A Christian is the master of a family; but, as is sometimes the fact, is obviously the only Christian in the family. According to this scheme, it is plain, he cannot set up family worship; because he can neither require nor advise the members of his household to be present at this religious service.

Ministers, usually at least, preach more or less to sinners; and customarily endeavour to suit their sermons to the circumstances of impenitent men. But they can never lawfully advise sinners to be present, that they may hear them preach. Nor can a parent be justified in directing his children to be present or to stand up to worship, or to listen, that they may learn and perform their duty; for in all these things they are still sinners and will commit sin. Nor can a minister advise his sinful parishioners to support him, or to build or repair a church; or to do the external acts of charity, justice, or truth; or even to arm in defence of his country; or to obey its laws and magistrates. In all these things, when done antecedently to regeneration, they are as really sinful as in praying and in striving for salvation.

The very persons who rely most upon this objection, rejoice universally when mankind are in any place awakened to solemn consideration concerning their guilt and danger. But every awakened sinner prays; and no person can by any ordinary means prevent him from praying. Why do these men rejoice? Certainly not in the sin which the persons awakened are supposed to commit. Certainly not in the abominable character which these prayers have in the sight of God. In what then do they rejoice? Undoubtedly in the prospect of the sinner's sanctification and return to God. Of course there is such a prospect. In this angels would also rejoice.

3. It is objected, that advising sinners to pray will encourage them to sloth, and quiet them in sin.

That this consequence may follow, I shall not deny. But it will follow only from an abuse of the doctrine which is here taught. A bad man may pervert a good doctrine to bad purposes; but this is no objection against the doctrine itself. These very consequences have, I verily believe, flowed from the doctrine of my objectors in ten instances, where in one they have flowed from that which I am supporting.

It is the duty of all men immediately to repent of their sins, and turn to God, with faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. These things I would always preach; and wish my hearers always to believe and feel. For this end I would exhort them to be present, that they might hear and feel them. For this end I would exhort parents to teach them to their children in the morning of life, that they may know and feel them from the beginning. Nor am I less desirous that they should read the Scriptures, that they may find and feel the same things in them, as uttered by the mouth of God; that my own errors may, in their minds, be corrected, and the truths which I preach enforced, by that holy book. For the same reasons I wish them to mark the lives, and enjoy the conversation of Christians; that they may be enlightened by their views, and deeply affected by the excellency of religion, manifested in their conduct. The religious writings of others I recommend for the same important purposes. I preach and write in hope of doing some real good to mankind. That others, with the same design, possess more ability to accomplish this interesting purpose, I cannot entertain a doubt. The same reasons therefore which make me wish that the congregation allotted to me may be present to hear my discourses, must, with enhanced force, render me desirous that they should also read the writings of others.

Finally; whatever is thus taught, enforced, and gained, I urge them to make by solemn meditation a part of their own habitual course of thought; compare with their own moral condition; and bring home to their hearts by asking God to sanctify them, and to bless the means of knowledge and amendment which he has been pleased to put into their hands.

In all this I see no natural cause of sloth, or quiet in sin. On the contrary, there is here, if I mistake not, more done to awaken, engage, and encourage men to seek salvation, than on the scheme of the objector. When I remember, that divines of the first reputation and the greatest success have thus preached, and that in the use of these very means, the great body of mankind, who appear to have been, or to be now, Christians, have become Christians, I feel assured that this is the proper manner of persuading others to assume the same character, and placing them in the way to a blessing from God.

SERMON CXXXVIII.

THE MEANS OF GRACE.—ORDINARY MEANS OF GRACE.—HEARING THE WORD OF GOD.

Take heed, therefore, how ye hear.—LUKE viii. 18.

IN the last Discourse but one I distributed the principal means of grace under the following heads:—

I. *The preaching of the gospel;*
II. *The reading of the Scriptures;*
III. *Prayer.*
IV. *Correspondence with religious men;*
V. *Religious meditation; particularly self-examination;* and,
VI. *The religious education of children.*

In that Discourse also I endeavoured to exhibit the influence of these means in the work of salvation.

The next object which I propose is a separate consideration of these several subjects; that their respective efficacy may be more particularly displayed. It will be remembered, that they are all here to be considered as means, in the application of which holiness is originally communicated, as well as means of improving in holiness.

The direction in the text is, I apprehend, a direction given to all men who are in possession of the gospel. It is delivered in the most general terms; and may therefore be regarded as extending to every mode of hearing which is useful. There are modes of hearing which, unless I am deceived, are eventually useful to sinners; and in which the gospel becomes to sinners 'the power of God unto salvation.' I shall consider these modes as included in it; modes in which I should wish a sinful child of my own, and for the same reason should wish others also, to hear the gospel. Such as have heard in these modes have in great multitudes, as I verily believe, been profited in a degree which no man can estimate.

The persons who in this sense would 'take heed how they hear' the gospel (by which I intend the Scriptures at large,) ought, while they hear, to remember the following things:—

1. That the gospel is the word of God.

To prevent any misapprehension, I wish it to be kept steadily in view, that no attention or reverence is here claimed to preaching, any farther than the gospel is preached. To the mere opinions and declarations of a preacher, as such, no other respect is due, than that which by common consent is rendered to the opinions and declarations of all men, of similar understanding and worth. The best opinions of men are merely useful, wholesome advice. The Scriptures are a law: possessed of divine authority and obligation. So far as the doctrines, precepts, and ordinances of the Scriptures are preached, they claim the reverence which they themselves have challenged.

The solemn remembrance, that the Scriptures are the word of God, involves a variety of interesting considerations.

In this character, particularly, they come home to us as the word of him by whom we were created, and by whom we are preserved and governed. From this great and glorious Being all that we have, and all that we hope for, is, and must be derived. We are his property; and are rightfully disposed of, and rightfully required to dispose of ourselves, according to his pleasure. In the Scriptures alone is this pleasure made known to us. In them alone, therefore, we learn the proper destination of our faculties, our services, and ourselves. The law, by which we are here required to do his pleasure, is invested with all possible authority and obligation; and demands our reverence and obedience in a manner supremely impressive.

As the word of God, also, the Scriptures are dictated by his wisdom, goodness, and truth. They are the word of him who cannot mistake, deceive, nor injure. Consequently they contain 'all things necessary for life and godliness;' whatever we need to know, and whatever we ought to do, for the attainment of his approbation. On their entire wisdom and integrity, their fitness to promote the great purpose for which they were written, and their conduciveness to it in ourselves, we are wholly to rely. Not a doubt can be reasonably entertained concerning the truth of the doctrines, the soundness of the precepts, or the sincerity of the promises. Nor are we any more to distrust the certainty of the threatenings, or the reality of those awful dangers which they disclose. We are bound, on the one hand, not to question the truth, and on the other, not to dispute the wisdom and goodness of that which is revealed. All things which this sacred book contains, are to be received as they are. Our own opinions are implicitly to bow before them; and we are ever to be ready to believe that what we think 'the foolishness of God, is wiser than men,' wiser than all the substituted opinions of ourselves or others. 'Let God be true,' ought to be our invariable language; 'but every man,' who possesses his declarations, 'a liar.'

Against this great and awful Being we have rebelled. Hence, although he is our Creator, Preserver, and Benefactor, he still regards our moral character with abhorrence. The Scriptures therefore are published to us as the word of an offended God. Hence are derived all those denunciations of anger and punishment found in them, which could have no place in the will of God, as revealed to obedient creatures.

As the word of God, the Scriptures announce to us, that, notwithstanding our rebellion, he is willing to be reconciled to us. We are therefore ever to remember, that they are the word of the Father, and of the Redeemer, and of the Sanctifier of mankind. In these venerable and amiable characters, God appears to us with infinite tenderness and endearment. His word is thus presented to us as the pleasure of the best of all friends, and the most affectionate of all parents. In our ruined condition he beheld us with boundless mercy; and, unasked and undesired, undertook to rescue us from destruction. For this end, the Saviour came into the world, lived a life of humiliation, and died a death of anguish and infamy. For this end, the Spirit of truth came into the world, to convince, renew, and purify the hearts of mankind. Of these three persons in one Jehovah, the Scriptures are the word; willed by the Father, dictated by the Son, and inspired by the Holy Ghost.

As the word of God, the Scriptures are the word of him on whom we daily depend for life, and breath, and all things. Whatever we enjoy he gives; whatever we hope for must, if enjoyed at all, be also given by him. Without him, we are 'poor, and miserable, and in want of all things.' With his favour, we shall be 'rich' indeed, 'and have need of nothing.'

The Scriptures are also the word of him by whom we shall be judged, and rewarded. The day is hastening, when we shall be called to an account for all our conduct, and shall be compelled to rehearse it before him. If we have done well, if we have obeyed, worshipped, and glorified him, and 'served our generation according to his will,' we shall be acquitted in this great trial, and received to everlasting glory. If we have done evil, and refused to do good, we shall be driven away to final and irremediable perdition.

Whenever we are assembled to hear the gospel, we are to remember, that with reference to all these solemn things it is the word of God.

2. That we are sinners, who infinitely need forgiveness and salvation.

As sinners, we are irreversibly condemned by that divine law, which we have broken, and by that just government, against which we have rebelled. 'The soul that sinneth shall die,' was the original sentence of that law to mankind; the sentence of him who can neither deceive nor change. The sentence will therefore be executed in its strictest meaning on all who disobey, and who do not become interested in the redemption of Christ. Under such a sentence, infinitely dreadful, and unalterably certain, our danger is im-

mensely great, and our ruin entire. From this sentence therefore we infinitely need a deliverance. Our all is at stake: and our souls are in a situation of the most terrible hazard. 'Hell,' if we continue in this situation, 'is open before us, and destruction hath no covering.'

It is impossible that any being should be in a state of more absolute and pressing necessity. Rational, immortal, and incapable of perishing by annihilation, we must be, and be for ever. But to exist for ever, and yet to be sinful and miserable only, is a doom, compared with which, all other characters and sufferings lose their deformity and wretchedness, and rise into happiness and distinction. When we are present in the house of God, we should recall with deep affection this intense and melancholy necessity, and feel the declarations of Scripture with a concern, suited to the inestimable importance of our situation.

3. That the Scriptures are the book in which alone the terms and means of salvation are published.

The word *gospel*, as you know, signifies good tidings, or joyful news. This name is given to the Scriptures generally, and to the New Testament particularly, because they contain the best of all tidings ever published to this ruined world. Independently of the gospel, all the race of Adam are under a sentence of condemnation, without a friend, and without a hope. To these forlorn and miserable beings the infinitely merciful God has been pleased to make known a way of escape, a deliverance from destruction. This glorious communication is made to mankind in the Scriptures only. From no other source has man ever learned that God is reconcilable on any terms; that sinners can be forgiven; that there is in the universe an atonement for sin: or that any atonement will be accepted. From no other source have we been informed, that God will be pleased with any worship which we can render; or, if he will, what that worship is. Without the Scriptures, we know not that the connexion between God and man, between heaven and earth, can be renewed; or that the gates, which admit intelligent beings to the world of enjoyment, have been, or ever will be, opened to apostate creatures.

To beings, in circumstances of such necessity and danger, tidings even of partial deliverance must be delightful. But these are tidings of complete deliverance from sin, and of an entire escape from misery. To beings, left in absolute ignorance of reconciliation to God, and in absolute despair of future enjoyment; to whom the world of happiness was shut, and to whom the ages of eternity rolled onward no bright reversion; even the uncertain rumour of relief must, one would imagine, echo throughout every region of the globe which they inhabited, and thrill with inexpressible emotions in every heart. But these are certain tidings from God himself concerning this glorious possession; from the God who cannot deceive; the God whose promises endure for ever.

This great salvation is, however, proffered by God on his own terms only. In the same Scriptures are these terms found. From them alone can we learn on what conditions we may obtain life, and escape from death. 'The way of holiness,' to which the gospel alone directs us, 'is' there made 'a highway;' and 'wayfaring men, though fools,' need not 'err therein.'

In the Scriptures also are the means of this divine and immortal attainment presented to our view. Here we are taught, that we become possessed of a title to everlasting life by faith, repentance, and holiness. Here also is pointed out the way in which these indispensable characteristics are communicated; viz., the means of grace already mentioned in these Discourses. Both the means and the terms are eminently reasonable and desirable; in themselves real and superior good, and the way to greater good; easy of adoption and use, and, with the divine blessing, efficacious to the end for which they are used; sanctioned with supreme authority by the testimony of God, and daily confirmed by their actual influence on multitudes of mankind.

When, therefore, we hear the word of God, we are ever to remember, that we are taught things in this respect infinitely interesting to us, and incapable of being derived from any other source.

4. That in order to be saved, we must understand the means, and the terms, of salvation.

There is no other word of God but the Scriptures; and, beside God, there is no other being, who can inform us 'what we must do to be saved.' Philosophers may investigate and write from generation to generation; this vast momentous subject has ever lain and will ever lie, beyond their reach. Those who read and understood the instruction of the ancient philosophers were never reformed by their doctrines. Those who read and understand the moral system of infidel philosophers are never amended by them, but corrupted of course. The Scriptures, on the contrary, have been the means of renewing and reforming millions of the human race. But this sacred book was never of the least use to any man, by whom it was not in some good measure understood. To enable mankind at large to understand it, God instituted the evangelical ministry. All complicated objects of the intellect, are far better known by sober reflection and diligent research, than they can be by casual or cursory thinking. The Scriptures contain a system immensely complicated. They demand therefore the most patient, persevering study, and thorough investigation. Hence, ministers, consecrated originally to this employment, are commanded to 'give themselves wholly to the ministry;' particularly to reading, and to meditation; that they may not be novices, nor furnish reasons to others for regarding their discourses with contempt. But all their labours will be to no purpose, unless those that hear them understand their discourses, however evangelically and usefully they may be written. Every hearer, therefore, should solemnly call to mind in the house of God, that the means and terms of eternal life then are published to him; that they are found nowhere but in the Scriptures; and that the Scriptures can be of no benefit to him, unless he understands them. His highest interest and indispensable duty demand of him, therefore, that he should hear as for his life.

It ought to be added, that all these things are not only explained in the Scriptures, but enforced on the heart with supreme power and efficacy. Motives of amazing import are here presented, to persuade the sinner to repentance. Alarms compel, invitations allure, threatenings terrify, and promises encourage, of such a nature, and exhibited in such a manner, as boundless wisdom and goodness thought best fitted to affect the heart. But all these also are in vain, unless heard, understood, and realized, by the sinner.

5. We are farther to remember, that our opportunities of hearing the word of God are few; and that which we are enjoying is, not improbably, the best which will ever arrive.

'Our life' itself is but a 'vapour, which appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.' Of this life the opportunities of hearing the gospel compose only a little part. The sabbath is almost the only season allotted to this end; a seventh part merely of our time; and, as actually enjoyed by us, a much less proportion. By the weakness of childhood, the thoughtlessness of youth, and the hinderances of riper years, the number of sabbaths which we are able to employ in gaining salvation is greatly reduced. If those which we lose in this manner by negligence, and by devotion to the world, be taken from the whole number, we shall find those which remain fewer by far than we are usually aware; few in themselves, few especially for so great and important a work.

How many sabbaths remain to us at any time, we can in no degree conjecture. That the number must be small, and that it may be still smaller, we know; but whether the present sabbath be not the last, we can never know. Were we assured that it was the last, with what anxiety, care, and diligence should we devote it to the attainment of endless life! As it may be the last, it ought to be regarded with the same anxiety. Whether it be, or be not the last, it is unquestionably the best opportunity that we shall enjoy.

It is in our possession: all others are merely expected. It is the sabbath on which we are less hardened and less guilty than we shall ever be at any future period. God is now reconcilable. Before another sabbath arrives, he may cast us off. His own command is, 'Today, if ye will hear my voice, harden not your hearts.' 'Behold now,' says St Paul, 'is the accepted time! Behold, now is the day of salvation!' Whenever, therefore, we are assembled to hear the word of God upon the sabbath, we should solemnly feel that we possess the best opportunity of obtaining everlasting life which we shall ever enjoy.

6. We are also to remember, that the Scriptures are the word by which we shall be finally judged.

'Whose soever sins ye remit,' saith our Saviour to his apostles, 'they are remitted; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.' In other words, 'I commission you to publish the terms of life and death to mankind. He whose life shall be condemned by the terms which, by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, I will enable you to announce, shall be condemned by me in the judgment. On the contrary, him whose life shall be approved by these terms, I will approve at the final day. All these terms of remitting and retaining sin, as published by the apostles, we now have in the gospel; and they are continually preached in the house of God. How infinitely important is it, that they should be infixed in our understanding, our memory, and our hearts: that we may always know, remember, and feel them, that they may be the source and the guide of all our conduct; and that by them we may in the end, not only be judged, but justified also, and rewarded!

Let every person, then, who is present at the preaching of the gospel, call to mind, that he is hearing the very terms of his final acquittal, or condemnation. Let him also remember, that one of the grounds of that sentence, which he will receive from the Judge of the quick and the dead, will be, that he is then 'taking heed how he hears;' or that he is refusing or neglecting to perform this solemn duty.

7. We are to remember, that God is present, to observe the manner in which we hear.

This consideration is of infinite moment; and ought with supreme force to come home to every heart. Let me beseech every member of this assembly, to think, how great and awful a being God is. Remember how absolutely you are indebted to him for 'life, and breath, and all things' which you have enjoyed; and how entirely you depend upon him for everything which you hope to enjoy, either in this world, or that which is to come. Remember how grossly you have sinned against him, by violating his holy law; and how mercifully he has invited you to repent, and return to your obedience. Think how aggravated will be the guilt of refusing to return, when thus invited, how entirely you are in his hands, and how impossible it is that you should escape from his power.

Realize, that his eye, as a flame of fire, pervades and enlightens all the secret retreats of the workers of iniquity; and that he sees and records every wandering, stupid, worldly, and disobedient thought. Remember, that he will require you to rehearse before him the manner in which you hear his word this day.

How immensely interesting are these considerations to every person in this assembly! Who, in a full and realizing, who, even in the most imperfect and casual, view of them, can fail, with supreme solicitude, to 'take heed how he hears?'

8. As all things contained in the Scriptures are wise, and right, and good; so we are to remember, that they are worthy of all acceptation.

My audience may remember, that I originally proposed to consider the manner in which sinners may hear the gospel, with rational hopes of being benefited by it. The hearing of the gospel I exhibited as one of the means of grace; and mentioned, that I should discuss it as such, and not as a theme of general investigation. To this view of the subject I have therefore confined myself; and have purposely omitted many observations which might be usefully made concerning this subject, to persons who are already Christians. Almost all the observations which I have made, are indeed, in their full force, applicable to them also. To sinners they are all applicable; and are all, in every sense, in their power, while they continue sinners. The last is as truly of this nature, as those which preceded it.

Every sinner may, antecedently to his regeneration, entertain a full conviction that the Scriptures are worthy of all acceptation. With this conviction solemnly impressed on the mind, every sinner may hear the gospel. Every sinner may also feel this truth in a strong and affecting manner. Awakened to a sense of his guilt and danger, he does thus actually feel, antecedently to any essential change in his moral character. But what some sinners do feel, all others may feel. But under this conviction, and this sense, all those are sanctified, who are sanctified at all. With these very views of divine truth upon their minds, the Spirit of God communicates to them, I do not mean to every one who is in this situation; for this I am not warranted to say, nor to believe: but to most of them,

perhaps to all who do not voluntarily relinquish their convictions; that change of heart, which is commonly styled regeneration; a change, infinitely important to every child of Adam.

'Faith,' says St Paul, 'cometh by hearing.' I have endeavoured to describe the manner of hearing in which it comes. It is to be still carefully remembered, that unless faith is actually obtained and exercised, no mode of hearing whatever will ultimately be of any value. The mode which I have pointed out is, in my apprehension, inestimably valuable, as means eminently useful to this great end.

What is true of hearing the gospel, is substantially true of reading it; and of reading also other religious books. The Scriptures particularly, and other religious books generally, are to be read with great care, and with all the views which I have expressed; that we may be able to judge whether those who preach to us, preach the truth of God. They are to be read also, that we may keep alive, and in full force, the impressions communicated by preaching. Finally, they are to be read, that we may gain the full advantages of all our opportunities between the returns of the sabbath; and furnish ourselves with daily instruction, with reproofs for our daily sins, with encouragement to our daily duties, and with powerful motives to a daily progress in the divine life.

REMARKS.

1. From these observations it is evident, that those who do not hear in the manner which has been described, are, even according to their own principles, wholly inexcusable.

All persons, present at the preaching of the gospel, can, if they please, solemnly remember that it is the word of God—that they are sinners, who infinitely need salvation—that in the gospel only the terms and means of salvation are published to mankind—that these, in order to be of any use to them, must be understood by themselves—that their opportunities of hearing it are few—and that the present is the best, and may be the last, which they will ever enjoy—that the Scriptures contain all the rules of life, by which they will be judged—that God is an eye-witness of the manner in which they hear—and that the gospel is worthy of all acceptation, and ought, therefore, to be received with the heart, as well as with the understanding. To hear in this manner demands no especial communication from God; and he who does not thus hear, is stripped of the pretence even of self-justification. It is indeed equally the duty of every man to hear with evangelical faith. But as this faith is the gift of God, unrenewed men are ever prone to feel themselves, in some degree, excusable in neglecting to hear with this exercise of the heart. This apprehension is, I acknowledge, entirely without foundation. Still it exists. But in the present case, on their own ground, no plea can be offered, which will even satisfy themselves. Let them, therefore, when guilty of this negligence, 'lay their hands upon their mouths, and their mouths in the dust,' and confess their guilt before God.

Of this miserable class of sinners not a small number are, sabbath by sabbath, seen in this house. Almost all who assemble here are in the morning of life; when, if ever, the heart is tender, and easily susceptible of divine impressions from the word of God. Almost all enjoy also the peculiar blessings of a liberal and religious education, and the best opportunities of knowing their duty, and their danger. Still, in defiance of the solemn commands of religion, and the authority of God, as well as of common decency, there are those who quietly lay their heads down to sleep when the prayer is ended, or the psalm read. These persons are indeed present in the house of God; but they are present only to insult him, to cast contempt upon the cross of Christ, and to grieve in the most shameful manner the Spirit of grace. They can hardly be said to hear at all. They come into the presence of God, merely to declare to him, and to all who are present, that they will not hear nor obey his voice; and to 'treasure up wrath against the day of wrath, and the revelation of the judgment. Let them remember, that the God who made them and in whose hand their breath is, is here; and that his all-searching eye is fixed with an intense and dreadful survey upon their conduct, and upon their hearts. Let them remember, that he hath said, 'Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and ye have not regarded: but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction as a whirlwind. Then shall ye call, but I will not answer. Ye shall seek me early, and shall not find me: because ye hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord.'

Let those also, who with more decency, and more momentary wisdom, really hear, and yet with the slightest temptations forget what they hear—vessels, into which the water of life is poured, only to be poured out again—remember, that they hear to no valuable end. The true end of this privilege is 'repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ.' This end they prevent in themselves, by an absolute destitution of serious and deep concern for their salvation. In their final ruin they will find little comfort in remembering this frail, feeble attention to the word of God. It will be a melancholy support in that terrible day, to say to their Judge, 'We have eaten and drunk in thy presence; and thou hast taught in our streets:' when they hear him reply, 'Depart from me, for I know you not, ye workers of iniquity!'

2. How infinitely desirable is it, that we should hear with good and honest hearts!

This, and this only, is obeying, in the proper sense, the command of our Saviour. As the gospel is plainly 'worthy of all acceptation,' to accept it in this manner is the indispensable duty of every man to whom it is preached. To this end we should remember, that our all is depending; our virtue, usefulness, and peace in the present life; our hope and support in death; our acquittal in the judgment; our escape from final perdition; and our introduction to eternal glory in the kingdom of our heavenly Father. What dreadful emotions must every careless, stupid sinner experience on a death-bed, when he calls to mind, that he squandered, with infinite prodigality, all his opportunities of gaining salvation, and cast away the blessings of comfort and hope for ever! Amid the solemn scenes of such a bed, when life is trembling and fluttering over the abyss of destruction; the pulse forgetting to beat, the soul struggling, and clinging to its tenement of clay, with awful anticipations of the judgment; how

overwhelming must it be to remember, that every prayer and sermon, that the gospel itself, and all the blessings which it contains, although so frequently offered by God with infinite kindness, were only despised, neglected, and forgotten! But the lamp is now gone out, the oil expended, and the door shut. Nothing, therefore, remains to the infatuated votary of sense and sin, but 'the blackness of darkness for ever!'

SERMON CXXXIX.

THE MEANS OF GRACE.—ORDINARY MEANS OF GRACE.—THE NATURE, SEASONS, AND OBLIGATIONS OF PRAYER.

Pray without ceasing.—1 Thess. v. 17.

The preceding Discourse was occupied by considerations on the two first of those means of grace which were formerly mentioned; viz., the preaching and hearing of the gospel, and the reading of the Scriptures, and other religious books. I shall now proceed to the examination of the third of those means; viz., prayer.

In this examination I shall depart from the scheme which was pursued in the preceding Discourse, and shall consider the subject generally under the following heads:—

I. *The nature*, and,
II. *The seasons of prayer.*
III. *The obligations to pray.*
IV. *The usefulness of prayer.*
V. *The encouragements to it.*
VI. *The objections usually made against it.*

I. *I shall briefly consider the nature of prayer.*

Prayer, according to the language of the Westminster Catechism, 'is the offering up of our desires to God for things agreeable to his will, in the name of Christ, with confession of our sins, and thankful acknowledgment of his mercies.' This definition is undoubtedly just; yet it is in a degree defective. Prayer is an act of worship, consisting of four great parts; adoration, confession, petition, and thanksgiving.

The first of these, adoration, consists in solemnly reciting the character of God; and in reverentially ascribing to him the glory due to his name for the infinite perfections which he possesses, and for all the manifestations which he has made of himself in his word, and in his works.

The second, confession, demands no comment.

The third, petition, is both by reason and revelation confined to 'things which are agreeable to the will' of God. His will involves whatever is right and good; and nothing which is not agreeable to it is in reality desirable.

Thanksgiving, the last of these subjects, is so generally and so well understood, as to need no explanation at the present time.

All these are to be offered up to God 'in the name of Christ,' in obedience to his express command. Unless they are so offered, they cannot, under the Christian dispensation, be accepted.

II. *The principal seasons of prayer are the following:*—

1. The sabbath.

On this holy day we are required to devote ourselves to this duty in a peculiar manner. A prime part of the religious service to which it is destined consists of prayer. For this reason the sanctuary is appropriately styled the 'house of prayer.' Thus God says in Isaiah, 'I will make them joyful in my house of prayer;' and again, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all people.' These promises immediately respect Christian nations; and teach in the clearest manner the proper destination of the house of God, and of the day upon which especially it is occupied by religious assemblies. The Jewish church worshipped in this manner on their sabbath; and the primitive Christian church on the Lord's day. These examples have been followed in every age of Christianity by those who in any country have worn the Christian name.

Nor is the sabbath a season of public prayer only. It is equally to be employed in private prayer. On this sacred day, God has required a peculiar attention to all our religious duties; at home as well as in the sanctuary. Every advantage for this purpose is furnished by this heavenly season. The consecration of this holy day by the fourth command, by his own resting upon the first sabbath, and by the resurrection of the Redeemer; the celebration of it by the church in all the ages of time; the blessing originally annexed to it; and the sanctification acquired and increased, in the minds of many millions of the human race, all unite to designate it as being pre-eminently the season of prayer. With these affecting views of the sabbath, all others conspire. On this day mankind assemble in the house of God as brethren, and as children of the same divine parent, to worship their Creator, to learn his holy will, and to obtain a title to endless life. Here, with one united voice, they confess their sins before him. Hither they come, to acknowledge their dependence on him for the communication of every blessing, and the fulfilment of every hope. Here they stand as mere suppliants for mercy; for the forgiveness of their sins, and the renovation of their souls. Hither they come, to be employed only in religious thoughts, affections, and pursuits; to act as spiritual and immortal beings; and to appear as candidates for everlasting life. Here, the word of God is presented to them as a law, immutable and eternal, which they have violated, and by which they are condemned; as the news and means of restoration to safety, hope, and life; as the manifestation of his character, and our own: and as the tidings of a future resurrection, judgment, and immortality. Hither

they come, on this sacred day, into the immediate presence of God, as the reconcilable Father of mankind; infinitely great, venerable, and lovely in his character. Here they behold the Saviour in all his peculiar glory and beauty, his transcendent compassion and self-denial. His condescension and humiliation, his preaching and miracles, his sufferings and death, his resurrection and exaltation, are here presented in his word and ordinances, and penciled by the hand of Jehovah.

This holy season is the day appointed by God himself, as a perpetual festival, for the commemoration of these glorious things; especially of the creation and redemption of mankind, and of the divine perfections manifested in these wonderful works. As such a festival it is regarded and acknowledged by all who assemble for his worship.

To all these things the strong power of sympathy lends an interest, a solemnity, a capacity for affecting the soul, unrivalled in its nature, and attainable in no other situation.

As on the sabbath these things are eminently felt in the house of God, so the spirit imbibed here is extended to everything of the same nature, when contemplated in our own dwellings. Thither we carry the feelings originated in the sanctuary, and there we prolong the views which the sabbath has already inspired. In both places, therefore, we are furnished with advantages for praying fervently and acceptably at this happy season, which obviously make the sabbath by way of distinction the day of prayer.

2. Such occasional days as are warranted by the word of God, and appointed by the rulers of mankind, for public worship, are also important seasons of prayer.

Public annual festivals for national thanksgiving, and public days of national humiliation and prayer, were enjoined by God upon the Israelites; the only nation to whom, as such, he ever gave laws and institutions. The institutions and laws of Moses are binding on us no farther than as they are applicable to our circumstances. Political and ceremonial branches of this system are not, and cannot be, applicable to the state of any modern, or Christian, nation. They are therefore abrogated, as we are amply assured in the Scriptures themselves. But these national thanksgivings and fasts are no less applicable to the state of all nations than to that of the Israelites. For all nations equally with them have sins to be confessed and lamented, and blessings to be remembered and acknowledged. God also has been pleased to regard, in a favourable and merciful manner, public fasts, not directly appointed by himself. Thus, when the Ninevites, alarmed by the prediction of Jonah, kept a day of solemn humiliation and fasting for their sins, God, 'repented of the evil, that he said he would do unto them;' and he did it not. In consequence of the fast also of the Jews in Shushan, on account of the ruin threatened to their nation by the malicious fraud of Haman, God accomplished their deliverance in a manner equally wonderful and glorious. Important blessings seem also to have been given in consequence of the fasts proclaimed severally by Ezra and Nehemiah. The public services of these days are usually the same with those of the sabbath. Prayer, particularly, is a prime part of them all. On such days the ancient churches assembled to acknowledge the goodness of God to them, and to confess and lament their sins against him. In these religious solemnities they have been followed extensively by the church in later times.

3. The morning and evening of every day, are, in a peculiar manner, seasons of prayer.

This truth was taught directly by the morning and evening sacrifice, under the Mosaic dispensation. Aaron, and the succeeding high-priests, were commanded, Exod. xxx. 7, 'to burn incense on the altar of incense every morning.' See also Exod. xxxvi. 3; Exod. xli. Levit. vi. 12. In like manner the evening sacrifice and oblation are often mentioned; as in 1 Kings xviii. 29; 2 Kings xvi. 15; Ezra ix. 4; and Dan. ix. 21.

In conformity to the language of this institution, David declares that he steadily performed this religious duty every morning and every evening, and also at noon every day. Daniel prayed to his God 'three times a-day.' Job also offered sacrifice in the morning. In the same manner, unquestionably, worshipped all the pious men of ancient times.

With the Scriptures, the nature of the case perfectly accords. In the morning we are solemnly called upon to remember the protection which God has extended to us through the night; a season in which we were wholly unable to protect ourselves. We are required to recollect also, that he has graciously given us the blessing of sleep, and the peace and safety with which we have rested upon our beds. He who does not praise God for these indispensable gifts, must be alike ungrateful and stupid.

In the morning also we are about to enter upon the business of the day, and stand therefore in absolute need of the divine protection, favour, and blessing. How wretched should we be, and how useless, unless our food and raiment, our health and strength, our reason, and all our other useful faculties, were continued in our possession? Equally do we need security against temptation and sin, danger and harm. But for all these we are entirely dependent on God alone.

In the evening we are solemnly obligated to remember with the deepest gratitude the blessings of the day. These are the blessings which we supplicated in the morning, and which God has been pleased to bestow upon us, notwithstanding our sins. In the evening also we are about to lay ourselves down to sleep. Besides him, we have no protector; and to him we must be indebted both for the sleep itself, and for the peace and safety without which it cannot be enjoyed.

Stated and regular seasons are indispensable to the effectual performance of all business. Method, proverbially styled 'the soul of business,' cannot exist without such seasons. Irregularity, which is the prevention or the ruin of all valuable efforts, grows of course out of irregular distributions of time. That which is done at accidental seasons only, is ultimately not done at all. No business demands regularity and method more than prayer. There is in all men naturally a strong indisposition to pray. Stated seasons, therefore, returning at regular periods, are peculiarly necessary to preserve this duty in its full vigour. He who prays at such seasons will always remember this duty; will form his schemes of life so as to provide the proper places for performing it; will be reproached by his conscience for neglecting it; will keep alive the spirit of prayer from

one season to another, so as to render the practice delightful; and will be preserved, uninterruptedly, in the practice, by the strong influence of habit. He who prays at accidental seasons only, will first neglect, then hate, and finally desist from this duty.

The morning and evening are seasons peculiarly fitted for the regular returns of prayer. They occur at intervals, perfectly convenient; terminate, successively, our sleep and our labour; are seasons necessarily distinguished; remind us regularly of all that for which we should pray; and are effectual means of establishing in us immovable habits of praying. They involve everything, therefore, which can be either asked or wished for this interesting purpose.

As these are seasons eminently advantageous for secret prayer, so they are almost the only possible seasons for the united devotion of families. Then, and then only, are all the members customarily present. Then the family business is either not begun, or ended, and all are at leisure to employ themselves in the worship of God. Strangers then do not intrude, and in this manner prevent the performance of the duty. Everything therefore concurs at these seasons to promote and establish the method, regularity, and habit which, necessary always, are indispensable where numbers are concerned.

4. The times at which we receive our food are proper seasons of prayer.

On food we depend for the continuance of life; and, of course, for the enjoyment of all temporal good. On this blessing also depends, in the like manner, the continuance of our probation: and therefore all our future spiritual good, so far as it will be gained in the present world. With this good are inseparably connected also those immortal blessings, which God will communicate as its proper reward beyond the grave. Hence, the communication of this blessing demands of us peculiar attention, gratitude, and acknowledgments.

These, accordingly, the Scriptures require everywhere at our hands. 'Every creature of God,' say they, 'is good, if it be received with thanksgiving.' They inform us also, that it is 'sanctified by the word of God,' that is, his express permission to use it, 'and by prayer.' They further teach us, that 'God created meats, to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. In these passages they teach us, that meats were created for this end, that they should be received by us with thanksgiving: and that, if they are not thus received, the end of their creation is not accomplished; that they are not good, when not thus received; and that they are not sanctified without prayer. The Scriptures also direct us, that 'whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do, we should do all to the glory of God.' But when we receive our food, whatever emotions we may experience within, we cannot glorify God before our fellow men, except by asking for his blessing upon it, and rendering to him our praise for the bounty by which it is daily supplied.

In conformity with these precepts, David often solemnly praises God for the communication of this blessing to himself, and calls upon all mankind to unite in the praise. The primitive Christians are exhibited by St Paul as 'eating, and giving God thanks;' or, in other words, as 'giving God thanks, when they received their food.' Our Saviour, the perfect example to all his followers, blessed the food provided for himself and those around him, to teach us, that it is our duty always to ask that blessing of God upon our own meals, without which they cannot be either useful or desirable enjoyments. The same glorious person also gave thanks uniformly to God for the bounties of his providence, to show us, that we are always to remember, with gratitude and praise, the divine goodness in supplying our wants, and in thus prolonging our lives. From this glorious example, and these most reasonable precepts, are derived ample proofs of this important duty, and the most powerful motives to perform invariably, faithfully, and with sincere delight, so desirable a service.

The very heathen were so sensible of the propriety and obligation of this duty, as enjoined by the religion of nature, that to a great extent they steadily made libations to their gods before their meals, as an acknowledgment of their indebtedness to them for their daily food. He, therefore, who, in a Christian country, neglects to praise God for his own food, cannot with propriety be called a heathen. He may with more fitness be styled an animal. Nay, in some respects, he degrades himself below the brutes. For 'the ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib;' but he 'doth not know, nor even consider.'

5. Besides these regular seasons of prayer, there are many others continually occurring, which can be designated by no general name.

The times at which all peculiar blessings are bestowed on us, are times of prayer. Whenever we are successful in any important concern, and are especially prospered, supported, or comforted; whenever we, or ours, are delivered from trouble or want, pain or sickness; whenever we escape from peculiar temptations, are placed in safety, and furnished with strength, peace, hope and joy, with the peculiar blessings of Christian fellowship, the rectification of our views, and the improvement of our religious affections, we are especially summoned to the duties of prayer and thanksgiving.

In the same manner is prayer our especial duty at those seasons in which we are peculiarly distressed in body or in mind, are in peculiar danger, are exposed peculiarly to temptations, are sick, are bereaved of beloved friends, are threatened with alarming evils, or whenever we find ourselves the subjects of peculiar sloth, reluctance to our duty, or ready to repine at the dispensations of God's providence, or to distrust his faithfulness, or his mercy.

Nor are we less obviously called to the duties of prayer and thanksgiving by the peculiar prosperity or distresses, the dangers or deliverances of our country. I speak not here of this duty as performed in public. I refer immediately to the performances of the closet. No man can safely or warrantably neglect the interests of his country in his sacred devotions. As its interests ought ever to be near his heart, so they ought ever to be remembered, when he comes into the presence of God.

In the same manner the great concerns of the church of God, ought continually to be the subjects of fervent supplication. 'If I forget thee, O Jerusalem,' saith the psalmist, 'let my right hand forget her cunning: if I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth.' All the wants and woes, all the blessings and consolations, of the church of God should be felt, as the personal concerns of every Christian; and, as such, should ascend up in his daily devotions

before the throne of his Maker. I only add, that both reason and revelation have made it our plain duty, to pray for all men. At the times also when we ourselves commence any important business, journey, or other undertaking, which is of particular consequence to our wellbeing, we are required to begin our efforts with humble petitions for the guidance, protection, and blessing of God.

Retirement, likewise, and solitude, the lonely walk, the chamber of meditation, and the peaceful pillow, being peculiarly friendly to this solemn enjoyment, summon us to it with peculiar motives.

Of these occasions generally, whether alluded to or specified, it is to be observed, that their return more or less every day runs through life, and ends only at death. All of them demand either silent or audible acknowledgments of our constant dependence on God, and our absolute indebtedness to him for all good. They demand a lively sense of his presence, perfection, and government, our supreme love and unchanging confidence to be exercised towards him, our daily communion with him, and our entire devotion to his service. Of all these prayer is the vehicle, the support, the soul. With it they will live and flourish; without it they will die. According to these observations, the text directs us to 'pray without ceasing.' In the same manner, the apostle elsewhere directs us to 'pray always with all prayer; and in everything to make known our requests unto God, with supplication and thanksgiving.' In this manner the prophets and saints of the Old Testament, and the apostles and Christians of the New, lived before God. Prayer was the breath by which their piety was supported and preserved. Thus lived Christ himself; and thus by his example he has taught us to live. Immediately before he ordained his apostles, he spent the whole night in prayer; and this was a characteristical specimen of his life. 'Let the same mind be in you, which was also in Christ.'

III. *I shall now briefly consider our obligation to perform this duty.*

1. To pray to God is a natural dictate of the human mind; a dictate of conscience and common sense.

We are absolutely dependent on God for all good. To know this, is to know a truth of immense importance to the moral system at large, and to each individual of which this system is composed. To feel it with acquiescence and joy, is to conform in our feelings to that state of things which is agreeable to the will of God, and of course to absolute rectitude. We are bound to delight in such a dependence on the glorious and perfect Jehovah; infinitely great, and wise, and good as he is; and able and disposed as he is to supply all our wants, and to furnish us with every real blessing.

But a spirit of dependence is more awakened, cherished, and preserved by prayer, than by all things else. But to cherish and preserve it in our minds, is the indispensable duty and the supreme interest of man. Few things contribute, in the same degree, to render us excellent, amiable, or approved by God. Without it we can neither be approved, amiable, nor excellent. In this view, therefore, the importance of prayer cannot be estimated.

Prayer is also the only method which nature points out of obtaining blessings from God. To prayer, as this method, we are directed by our earliest circumstances in childhood. By asking we originally expect to gain, and actually gain, all the blessings which are given to us by our parents. What they grant to our petitions, common sense directs us to hope from God, in answer to similar petitions. From analogy, which is fairly presumed to be conclusive, we determine, that the mode of obtaining good which his providence has formed for our direction with respect to earthly parents and benefactors, is the mode which we ought to pursue whenever we seek to obtain good immediately from him, our heavenly parent and Divine Benefactor. As this conduct is universal, it is justly concluded to be natural. For we have no higher proof that anything is natural, than the fact, that it exists in all men, of all ages and nations.

The heathen universally prayed. Of this service their worship was in a great measure constituted. From California to Japan we find this everywhere its leading feature: and from the first periods recorded in history to the present time. There are but two sources whence this conduct can have been derived; the conclusions of reason, and the dictates of revelation. If it was derived from reason, then it was demanded by reason; if from revelation, then it is required by God.

2. What nature has thus dictated and pursued, the Scriptures have expressly enjoined.

It will be unnecessary for me to multiply quotations on this subject. The text, and the other passages already recited, are more than sufficient to settle the point, were it at all in dispute. But no truth is better known, or more abundantly acknowledged. I shall, therefore, only observe, that these commands are invested with all the authority of God.

2. The example of Christ is of the same obligatory force.

Christ, as is well known, lived a life of continual and extraordinary prayer; and thus accorded with that general prediction in the eighty-ninth psalm, 'He shall cry unto me, Thou art my Father, and my God, and the rock of my salvation.' Accordingly, St Paul testifies of him, Heb. v. 7, that 'in the days of his flesh he offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto him that was able to save him from death; and was heard, in that he feared.' This example, you know, is not only a pattern and a motive, but a law also, binding us with authority.

4. Our own wellbeing may, with strict propriety, be added to these obligations, as a reason of high and commanding import.

God has taught us, that he will be 'inquired of' by mankind, for the good which he is pleased to bestow upon them. The only promise, that he will give, or, that we shall receive blessings, is made to such as ask: 'Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find, knock, and it shall be opened unto you;' is the only language of revelation concerning this subject. Supplication for good, therefore, is the only condition upon which it can be hoped. But we entirely need, and God is infinitely able and disposed to give, all that is really good for us. To such as ask he will give; from such as ask not he will withhold. Of course, those who will not pray will never receive.

On our prayers then, according to the only ordinance of God with respect to this subject, all our good depends, in one important sense, both for time and eternity. We may, indeed, and we actually do, receive many things in this world, really good in themselves,

for which we do not pray. But they are not, and, so long as we neglect to pray, will not be good to us. To those who omit this duty, even the blessings bestowed by God cease to be blessings. Prayer purifies the heart for the reception of them; and removes the temptations which, good as they are in themselves, they cannot fail to present to the passions and appetites even of a religious man.

In eternity those who in this world neglect to pray will experience nothing which is in itself good, but will find that, as they refused to ask here, God will refuse to give for ever.

All these sources of obligation lend their whole force to all the seasons, occasions, and kinds of prayer; to the public worship of the sabbath, and of authorized fasts and festivals; to the morning and evening sacrifice; to the religious service at our meals; and to the prayers offered up on the numberless occasions presented by our daily returning wants, sufferings, and enjoyments. On all these occasions, they are accordingly to be felt, acknowledged, and obeyed. Of course, we are to remember, to feel, and willingly to feel, nay, to feel with delight and gratitude, that it is our indispensable duty, our highest interest, and our glorious privilege, to 'pray always, with all prayer and supplication, with giving of thanks; for this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour.' Amen.

SERMON CXL.

THE MEANS OF GRACE.—ORDINARY MEANS OF GRACE.—THE USEFULNESS OF PRAYER TO INDIVIDUALS.

Pray without ceasing.—1 Thess. v. 17.

In the preceding Discourse, I considered the nature and seasons of prayer, and the obligations which we are under to pray. I shall now discuss, at some length, the fourth subject proposed at that time; viz., the usefulness of prayer.

The observations which I shall make concerning this subject will be included under the following general heads:—

The usefulness of prayer by its own proper influence, and,

Its efficacy in procuring blessings from God.

The first of these heads, viz., *the usefulness of prayer by its own proper influence*, I shall consider as it respects individuals, families, and public societies.

In this Discourse it is my intention to exhibit the *usefulness of prayer to individuals, by its proper influence on themselves.*

Before I proceed to the direct discussion of this subject, it will be useful to observe, that the personal concerns of an individual are the proper subjects of secret prayer. The propriety of such prayer is wholly derived from the fact, that we have many important interests which are only personal, and require to be transacted between us and our Maker. In their very nature, they are incapable of being disclosed to our fellow creatures, without material disadvantages. Often they are such as we would not on any account reveal to any human being whatever. Often the disclosure, although not injurious to our moral or intellectual character, would wound our delicacy, or involve us in other kinds of distress. In a multitude of instances, where they are already partially known, we are still unable to disclose them entirely, and with that freedom which is indispensable to the due performance of this duty. Before our Maker, strange as it may seem, we can use a freedom of communication which cannot be exercised towards any created being. We know that he is already acquainted with whatever we have experienced, done, or suffered, either within or without the mind. We know that he is infinitely removed from all the partialities and prejudices, from all those cold, unkind, and contemptuous sentiments, which are so generally cherished by our fellow men. We know that he will not betray us: but, however unworthy we have been, will regard us, if sincere and penitent, with kindness and mercy. We approach him therefore with a freedom, a confidence of communication, which can be used towards no other being in the universe.

Besides, God is nearer to all men, than any man to another. If we are willing to choose him as our friend, he is infinitely the nearest, the best, the most affectionate of all friends. With him therefore a communion can, and does exist, which no creature can hold with a fellow creature.

In consequence of these facts, a freedom and a fervency also exist in secret prayer, when the subject of it is our personal concerns, which cannot exist in the presence of others.

With these things premised, I observe, that the usefulness of prayer to individuals is found.

1. In the peculiar solemnity which it naturally induces on the mind.

In secret prayer a man comes directly into the presence of God. This great and awful Being is the source of all solemn thoughts and emotions in his creatures, and the object in which such thoughts ultimately terminate. Everything in his character, everything in our character and circumstances, everything in our relations to him, and in the situation in which we are thus placed, the end for which we have entered our closets, the duty which we are performing, the retirement from the world, the presence of God, and the con-

sciousness that his eye is on our hearts, all these conspire to drive away every trifling thought, and to banish every improper emotion. It is scarcely possible that the man who has withdrawn to his closet, for the purpose of meeting God face to face, and who here remembers before whom he stands, on what business he has come, and of what importance that business is to himself, should fail to fix his thoughts in solemnity and awe, and hush every tendency to an unbecoming emotion.

To all men this state of mind is eminently useful, and indispensably necessary. Spiritual and immortal concerns demand, of course, and most obviously, this state of mind. We cannot attend to them in any other state with advantage, nor without serious disadvantage. We cannot see them as they are, nor feel them as they are. We cannot be influenced to attend to them, nor to provide for them, as they indispensably demand. As they are of all possible consequence to us, so this state of mind, the only one in which we can usefully attend to them, becomes of a proportional importance.

Thus forgiveness of sin, a restoration to holiness, resolutions to perform our duty, the effectual pursuit of salvation, and the final escape from ruin, can never be useful objects of attention and effort to him whose mind is not settled in that state of solemnity which these mighty concerns require. The soul which is given up to levity regards them, of course, with habitual indifference, and not unfrequently with habitual contempt. By a man of this character therefore they will be neglected and forgotten.

2. Prayer is useful to an individual, as it enlightens and quickens the conscience.

Conscience is the judgment of the mind concerning its moral conduct, both internal and external. By this judgment of the mind, we are, and of necessity must be, ultimately directed in every case of a moral nature. It is therefore of the utmost importance that it should be formed aright.

Conscience also is used, both in the Scriptures and elsewhere, with a direct reference to those emotions, or feelings, which we experience, when this judgment is formed; and which usually have more or less influence upon the formation of the judgment itself, and upon the conduct by which it is followed. When these are just and vigorous, we are not only directed, but prompted to act aright. When they are dull and lifeless, we are apt, how just soever the judgment may be, either not to act at all, or to act in direct violation of its dictates. In every such case our conduct is sinful; and often when, under the influence of a conscience more tender and susceptible, it would have been virtuous. Hence the plain necessity of having our consciences quickened, or made alive to our duty. 'A seared conscience' denotes, not the want of a capacity to judge, but an insensibility to the importance of moral good and evil.

Among the means placed in our power of enlightening and quickening the conscience, prayer, after the Scriptures, is in my view the first, and far superior to any other. It is also the chief mean of rendering the Scriptures themselves effectual to this end.

When we stand in our closets, immediately before God, are secluded from the world, and withdrawn from every eye but his; when we feel the awe inspired by a clear view of his character, and realize, in an affecting manner, his presence and inspection; it can hardly be possible for us not to entertain concerning our Creator, ourselves, and all moral objects, views exceedingly different from those gross apprehensions which we experience in ordinary circumstances. We can hardly fail to discern our sinful character, and to regard sin as a real and great evil. God, in spite of all our ordinary stupidity, will then appear to be an awful, perfect, and glorious Being; his law to be holy, just, and good; its extent to comprehend all our thoughts and actions alike; its nature, demands, and penalties, to be unchangeable; and ourselves to be condemned, and, if left in our present condition, to be ruined. In this situation we further discern, of course, that many things are sinful, which we have customarily regarded as innocent; and that many things are duties, to perform which we have heretofore felt little or no obligation.

These views are particularly enlarged, and rendered more distinct, by means of our confessions and petitions. When we confess our sins before God, we are compelled to such sincerity of thought, as well as of speech, as must induce us to throw aside a multitude of prejudices, self-justifications, and self-flatteries; usually, and very pleasingly, cherished. We know that we cannot deceive God; and are certain that even our inmost thoughts are naked to the all-seeing eye. Little inducement is presented to us, therefore, to think falsely of our conduct. So far as our views extend, they naturally become just and scriptural. In this state, every sin which we confess is apt to be seen as it is; as a sin, as a violation of the law of God, as an act of opposition to his will, and as a source to us of guilt and condemnation. The vanity strongly appears of attempting to hide our guilt from his sight; and of course the necessity, as well as the duty, of acknowledging it before him. Hence, while the confession of all our sins is forcibly prompted, the confession of each is naturally rendered sincere. Hence also the sinner sees many things to be sinful, which he has usually thought innocent, perhaps virtuous; and the whole number of his sins to be far greater than he has before mistrusted.

In our petitions we ask for the blessing of God. If we ask for forgiveness, we ask for the forgiveness of our sins; and of course discern that we have sins to be forgiven. This forgiveness is necessary for every sin. While the eye of the mind is employed in wandering with solemn anxiety over this interesting subject, and inquiring with deep solicitude what, and how numerous, are the cases in which this forgiveness is needed; it is impossible for us not to perceive that they have many, very many, sins to be forgiven.

If we ask for sanctification, we ask it for sinners, to whom this blessing is necessary. In the same character we ask for justification, for adoption, for increase of grace, and for perseverance unto the end. In a word, our guilty character will recur, and present itself before our eyes, with every petition which we make.

Nor will the necessity and excellence of holiness appear with less evidence. Sin is our ruin; holiness is our recovery. Both are alike important; the one being as dreadful as the other is desirable. Of all the blessings for which we ask, holiness is the basis, the means, and the end. To every one of them it inseparably adheres; with every one it is intimately blended. Our views therefore will be as naturally and as extensively engaged by it, and be as naturally rendered clear and impressive.

As these two great attributes are the only ones which characterize our moral conduct, so the clearer and brighter our views of these things are, the more enlightened, of course, is our conscience, or the judgment of our minds concerning that conduct. When we ask God for his blessing on anything which we are about to do, we shall in this way discern with more certainty its real nature, especially as it appears to our own view, than in any other situation. We often, as we think, convince ourselves by reasoning, that a proposed pursuit is lawful and right; when we in fact believe it to be otherwise. In most, if not all such cases, the first judgment of our minds, that which we usually denominate the decision of conscience, has already determined it to be wrong. On the future reasoning, inclination has usually had no small share of influence, and has warped the judgment of the mind so as to lead it to false conclusions. With these conclusions, however, we are but too prone to feel satisfied.

But if we attempt to ask the blessing of God upon such conduct in our closets, we shall often find our attempts to be vain. Our mouths will be stopped, and our efforts to pray annihilated. Some persons declare, and appear to believe, that gaming is lawful and justifiable. But no one ever asked, no one can ever seriously ask, the blessing of God on a design to game. There are persons who declare lewdness to be lawful. But no person can ask God to bless a lewd purpose. An attempt of this nature would choke the utterance even of a profligate.

When we ask the same blessing on similar conduct already past, the same consequences will follow; and we shall be forced, in spite of ourselves, to acknowledge and feel the guilt of that which is sinful. Notwithstanding his utmost efforts, the sinner will be checked in all his attempts to pray, so long as he justifies, so long as he does not confess and lament, his guilty conduct, however satisfied with himself he was in the perpetration. Until he becomes willing to forsake his sins, they will 'hinder his prayers.' Nor can he continue to sin, and continue to pray.

This doctrine St Peter preaches in the third chapter of his first epistle. In the seventh verse, he directs husbands to live with their wives, as in the preceding verses he had directed wives to live with their husbands, in the performance of all the duties of conjugal affection, and in a general obedience to the precepts of the gospel. For these directions he subjoins his reason in the following words; 'that your prayers be not hindered.' According to this decision of the apostle, disobedience to the gospel, and the neglect of the duties required by it, hinder, of course, the prayers of mankind. In other words, sin is the direct hinderance of prayer. Every person who prays to God will continually find, by his own experience, that this account of the subject is true; and that, whenever he sins, his prayers are hindered. Of course, he will be obliged to relinquish his sins, or desist from his prayers. Should he continue to pray, all the views which I have mentioned, and all others like them, will continually recur, and will soon become habitual. They will soon constitute the general current of his thinking on moral subjects. But the more clear, distinct, and habitual, our thoughts concerning moral subjects become, the more strongly, and the more uniformly, shall we feel these subjects. Their importance will not only be seen, but regarded with much solemnity, deep interest, and influential concern. The soul, continuing in prayer without ceasing, becomes alive to all such subjects. These are the chief subjects of its prayers; and prayer is its chief duty. Moral subjects, therefore, resume their proper place and rank in its estimation, and find a susceptibility in its regard wholly due to them, and immensely interesting to itself. In this way prayer contributes, to a degree which cannot be limited, to withdraw the soul from sin, to disarm temptations of their fascinating influence, to weaken the power of passion, and to increase the hopes and means of resistance. In the same manner are the views and emotions which regard holiness improved; and resolution and strength gained, to make progress in the divine life.

3. Prayer is useful to unregenerated individuals, by teaching them, that, so long as they continue in this state, they cannot pray in the manner required by God.

Unregenerate men, when affected with a deep sense of their guilt, and a solemn concern for their future destiny, universally pray. But all such men, before they have made attempts of this nature, believe, whatever may be their creed, that they can pray with their present disposition, so as at least to satisfy themselves; and, not improbably, so as to be acceptable to God. There is no way within my knowledge, in which they so effectually unlearn this doctrine, and so entirely give up this belief, as by their own attempts of prayer. The peculiarly clear, distinct, and affecting views of moral subjects, which I have already mentioned, are of course directed to their prayers, as well, as much, and probably more, than to any other subjects of this nature. Their prayers, in the act of offering them up to God, are seen by them in a light, and with a distinctness and certainty, never perhaps experienced in any other case. Amid the anxiety and earnestness with which awakened sinners pray, they come, without an exception, first to doubt their own ability to pray as they ought: and then, without a doubt, to believe that their prayers are wholly destitute of evangelical worth: at least, I never knew an exception to this process in any person who, in this situation, has disclosed his views of the subject to me. Perhaps I ought rather to say, I remember none. This important part of self-knowledge, is, I believe, rarely, if at all, acquired in any other way. In this situation, and by these means, sinners, if I mistake not, are chiefly brought to a state of absolute humiliation, and a full conviction of their entire dependence on Christ for holiness and salvation. Not to be able to pray, so as to be in some degree satisfied and comforted by our prayers, is to be poor indeed. This humbled, dependent state of the mind, is, as I formerly observed, that in which the grace of the gospel is usually bestowed on men.

4. Prayer is useful to individuals, as it teaches them their dependence on God.

The act of asking for blessings in prayer, which is its primary employment, brings up forcibly to our view, the impossibility of furnishing them to ourselves. The blessings also for which we ask, are seen to be absolutely necessary for us, and such as none but God can give. They are the results of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness alone. Of these interesting truths, the suppliant cannot fail to perceive the clearest evidence, and to experience the strongest impression.

To this sense of dependence on God, our adoration, in which we recite his glorious perfections in the most

solemn manner; our confession, in which we recount our sins and wants, our infinite need of forgiveness, and our utter insufficiency to supply ourselves with the necessary good, and our thanksgiving, in which we acknowledge that all the blessings enjoyed by us have come from God only; irresistibly conspire to make large additions. As the God, whose immensely great and glorious character we humbly and solemnly repeat, is presented to our view as rich in all good, we feel ourselves to be poor, and little, and sinful, and naked, and in want of all things.

Alone, withdrawn from the world, in the immediate presence of Jehovah, we cannot but see these things in the strongest light, and by themselves. The eye of the mind is turned solely and intensely upon them, and prevented from the obscurity, confusion, and consequent perplexity, which necessarily attend all complicated views. With such apprehensions, we can scarcely fail to feel, in the deepest manner, this most important subject. It becomes the burden of our thoughts and our language. The value of the blessings themselves, our indebtedness to God for them, our own unworthiness of them all, and the mercy manifested in bestowing them, unitedly impress them on our hearts with a force peculiar and pre-eminent.

As the pardon of our sins, and the justification, adoption, and sanctification of our souls, constitute the means of all other good, so they are seen, felt, and acknowledged, even by the convinced sinner, to be his own highest and immediate good. For this good he will cry with intense earnestness to him, in whom alone he finds either ability or disposition to communicate this invaluable blessing. With deep humiliation, with intense anguish, he casts himself at the foot of the cross, with the prayer of the publican, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!' or with that of the disciples, when the ship in which they were conveyed was ready to sink, 'Lord, save me, or I perish!' In this situation of the soul, desponding, convinced of its guilt and danger, and feeling the infinite necessity of forgiveness and renovation, God, in all his ordinary providence, has been graciously pleased to extend mercy to sinners, and to bring them into his kingdom. This is not done because of any excellency in their prayers, or in their characters; for no such excellency exists: but because they infinitely need his mercy; and also, if I am not deceived, because there is an evident propriety in bestowing it on them, when in this situation, rather than while they are stupid, blind, and hardened in their sins.

The Christian, in the same manner, learns with still more clearness and stronger affections, his own absolute dependence on his Maker. All his springs of holiness and happiness he perceives to be in God. Innumerable sins he discovers lying at his door; many and various lusts remaining in his heart; wants of many kinds, and of great importance, rising up continually to his view; his guilt dreadfully great, and his danger extreme. No being but God can remove the evils from which he suffers, or those which he dreads. None but God can supply the blessings which he feels to be his all.

In the whole of the Christian course, he realizes, in the most affecting manner, his absolute necessity of being enabled by the grace of God to resist temptations, to overcome lust, to vanquish enemies, to subdue sin, and to advance in obedience. Every evil affection he sees capable of being removed or lessened by the assistance of God only; and by the same assistance he must be furnished with all his ability to live a holy life, and to cultivate every virtuous propensity. From God only, he also knows, must be derived his daily hope, support, and consolation; peace of mind, evidence of the love of God, increase in grace, and 'a patient continuance in well-doing.' God only can cleanse his soul, refine and exalt his views, remove his fears, quicken his affections, brighten his hopes, and multiply his joys. All these are blessings, possessed by none beside the Infinite Mind; and gifts of none but the Almighty Hand. At the same time, they are blessings which God is supremely pleased to bestow. His nature is bounty; and giving is his favourite employment.

But he is pleased to be 'inquired of' for all blessings. Ready as he is to bestow, it is his pleasure that all his rational creatures should ask. Accordingly he requires 'all flesh to come to him' with their requests; and, for their encouragement, styles himself 'a God hearing prayer.' With these delightful views of the divine character, and with affecting apprehensions of his own circumstances, every Christian comes to God; and finds in prayer peculiar encouragement, hope, assistance, strength, enjoyment, and universal edification.

5. Prayer is useful to individuals, as it furnishes to them the best views of the divine character.

Prayer brings home to the mind, the character of God with peculiar advantage in many ways. Some of these have been already mentioned, as being inseparably connected with the subjects which I have had occasion to consider. Several others I shall now briefly recount. It is impossible that a suppliant should fail to remember, with peculiar strength and conviction, this glorious Being as his Creator, Preserver, and Benefactor, his Father, Redeemer, and Sanctifier. These are the themes of his prayer, in all the parts of it, and are perpetually recurring. They rise in his adoration, confession, thanksgiving, and petitions. They rise in every profitable form. He cannot think of a want, a sin, or a blessing, without realizing against whom his sins have been committed, by whom his wants must be supplied, and from whom his blessings must flow. He cannot but recall, with deep affection, the justice of that great Being whom he has offended; the holiness of him, whose image he is required to exhibit; the purity of him, whose all-seeing eye is intent on his sins; the power of him, by whom he was created, and has been always preserved; and the goodness, faithfulness, truth, and mercy of him, to whose mercy, truth, and faithfulness he must be indebted for the forgiveness of his sins, and the performance of all the promises contained in the covenant of grace, and to whose goodness he must owe every future blessing of time and eternity.

In prayer, God literally draws nigh to him, and he to God. In a sense, he beholds his character in full view; as we distinctly see near objects with the bodily eye. The divine perfections are therefore realized and acknowledged, and not merely and loosely proved by argument to our understandings. Like Job, he before had heard of God 'by the hearing of the ear; but now his eye seeth him.' As his prayers return daily, so his views returning with them soon become habitual; and, like other habitual things, become continually stronger and stronger, more and more bright, just, and affecting. The great, glorious, and delightful character on which he so frequently dwells, is in a sense enstamped on his

heart, and always realized and enjoyed. Thus a peace and satisfaction are derived to him from prayer, for which nothing can be a substitute. By prayer, therefore, as a Christian, he lives, and lives with holiness and wisdom daily increasing; is continually a better man in all the relations of the present life, and a more and more proper candidate for immortal happiness in the world above.

That each of the several things which I have mentioned, as effects flowing from the performance of this duty is, in an eminent degree, useful to him who performs it, will be questioned by no sober man. Still more strongly will it be perceived, that all these advantages united must be of pre-eminent importance. To be destitute of them must be, in the spiritual sense, to be 'poor, and wretched, and miserable.' All of them, however, exhibit this subject, when considered by themselves, in an imperfect manner. These views and dispositions, in their connexions and consequences, are branched out into others, and then into others still, in such numbers, in so continual a succession, and with such efficacious influence, as to affect, with the greatest advantage, the whole Christian character, and to reach through every part of the Christian life. Everywhere their influence is felt, and wherever it is felt is benign and happy. Hence the Scriptures insist so abundantly on the performance of this duty; and, to secure their benevolent purpose, multiply everywhere, commands, examples, and promises.

REMARKS.

From this summary and imperfect account of the usefulness of prayer to individuals, I remark,

1. That he who does not habitually pray to God, cannot be a Christian.

God has commanded us to pray to him; and is pleased to be 'inquired of' by his creatures, for all the good which they need. He who does not pray, violates continually a plain command of the Scriptures; and proves himself indifferent to the great and comprehensive duty of obeying his Maker. But this is a contradiction to the whole Christian character.

This, however, is not the only ground of the conclusion, nor that on which I meant principally to insist at the present time. In the character and circumstances of a Christian is laid the most solid foundation of habitual prayer. His sins perpetually present to him the infinite necessity of forgiveness and sanctification. His love to God, and his good-will to mankind, excite in him, by their very nature, unceasing desires, and generate vigorous efforts to increase this evangelical character. His faith in Christ, and his disposition to obey his commands, require continual additions of strength; and the peculiar consolation, peace, and hope, which he finds in prayer, and which without prayer he cannot find, call unceasingly upon him to be faithful, steadfast, and fervent in this duty. A hungry man might as well be expected to abstain from food, or a thirsty man from drink, as a Christian from prayer. Prayer is the breath on which Christianity lives, and from which it derives peculiarly its power, activity, and enjoyment. Mark the manner in which David describes his distress in being cut off from the solemn services of the tabernacle; and the relief, the comfort, the strength, and the joy, which he found when he drew nigh to that holy place. Mark the discourses of our Saviour on this subject, and the most edifying example of performing this duty, which he has left on record for our imitation. Attend diligently to the commands, exhortations, and encouragements, given to St Paul, to engage us to 'continue always in all prayer.' Here you will see with the most certain evidence how naturally, and how irresistibly, holiness prompts to the performance of this duty. Such is the spirit by which all Christians are governed, and without which no man can be a Christian. By our fruits are we known, both to ourselves and to others. Prayer is the prominent fruit of the Christian spirit; and where this fruit is not found, it will be in vain to search for the tree.

From these observations we easily learn the reason why hypocrites rarely continue steadfast for any length of time in secret prayer. A sinner, under strong convictions of sin, will betake himself of course to his closet. Why will he do this? He is still a sinner, and a stranger to the evangelical character. He finds no part of the Christian's pleasure in things divine; no obedience to God, or the contemplation of his perfections, commands, or designs; in his sabbath, word, or ordinances. Of that relish for spiritual objects which is implanted in regeneration, and which constitutes what is called the spiritual mind, he is wholly destitute. In seeking salvation, however, he is altogether in earnest; and in seeking the forgiveness of his sins, and the sanctification of his heart, as indispensable means of this most interesting attainment. Hence he prays. But to this character the hypocrite is a stranger, and feels not therefore these inducements to prayer.

Still more is he a stranger to the views, affections, and enjoyments of a Christian. For spiritual objects he has no relish, no desire. In the character of God, the character of Christ, and the nature of religion, he finds no pleasure, and sees no profit, except so far as hypocrisy may increase his reputation, and promote his selfish purposes. For this, his governing end, he will often appear more engaged in religion when he expects to be seen by men, than Christians themselves. In public and family prayer he will frequently be exact and abundant; because this conduct will gain him the character which he covets. Here others see him. Here therefore he finds an advantage sufficient to excite his perseverance in these external services.

But in secret prayer there can be no gain besides that which is spiritual and immortal. No reputation can spring from conduct unknown to men. If therefore the hypocrite begins the performance of this duty, he will usually soon desist; because, on the one hand, he has no anxiety about salvation, and, on the other, no delight in the duty. Accordingly, Job says of the hypocrite, 'will he delight himself in the Almighty? Will he always call upon God?' that is, he will not always call upon God. He will, at times, call upon God for a little period; but will cease, of course, from this duty, after that period is ended; because he expects from it neither profit nor pleasure.

2. From these observations, it is evident, also, that he who does not pray is guilty of pre-eminent folly.

Prayer is the only communication between mankind and their Maker, and the only means of obtaining blessings from him. The man who refuses or neglects to pray, voluntarily cuts himself off therefore from all hope of good. The easiest, least expensive, least burdensome, possible mode of acquiring good, is to ask for

it. God has been pleased to constitute this the only mode of obtaining it from him. He therefore who does not pray cannot rationally hope for any blessing.

To renounce all good, when it is attainable by any means, however difficult, is the conduct of a fool. To renounce it when the means are the easiest possible, is the conduct of a madman. Such a fool, such a madman, is he who neglects prayer. To pray costs neither money, pains, nor time. Why do multitudes in this house neglect to pray? The true explanation of this mysterious, sottish violation of every dictate of reason, conscience, and revelation, is, that all these persons hate their duty. They 'sin against God, and wrong their own souls; they hate him, and love death.'

SERMON CXLI.

THE MEANS OF GRACE.—ORDINARY MEANS OF GRACE.—THE USEFULNESS OF PRAYER TO FAMILIES.

Praying always with all prayer.—EPH. vi. 10.

HAVING considered the usefulness of prayer to individuals, I shall now, according to the scheme proposed, examine its usefulness to families.

The text, as will be seen by attending to its connexion with the preceding verse, contains a command in which we are required to 'pray always (*εν παντι τῳ καιρῳ, at every season*), with all prayer;' that is, with prayer of every kind; or prayer offered up to God in every form. By this precept, then, mankind are commanded to pray at every season suited to the performance of this duty; and with such prayer as becomes the circumstances, wants, and characters, of those by whom the duty is to be performed.

The family prayer is included in this general direction, as one kind of prayer especially suited to the wants and circumstances of mankind, will not be questioned by most of those who profess the religion of the gospel. Nor will it be doubted that every morning and every evening presents a proper season for the performance of this religious service.

In examining the proposed subject of discourse, it will be useful to consider,

The advantages of performing,

The disadvantages of neglecting, and

The objections commonly made against this duty.

The foundation of family prayer is laid in the intimate connexion of those who are members of these little societies. This connexion necessarily creates a variety of interests, wants, enjoyments and sufferings, which are common to them all. United in all these concerns in a very intimate manner, the several members of a family find a common interest in unitedly supplicating upon them the blessing of God, without which neither prosperity nor relief can be expected. A common interest is the source of all communion in the worship of God, whether in families, particular churches, nations, or the Christian world at large. Nor is there any reason against family worship, which does not lie against the worship of churches, and larger Christian communities. Indeed, ancient churches were not unfrequently formed of single families.

Among the advantages which attend family prayer, I shall mention the following:—

1. The intimate communion which exists in this worship, naturally renders our devotion intense and exalted.

Religion is in its nature social. Worship, particularly, is naturally social. Every man possessed of the spirit of the gospel feels an interest in those things in which others are alike interested with him, which it is difficult for him to feel in things, even of the same nature, which concern himself only. Nay, selfish as the human heart is, mankind are naturally more affected, on many occasions, by those concerns in which they share with others, than in those which are merely personal. He who would fly, when himself only was attacked, would fight when an enemy assaulted his family. Many a slothful man has become industrious, many a prodigal prudent, many a parsimonious man generous, and many a lightminded man sober, in consequence of the interest which he took in the affairs of his household.

All the members of a family are connected by the strong bonds of natural affection; bonds which unite human beings together with a power and intimacy found in no other circumstances of life. The sympathy here experienced is therefore intense and peculiar. The wants and interests are not only common, but near and important; reaching every heart at once; awakening instinctively a lively, vigorous concern, a powerful sympathy, and united efforts, of singular energy and ardour. The members of a family all dwell also in the same house, are daily united in one common system of employments, interchange unceasingly and habitually their kind offices, and are accustomed to rejoice and mourn, to hope and fear, to weep and smile together. No eloquence, no labour, no time is necessary to awaken these sympathetic emotions. They are caught at once, from eye to eye, and from heart to heart; and spread instantaneously, with an electric influence, through all the endeared and happy circle.

In the devotions of this little assembly, parents pray for their children, and children for their parents; the husband for his wife, and the wife for her husband; while brothers and sisters send up their requests to the throne of infinite mercy, to call down blessings upon each other. Who that wears the name of man can be indifferent here? Must not the venerable character of the parents, the peculiar tenderness of the conjugal

union, the affectionate intimacy of the filial and fraternal relations, must not the nearness of relations long existing, the interchange of kindness long continued, and the oneness of interests long cemented, all warm the heart, heighten the importance of every petition, and increase the fervour of every devotional effort?

The blessings asked for are common to all. The parent, in speaking for one member of the family, speaks, even when he does not directly design it, for every one. For here, as in the natural body, 'whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.' These blessings are also indispensable and invaluable. They are no other than the health, union, peace, prosperity, forgiveness, sanctification, and everlasting life, of all this circle of beloved objects. How necessarily then must all the natural affections of the heart, and all the power of religion, conspire to render prayer, thus offered up, eminently fervent and devout! The world perhaps does not furnish a single prospect so beautiful, so lovely, to the eye of virtuous contemplation, as a family thus assembled in the morning for their affectionate devotions; combining the two most charming among all the exercises of the human heart, piety to God their common Parent, and tenderness to each other; and living through the day in that course of evangelical conduct, which is pre-eminently suited to so delightful a beginning. No priest, no minister, is so venerable as a father; no congregation so dear and tenderly beloved as a wife and children; and no oblations are offered with the same union, interest, and delight, as those of a pious and affectionate household.

2. Family prayer eminently contributes to domestic order and regularity.

The worship of the morning and of the evening commences and closes the concerns of the day, with an exactness of method, almost necessarily diffused through all its concerns. The regular returns of an employment, distinguished by its importance, communicate to the business connected with it, and to those who perform it, a character of regularity, unavoidably felt, and universally prevailing. The worship of God is always of the highest importance. The spirit of religion which dictates it is, in its nature, a spirit of order. Its returns take place every morning and every evening, after short intervals, and with exact regularity. Its influence is therefore necessarily diffused through the day, operates with an efficacy wholly peculiar, and controls with a superior authority both the mind and the life. No influence is equally felt, and no minds are equally prepared to be acted upon by influence. The method established is invested with unrivalled solemnity, enforced by the sanctity of religion, regarded with singular veneration, and submitted to without a question, even in thought. But method is the soul of all business, especially of complicated business, and peculiarly of business in which numbers are concerned. The method here produced is formed with perfect regularity, with supreme ease, without the consciousness of any difficulty, and without a thought of any resistance. Its nature is delightful; its efficacy is complete.

3. Family worship greatly strengthens parental government.

In the morning and evening devotion, the parent is invested with the solemn character of a priest of God, a minister of Christ. This character, eminently venerable in itself, adds in the highest degree to the personal venerableness and dignity of the parent. When we think of any object, whatever may be its nature, we necessarily associate with it those ideas which have customarily been connected with it in our minds. Children naturally regard a parent with reverence. But they cannot fail to reverence a respectable parent more, and a contemptible parent less, on account of his personal character. Whenever they have been accustomed to behold their parent daily sustaining the office of a minister of God, they necessarily associate with every idea which they form of his person and character this solemn and important apprehension. Every image of this venerable relation presented to their minds will include in it that of a divinely appointed guardian of their spiritual concerns; a guide to their duty, given them from above; a venerated and beloved intercessor for their salvation.

At the same time, the apparent habitual piety thus exhibited, will persuade the children that the authors of their being are sincere in all their religious professions, and in their various moral instructions to them; and that they are therefore, in the evangelical sense, virtuous. The evidence furnished in this manner may be, I acknowledge, and often is, overthrown by the sinful conduct even of praying parents. But I see not how this conviction can exist, where parents do not maintain the worship of God in their families. The want of such worship presents to the eye of children a palpable and indubitable inconsistency between their conduct and their professions, which no child can fail to see, or feel. An unhappy conviction will here unavoidably spring up in their minds, which cannot be stifled, and which will necessarily lessen the character of the parent, and the weight of his commands; a conviction that these persons, notwithstanding their venerable name, and their relation to himself, are unpossessed of that singleness of heart, and that integrity of profession, which he cannot avoid regarding as indispensable.

This union in their worship, presents also in a very forcible manner to the eyes of their offspring that peculiar union of views and affections, of interests and designs, with respect to the most important of all subjects, and by necessary consequence with respect to every other, without which, it is hardly necessary to observe, no parental government can be successful; and the happy influence of which is proverbially acknowledged wherever it is found.

It is unnecessary to insist here upon the interesting nature of these subjects. It is unnecessary to show how indispensable it is that children should entertain the most reverential thoughts concerning their parents, feel an undoubted conviction of their sincerity in all things, and realize in the strongest manner their cordial union in every valuable purpose. I shall only add therefore, that, from the numerous complaints so often made by parents concerning the difficulty of governing their children, it may fairly be inferred, that all persons sustaining this character, and possessed of common understanding, must consider so efficacious an addition to their authority as of inestimable value.

4. This worship, in an eminent degree, preserves and promotes religion in a family.

Whenever a family or an individual observes an exact regularity in performing the duties, and celebrating

the ordinances of the gospel, religion naturally becomes flourishing and vigorous in their hearts and in their lives. From family prayers both the parents and their offspring go, happily prepared, to the devotions of the closet; and from these devotions return, with the same becoming spirit, to the worship of the house: and from the retired and affectionate services of the week, they proceed with the best preparation to the more solemn duties of the sanctuary.

To children, and servants, especially, the worship of the house is of incalculable importance. The advantages of both these classes of mankind for understanding and practising the duties of religion, in many respects, are obviously few and limited; while their minds are imperfectly fitted to make the most advantageous use of such as they enjoy. To increase their number and their power, and certainly not to lessen either, must naturally be the wish of every benevolent man. Among these, the household worship is eminently important. Here, so soon as they are able to understand anything, they see religion appearing, daily, in one of its most affecting forms; celebrated by those whom nature teaches them most to respect and love; and occupied about interests which they easily understand, and deeply feel. Under the happy influence of these considerations, they grow speedily into fixed habits of thinking reverentially, and believing favourably concerning religion. The very aspect of the service teaches them, that it holds the uppermost place in the mind of a parent; while a conviction of this truth renders his opinions and conduct more venerable and affecting in those of the children. In these circumstances they naturally feel as if God was always to be worshipped, sought, honoured, and praised; and that his blessing was to be implored in every concern, temporal and spiritual.

A family, habituated in this manner, goes from the house to the church with the most profitable apprehensions concerning the ordinances of the sabbath. Religion, in the view of all its members, wears a solemnity and importance, ordinarily not otherwise attainable; and a frame of mind is acquired, most happily susceptible of the best impressions in the house of God.

Thus by prayer in the family, the religion of its members, if they are religious at all, is rendered more sincere, fervent, and efficacious. They are all better beings; better husbands and wives, better fathers and mothers; better children, brothers and sisters, better masters and servants, than they otherwise would, or in the ordinary course of providence could be. All the endearing interests of families, all the strong ties, the tender relations, and the vigorous affections which grow out of this happy union of mankind in these little societies of nature, are in this manner converted into most useful means of promoting the holiness of all.

At the same time, and from the same source, children and servants are furnished with the most powerful persuasives to become holy. Family worship is a primary branch of religious education, as that education is a primary source of religion to mankind; and one of the two great pillars, on which rests the salvation of men. Without family worship, religious education will always be essentially defective; and the instructions, reproofs, and persuasives, suspected, at least, if not accounted insincere.

But holiness is the great interest of all rational beings. In itself it is happiness of the noblest kind. It is also the parent of all other happiness which is solid and enduring. On family prayer then, God has founded a great and important part of all the real good of his rational creatures in the present world.

No man can be insensible to this consideration, who is not insensible both to the present and future welfare of his offspring. Almost all parents wish their children to be virtuous here, and happy hereafter; and this, even when themselves are vicious. Family prayer is one of the chief means, among those which are placed in the hands of parents, of rendering their children the subjects of holiness, and the heirs of eternal life. The parent therefore who does not make the utmost use of this mean, always in his power, so easily employed, so obviously fitted to produce the effect, and so fraught with invaluable consequences, ought never to pretend that he has any real love for his children.

When therefore he sees them sinful, thoughtless, and dissolute, let him, instead of complaining of the difficulty which he finds in governing and reforming his children; instead of quieting himself with the belief, that they are so peculiarly froward, as to frustrate every effort, and discourage every hope, take shame and confusion of face to himself for his own guilty negligence. Let him remember, that himself is eminently the cause of their profligacy and their ruin. Let him tremble, lest the 'fury' invoked by Jeremiah 'upon the families which called not upon the name of God,' should descend upon his own house, as the proper reward of his own irreligion.

5. Families have the best reason to expect the blessing of God in answer to their prayers.

All the promises, and other encouragements, given in the Scriptures to prayer, are addressed to individuals, families, and larger communities, alike. 'The effectual fervent prayer of the righteous' as truly 'availeth much' in the household, as in the closet, or the church. The house is the place to ask for family blessings. Here all concerned in them unite their humble and fervent requests for the merciful communication. Nations warrantably hope for national blessings, when they join in public supplications to God. The same observation is equally applicable to all inferior societies among mankind. The members of a household are here the persons interested, the persons who hope to receive, and therefore the persons who should ask. They are unitedly to receive; their supplications therefore ought to be united. Nor is there any case in which a gracious answer to prayer may more justly be expected.

Among the disadvantages, which flow from the neglect of family prayer, may be mentioned its unhappy influence.

1. On domestic order.

The mind naturally opposes order; and cannot be brought to observe or relish it, unless by influence long exerted, arguments often repeated, and habits slowly and firmly established. Where these advantages do not exist in some good degree, man more resembles a wild beast, than a rational being; is impatient of all regularity, and all restraint: and is precluded alike from all worth, usefulness, and enjoyment. But no means contribute so easily, so powerfully, or so happily, to the establishment of good order in the house, as family worship. I do not deny, that this benefit flows in various degrees from other sources. But even these are prevented of no small part of their influence, where this

species of prayer is neglected. They are pillars, standing on one side of the building; and incapable of supporting it; because those on the other side are taken away.

2. On parental government.

By this neglect all the advantages, already mentioned with reference to this subject, are lost; and all the disadvantages derived from the opposite conduct are incurred. An irreligious parent cannot fail to be seen by children in an unhappy light. Nor is this any fault in them. The most dutiful children will regard him in this manner. Irreligion is in its nature odious and contemptible; and cannot, unless under the influence of strong habitual prejudice, fail to be seen as it is. The conscience of every child will tell him this truth, however affectionate and reverential may be his disposition.

But the parent who is thus viewed by his children, and who gives them reason to view him thus, will find his instructions, reproofs, and punishments stripped of their principal efficacy. This efficacy is chiefly dependent on the reverence with which he is regarded; and this reverence, in a higher degree than he will probably be aware, is inseparably dependent on their apprehension, that he is a religious man. But the omission of family worship, will necessarily attach to this character, always in some degree, and usually not in a small one, the appearance of irreligion. Even in the most amiable, and in other respects unblamable men, it will prevent that full conviction in the minds of children of parental respectability, which it is so desirable that they should entertain. Even this fact will have a considerable and malignant influence upon the government and obedience of children.

3. On the religion of a family.

In a family where such worship does not exist, there is, it must be acknowledged, no appearance of religion. If the parent, a case which rarely happens, should be a religious man: he is not seen to possess this character. Should he appear to sustain it in some things, he is plainly discerned not to sustain it in others; and thus exhibits an inconsistent, vibratory course of life, on which the eye cannot rest with either conviction, or pleasure. Such a contradictory character can have little influence in doing good to the minds of children. Whatever desirable efficacy it may possess, when viewed on one side, it will impair and destroy when seen on the other.

All professions of religion, all pretensions to being religious, pass for nothing in the minds even of children, when unsupported by a religious life. But in the present case, the children behold their parent live in the continual neglect of what their consciences naturally declare to be one of the first duties of religion. Hence, whatever regard he may testify to this sacred subject; how numerous and how solemn soever his instructions to them may be, his power of making useful impressions on their minds, will in a great measure be prevented. Let it be remembered, that this prevention will be voluntary and wanton. No necessity can be pleaded for it, no advantage alleged, and no excuse found. How solemnly ought parents, who thus causelessly strip themselves, and rob their families of these inestimable benefits, to ponder this unhappy course, and to give themselves neither rest nor peace, until they shall have begun a final reformation!

The objections which, within my knowledge, have been alleged against family prayer, or rather which have been intended to excuse the neglect of this duty, are chiefly the following:—

1. The want of an express injunction of it in the Scriptures.

There is not, I acknowledge, any passage in the word of God, which in so many terms enjoins prayer in the family as a duty, in distinction from other modes of religious worship. Of him who thinks this fact an objection to the performance of this duty, I ask, will you neglect every Christian duty which you do not find enjoined in express terms? Are you prepared to go through life without dedicating your children to God in baptism? Will you refuse to observe the first day of the week as the Christian sabbath? Do you feel authorized to exclude the female sex from communion at the table of Christ? Yet in vain would you look for precepts enjoining these things in express terms.

But I deny the inference drawn by the objector from the silence of the Scriptures concerning this subject. Not only is the general principle, that nothing is our duty which is not expressly required in the Scriptures, false; but the application of it also, even if it were allowed to be true, is in the present case incapable of being justified. As the objection itself seems to be generally relied on more than any other, it will be useful to consider the subject of it at length, as it is exhibited in the Scriptures.

Prayer is nowhere in the Scriptures enjoined as a duty which was before unknown, and new at the time of the injunction, or as then to be begun. On the contrary, it is always spoken of as a duty already known, confessed, and practised. All the commands concerning it, respect either the times, manner, degree, spirit, universality, or some other circumstance, with which the performance ought to be connected. In no instance is the duty enjoined as original, or as the subject of a new institution.

The first mention made of this subject in the Scriptures, if we adopt the common translation is in Gen. iv. 26. Here, after the birth of Enos, it is said, that 'then began men to call on the name of the Lord;' that is, mankind then began publicly to worship God in a solemn, religious assembly. I suppose, however, that this translation is erroneous; and believe the words ought to be rendered, 'then began men to be called after the name of the Lord;' that is, the family of Seth began to be called 'the sons of God;' in opposition to the apostate family of Cain, who were styled 'the children of men.' See Gen. vi. 2.

According to this opinion, the first passage in which prayer is mentioned, is the prayer of Abraham for Ishmael, Gen. xvii. 18.

The second is his intercession for Sodom, Gen. xviii. 24.

The third is the direction, that Abraham should pray for Abimelech, after his offence in taking away Sarah. This may be considered as a command.

The fourth is the declaration, that 'Isaac went out into the field to pray in the evening,' Gen. xxiv. 63.

To these may be subjoined, as next in order of time, several instances in the book of Job.

'Yea, thou restrainest prayer before God,' Job. xv. 4.

'My prayer is pure,' Job xvi. 17.

'What profit shall we have, if we pray to him?' (words of the wicked,) Job xvi. 15.

'He shall pray to God, and he will be favourable to him,' Job xxxiii. 26.

'My servant Job shall pray for you:' (A command,) Job xlii. 8.

The first passage which can be fairly construed as an injunction of prayer in the general sense, is the exhortation of the psalmist, 'pray for the peace of Jerusalem:' that is, the church at large; Psal. cxxii. 6.

The second is in Jer. xxix. 7, 'Seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the Lord for it.'

In all these passages (the whole number of those in which the subject is mentioned, until after the period of the last which has been quoted), there are four instances in which prayer may be said to be commanded. In the two first, individuals are required to pray for individuals, on singular and peculiar occasions. In the third, saints are commanded, or rather exhorted, when assembled for public worship, to pray for the peace of the church. In the fourth, prayer is enjoined upon the Jewish captives, for the peace of the city whither they were to be carried. All the other passages are merely circumstantial accounts of the subject.

The first injunction of this duty, the terms of which regard it as in any sense generally obligatory, was given when the world was about three thousand years old; and the Jewish church about eight hundred. The second about two hundred years afterward.

From these facts I conclude, that it was not the intention of the Scriptures to institute this duty anew, in any passage whatever; there being no passage in which it is thus instituted. They took up this subject in the only way which was natural or proper. Men had always prayed from the beginning, and on all occasions confessed prayer to be a duty. Nothing more therefore was necessary, natural, or proper than to regulate it as a duty already begun, acknowledged, and practised by mankind. The state of facts demanded only, that the Scriptures should teach the manner, the times, the spirit, the constancy, and the universality of prayer. Nothing more was necessary; and this is done in the happiest and most effectual manner conceivable.

From this account of the manner in which prayer is treated in the Scriptures, it appears evident, at least to me, that original and particular directions concerning the three divisions of this duty customarily made in modern times, viz., secret, family, and public prayer ought never to have been expected. The circumstances in which the subject is taken up, and the manner in which it is exhibited, forbid every expectation of this nature. The question, whether prayer in secret, in the family, or in public, is a duty of man, was probably never asked, nor the obligation to perform it in either case doubted, during the whole period from the beginning of the world to the completion of the scriptural canon. Men always prayed on every solemn and proper occasion; in public, in private, and in secret. When one man had wants of his own, which he wished to spread before God, or blessings which he wished to ask, he performed this duty in secret. When two, twenty, a hundred, or a thousand, had common wants, and wished for common blessings, they united in their devotions; and thus formed a greater, or smaller, religious assembly. Thus families, thus churches, and thus nations met together for social prayer and praise, as well as for the purpose of offering social sacrifices.

To this origin are to be referred the family sacrifices of Elkanah and Jesse; and among the heathen nations the existence of household gods, and domestic libations. Such gods, derived from the same source, were in all probability the teraphim, which Rachel took from Laban. Abraham's family plainly worshipped together; so did the family of Job; so did Christ and his apostles; so did the apostles after his ascension. There were little religious assemblies also in the houses of Aquila and Nymphas; consisting probably of their own households, and of such others as were occasionally present. The whole congregation of Israel also assembled at the times specified in the law of Moses, from the days of that lawgiver to the latest period of their national existence. In the same manner worshipped the Christian churches at Jerusalem, Antioch, Rome, and other places.

The truth unquestionably is, prayer was instituted by divine appointment from the creation of man, and was traditionarily spread through all nations, as a duty evident to common sense, and acknowledged by the universal voice of mankind. The Gentiles practised it in every form, as did the patriarchs, Jews, and Christians. It was performed by one, few, or many; that is, by all who were interested in the wants felt, and the blessings supplicated; and secretly, privately, or publicly, just as the occasion required.

On this scheme is the text formed: 'pray always, with all prayer;' that is, pray on every proper occasion, with prayer suited to that occasion: if the occasion be your own, with the prayer suited to it; viz., secret prayer; if your own, and that of others also, be they few or many, with prayer suited to every such occasion.

Families are always together at least twice every day; and every day furnishes at least two occasions to all the members for communion in prayer. All the members therefore are required by this precept unitedly to spread their common wants before their Maker, and to ask for blessings in which they have a common interest.

In the same manner are both secret and public prayer enjoined. Neither of these duties is enjoined originally. All the precepts relating to them are employed in regulating the disposition with which, the manner in which, the times at which they are to be performed; or the modification, or other circumstances pertaining to the performance. Neither of these duties is anywhere in the Scriptures instituted anew; but both are always spoken of as already existing.

At the same time, several passages of Scripture, besides those already mentioned, refer to this subject in a manner too evident to leave a reasonable doubt, that family worship was their immediate object. When Joshua informs the children of Israel, that 'as for him and his house, they will serve the Lord;' he teaches us directly, that they united, and had customarily united, in this service. The Lord's prayer, after the manner of which we are directed by Christ to pray, is a social prayer, and seems plainly to have been intended, not for an individual, not for the closet, not for the church, but for the family and the fireside. In this prayer we are directed to ask for our daily bread,

on the day in which the prayer is used. As therefore we need, and are bound to ask for, our daily bread every day, it was plainly designed to be a daily prayer, and could not therefore be intended for the church; since mankind are not, and cannot be, present in the church every day. That it was not intended for the closet, is obvious from the fact, that it is addressed to God by more persons than one. That it may with propriety be used both in the church, and in the closet, as to its substance, I readily acknowledge: but it was, I think, plainly intended principally for the household. 'What a live coal,' says Dr Hunter beautifully, 'is applied to devotion, when the solitary my Father and my God, is changed into the social our Father, and our God! How delightful, let me add, how interesting, how animating, how encouraging to every amiable and virtuous emotion, for the pair, thus united, to be able to say, and actually to say, 'Behold, here are we, and the children whom thou hast given us!'

In Zechariah x. 10, the prophet informs, that, as a commencement of the millennial glory and happiness, the people of Israel shall worship God with peculiar earnestness and devotion, as it is expressed in the Hebrew, 'families by families.' In other words, he teaches us, that there shall be a wonderful prevalence of family worship. This also he exhibits as followed by remarkable testimonies of the divine favour, and as crowned with blessings new in their degree, and eminently glorious in their nature. It is difficult to conceive how God could testify in a more affecting manner the peculiar favour with which he regards family religion.

2. Diffidence and timidity are often alleged as serious objections to the performance of this duty.

This certainly is a very unhappy excuse for neglecting this duty, and very unfortunately alleged. I should feel myself bound to ask the author of it, Are you too diffident to perform your customary business? Are you too diffident to pursue customary amusements? Are you too diffident to commit sin? Does the bashfulness, which hinders you from family prayer, hinder you also from censuring, and laughing at others who practise it? Does it prevent you from using the language of profaneness? Why should you be timid only concerning the duties of religion? Is there anything in the nature of this subject, which can reasonably excite shame, or which can fairly excuse you in indulging it? Is it not true, that religion itself is the thing of which you are ashamed?

Remember, I beseech you, the awful declaration of Christ concerning this subject, 'Whosoever shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his glory.' Family worship, presented in the name of Christ, is as real a confession of this divine Person, as the participation of the sacramental supper.

3. Inability to pray, to devise proper thoughts, and to find proper expressions, is also no unfrequent objection against the performance of this duty.

To him, who alleges it, I would say, Have you not wants to be supplied, woes to be relieved, sins to be forgiven, and blessings to be supplicated? Can you not confess your sins, recite your wants and distresses, and mention the blessings which you need! Do you ordinarily find any difficulty in conferring with an earthly friend, or in soliciting aid from an earthly benefactor? Have you, when in earnest, ever found any serious embarrassment in telling others what you needed, or what you desired?

Wherever religion gains possession of the heart, regular experience proves, that all these blessings vanish. Nay, where serious conviction of guilt and danger is entertained by the mind, every man who is the subject of it forgets at once both his inability and bashfulness. Is it not evident, then, that the true reason why these things have such unhappy influence over you is, that you have no proper regard for religion, and no just sense either of your guilt, or your need of forgiveness?

At the same time, these difficulties are incomparably more formidable in prospect, than in reality. As you approach them, they vanish. Thousands and millions, originally neither wiser nor better than you, neither less timid nor less embarrassed, have got over them all. Certainly then you may achieve the same victory.

4. Multitudes allege also, as a serious objection to the performance of this duty, that they shall meet from their families nothing but opposition, censure, and ridicule.

To the author of this objection I shall answer, that it is usually, if not always, founded in mistake. Children are by nature prepared to reverence religion. The conscience of man, before it has been warped and overpowered by passion, prejudice, and sin, prompts him, of course, to regard this solemn and awful object only with emotions of respect. So obvious is this truth that it has often been acknowledged by infidels. Children therefore present no obstruction to the performance of this duty.

Whatever may be true of other countries, it is certainly true in this, that the number of women is extremely small who discourage, in any manner which may be styled direct, the ordinances of religion. From them, therefore, no hinderance will be presented to this duty, unless in cases of a very extraordinary nature. The difficulty then which is here alleged is, in almost every case, created solely by the man himself.

I would further ask this objector, Have you made the experiment? If not, where is your proof of its truth? If you have, have you attempted to remove it; and, like a wise and good man, determined to govern your family, and subdue so unreasonable a spirit?

This evil is oftener feared than felt. It is doubtful whether the man can be found, who, after a faithful trial, has been prevented by it from the regular worship of God in his family.

There is another objection which, though perhaps never alleged in form, has had no small weight in particular cases. It is this: The persons in question have long neglected it, and feel extreme reluctance to exhibit to their families their inconsistency of character. Concerning this objection I shall only observe, that it lies equally against all reformation; and, if yielded to, would effectually prevent every sinner from becoming a Christian.

Upon the whole, all those objections are either erroneous, or nugatory; either advised, or adopted, by a mind already willing to neglect the duty; and fastened upon, as the best means within its reach, to quiet its own conscience, and to justify its conduct in the sight of others.

SERMON CXLII.

THE MEANS OF GRACE.—ORDINARY MEANS OF GRACE.—THE USEFULNESS OF PRAYER TO COMMUNITIES.—ITS EFFICACY IN PROCURING BLESSINGS.—ENCOURAGEMENTS TO PRAYER.

It is good for me to draw near unto God.—PSAL. lxxiii. 28.

In the last Discourse, I considered the usefulness of prayer to families. The next thing proposed for discussion was its usefulness to communities.

It may be proper to remind my audience, that the usefulness of prayer was originally mentioned as twofold; consisting,

1. In its immediate influence on the suppliant; and,

2. Its efficacy in procuring blessings.

It may be proper further to observe, that, next to the *usefulness* of prayer, I proposed to examine the *encouragements* to this duty. These three subjects will be considered in the present Discourse.

In the text, the psalmist declares, that 'it was good for him to draw near to God.' If it was good, that is, profitable, for the psalmist to perform this duty; it must, without a question, be equally profitable to every other individual, who prays with the same spirit. There was nothing in the character of David which rendered prayer more beneficial to him, than it may be to others. He prayed, frequently, faithfully, and earnestly. All who pray in the same manner will find the same benefits. Nor will this usefulness be, in any degree, lessened by the communion of multitudes in this solemn service. On the contrary, it will be increased. The power of sympathy cannot fail to enhance the fervour of prayer, when offered up to God by numerous bodies of mankind. Whatever advantages then result from prayer, generally considered, whether offered up in the closet, or in the family, all these will result from the prayer of communities. Besides these, public prayer is accompanied by several advantages, in a great measure peculiar to itself. Particularly,

1. Public worship is in a prime degree constituted of public prayer.

The benefits of public worship I have considered at large in a former Discourse. All these benefits are not, I confess, derived solely from public prayer. They are, however, so connected with it, as, in a remoter sense, to be justly attributable to its proper influence. It seems scarcely probable, that, without public prayer, the other ordinances of public worship would be celebrated at all, or the sabbath itself at all observed. If we did not feel our dependence upon God for all good, and the absolute necessity of deriving, and asking it from him, there would, apparently, be no motives of sufficient efficacy to preserve public worship in the world. If public prayer were to cease, the sabbath, it is to be feared, would be forgotten and the sanctuary deserted.

These things being admitted, it follows, that all the blessings above mentioned are derived from public prayer; not, indeed, immediately, but ultimately. On their importance I need not now expatiate.

2. Public prayer, above all things, preserves alive a sense of national dependence on God.

The prime mean of preserving in the mind of an individual a sense of his own dependence on his Maker is, confessedly, prayer; as has been shown at large in a preceding Discourse. On families and on nations its influence is the same. No human emotion has a more advantageous influence on the mind than this. It affects men deeply in all stations and circumstances; and affects them all happily. It is a feeling perfectly just, and the only just feeling respecting the subject. It is a feeling of high importance; it is a feeling of the most useful tendency.

On rulers its influence is that, and only that, which they need to incline them to 'rule justly and in the fear of God.' A ruler who feels his dependence on his Maker will be just, of course; because he knows that God is just, and demands exact justice of him; because he knows that God is an eye-witness of all his conduct; and because he knows he must give an account of that conduct, and be rewarded according to its nature. If he does that which is right, he is assured of acceptance; if not, sin, he is equally assured, will lie at his door.

With such a sense of his dependence, a ruler will be merciful also; because he knows that God is merciful; that he loves those who are merciful, and requires mercy of all men, and peculiarly of rulers; because he knows, that 'mercy and truth uphold the throne of a king,' and the office of every other ruler; and because he knows that, in the end, he himself will infinitely need mercy; that God has pronounced the merciful, blessed, and promised that 'they shall obtain mercy,' and has awfully declared, that 'he shall have judgment without mercy, who showeth no mercy.'

With this sense of dependence also, a ruler will be humble. In the sight of God every man, however high his station, however extensive his power, is merely a 'worm of the dust, and crushed before the moth.' To a being so frail, so feeble, so dependent, pride cannot belong. His own littleness cannot fail to stare him in the face, whenever he remembers that everything which he has, or is, or will be, has been, and must be, solely derived from God; and for its continuance must depend solely on his pleasure. It is impossible for a mind fraught with these sentiments not to forget the haughtiness of power, and the splendour of station. At the same time, a ruler thus disposed will ever call to mind, that the poor in spirit, the meek, and the humble, are the only persons to whom good is promised in the gospel. 'The haughtiness of man,' it is there declared, 'shall be brought low, and the pride of all human glory shall be stained.' It is there declared, that every proud

man is 'an abomination to the Lord,' and shall be stubble for the final day.

It is scarcely necessary to observe, how important these attributes are to every ruler, or how beneficial they invariably prove to subjects. With such a character, the ruler cannot fail to be equitable in his laws and administrations, reasonable in his exaction and management of public property, clement in the distribution of justice, conscientious in the performance of every duty, and universally 'a minister of God for good' to his people.

A corresponding influence, equally happy, will the same sense of dependence have on those who are ruled. The same general conscientiousness will prevail in their minds; a scrupulous obedience to all laws, and lawful authority; and a steady attachment to the good order and peace secured by a wise administration.

Men formed to sentiments and habits of this nature are almost wholly a different kind of beings, from those to whom such sentiments are unknown. The motives by which these two classes of men are governed are totally diverse. Those of the former class are swayed by the fear and love of God, a disposition to obey him, the dictates of conscience, the hope of final approbation, and the dread of final ruin. Those of the latter class are influenced only by present, selfish considerations; and universally inquire how much they shall gain by submission to government, or how much they shall lose by revolt. The former obey rulers, are just and kind to each other, and perform all the duties owed to their fellow men, from conscience and principle. The latter, so far as they perform these duties at all, perform them from convenience only. On the former class, full reliance may be uniformly placed. To the latter no confidence can safely attach, except when their duty and their selfishness coincide. The obedience of the former is voluntary, that of the latter mercenary and venal.

Between rulers and subjects, governed by this sense of dependence on their Maker, arises of course an universal confidence. In a country thus influenced, the government can therefore easily, and will naturally, be mild and gentle. In every other, it must ultimately be a system of coercion, an administration of force. Society in such a country is established on sounder principles, is formed with juster views, and assumes a nobler character. It is the society of reason, of friendship, of virtue, of piety. Everything in the understanding, the heart, and the life, is more accordant with the commands of God, and therefore with truth and rectitude. The bonds which bind the society together are stronger, the trespasses against human happiness are fewer and less atrocious, the punishments inflicted by the magistrate are milder, and more rare; and the safety, comfort, and prosperity enjoyed are more absolute, uniform, and entire.

Of all these blessings, prayer, both public and private, is in such a sense the source, that without it they never existed in this corrupt world, and never will exist. Nor will their extent ever fail to be proportioned to the prevalence of this duty.

I have now finished the observations which I intended concerning the usefulness of prayer, by its proper influence on the suppliant. The next subject which demands our attention, according to the plan proposed, is its efficacy in procuring blessings from God.

Every considerate man will see infinite motives inviting him to pray, when he discerns that prayer will of course make him a wiser and better man, recommend him to the approbation and favour of God, and prepare him to receive blessings from his hands; when he perceives, that in praying he has become obedient to a high and solemn command, and more attempered to the spirit and character of heaven. These are the most estimable of all blessings; and as they are blessings of such import in themselves, and extend throughout eternity, their value, it is plain, cannot be measured.

But to many minds, the hope of being actually answered, and directly blessed with good of some extraneous kind, not inwrought in the present character, and distant from personal improvement and distant fruition, is usually a still more powerful persuasive to prayer. Some persons would be moved by this consideration, who would imperfectly feel the other, great and obvious as it appears. It is also a consideration founded in truth and reality; and for both reasons merits a place in this system of discourses.

If I am not deceived, the following observations will place it in a convincing light.

1. From the influence which prayer has naturally on the suppliant, there is no small probability, that God will grant blessings in answer to the petitions of those who faithfully perform this duty.

From the observations made in a former discourse concerning the influence which prayer has on the suppliant, it is evident that by the faithful performance of this duty, he is in all respects made a fitter recipient of blessings, than he can be otherwise. No rational doubt can be entertained, that God will bestow his blessings on such as are thus fitted to receive them, rather than on such as are not. It is evidently proper, that he should regard with compassion and kindness, and that he should communicate good to those who felt their dependence on him, acknowledged his sufficiency and disposition to supply their wants, humbly besought his mercy, realized their own undeserving character, and were grateful to him for every blessing which they received; when with equal propriety he would refuse the same blessings to men who felt no dependence but on themselves; who were too indifferent, too lazy, or too proud to ask; who questioned his right to require, and their own obligation to perform this duty; or who were too ungrateful to acknowledge their own indebtedness to him for the mercies which they receive, or his goodness in bestowing them. Were God to pursue any other course of administration, it is difficult to conceive how he could act as a moral governor, and secure, without coercion, the obedience of his subjects.

2. The instances are numerous, in which blessings are actually given in answer to prayer.

I am well aware of the objection which lies against this doctrine. It may, I am sensible, be always said in reply, that we know not whether the same blessings would not have descended, if prayers had not been offered up for them. Without the aid of revelation, I acknowledge, this cannot be known with certainty; since he who gives blessings, is the only being who originally knows the reason for which he gives them. Still, from the course of providence merely the probability is strong, that the blessings in question are given only in answer to prayer. In support of this assertion I observe, that blessings have in many instances been

given, after fervent prayers have ascended to God, when none but God could have contributed to their existence, when they were utterly unattainable by any human efforts; after all such efforts had been made without success; after all hope of obtaining them, except by prayer, had vanished; and when, 'Give us help from trouble, for vain is the help of man,' had become the only language seriously thought of by those who were concerned. Of such instances I could easily mention a considerable number. Many more, there is every reason to believe, are remarked by every observing, religious man. Many more still would, I doubt not, have been remarked, if religious men were more observant, and prayer were more continually and faithfully performed.

It will be said still, that even these blessings might have been given, had they not been supplicated. To this suggestion of possibility the proper answer is, 'They might not.' We know they were not given without prayer; and have not a shadow of reason to conclude that, if they had not been prayed for, they would ever have been given. The suggestion therefore is useless to the purpose for which it is made.

But the complete proof lies in this; that certain blessings are not given to men who do not pray, and those, blessings of the highest importance. Such are peace of conscience, 'joy in the Holy Ghost,' the 'hope' which 'maketh not ashamed,' increase of grace, and final perseverance in piety. These are the best of all blessings; and these are never found by those who do not pray. They are also blessings which none but God can give. As therefore they are given to those only who pray, so they are plainly given as an answer to prayer.

At the same time, I am bound, as an inhabitant of New England, solemnly to declare, that were there no other instances to be found in any other country, the blessings communicated to this would furnish ample satisfaction concerning this subject to every sober, much more to every pious man. Among these, the destruction of the French armament under the Duke D'Anville, in the year 1746, ought to be remembered with gratitude and admiration by every inhabitant of this country. This fleet consisted of forty ships of war; was destined for the destruction of New England; was of sufficient force to render that destruction, in the ordinary progress of things, certain; sailed from Chebucto, in Nova Scotia, for this purpose; and was entirely destroyed on the night following a general fast throughout New England, by a terrible tempest. Impious men, who 'regard not the work of the Lord, nor the operation of his hands,' and who for that reason are finally destroyed, may refuse to give God the glory of this most merciful interposition. But our ancestors had, and it is to be hoped their descendants ever will have, both piety and good sense sufficient to 'ascribe to Jehovah the greatness, and the power, and the victory, and the majesty;' and to 'bless the Lord God of Israel for ever and ever.'

3. The Scriptures put this subject out of doubt, by declaring directly, that blessings are given to mankind in answer to prayer.

To prevent any misapprehension concerning the views now to be exhibited of this subject, I observe, that I do not consider prayer as meriting in any case the blessings which are given to the suppliant. All blessings are bestowed upon man by the unmerited mercy of God; as is unanswerably evident from the fact, that men universally are sinners, and deserve of course nothing but punishment.

Nor do I intend, that the prayers of men change at all the views, dispositions, or purpose of God. 'The Father of lights, from whom cometh down every good and perfect gift, is without variableness, or shadow of turning.' No suppliant therefore is encouraged to pray by an expectation, or a possibility of producing the least change in the glorious object of his prayers.

But I intend, that prayer is in this sense the means of procuring blessings; viz., that without prayer the blessings would never be obtained.

In the immutable counsels of God it is established, that there shall be an inseparable connexion between humble, faithful prayer, and the blessings needed by the suppliant. Prayer is therefore as regularly, nay, more regularly, a cause of blessings, than ploughing and sowing, rain and sunshine, are of the harvest.

In support of this position, I shall now allege several passages of Scripture, sufficient in my view to establish the doctrine beyond reasonable debate.

The only condition upon which mankind receive any blessings, is given us by our Saviour in that remarkable passage: 'Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.' As asking is here made the condition of receiving; it is plain, that if we perform not this condition, we are assured that we shall not receive.

Again: 'Verily, verily I say unto you, that whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you,' John xvi. 23. Here the promise is unlimited, as to the good which is asked; and absolute, as to the certainty of receiving it. More cannot be expressed, nor desired. Again: 'Whatsoever we ask, we receive of him,' 1 John iii. 22. Quotations of this nature need not to be multiplied.

As proof that prayer is not offered up in vain, I allege Isa. xlv. 19: 'I said not to the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain.' In this passage God declares that it was no part of his declarations to Israel, that they sought him, or prayed to him in vain. Of consequence, it was no part of his counsels with respect to that people. But the counsels of God towards his people, in the different ages of the world, are in substance the same. It is now as true as it was when this prophecy was uttered, that they never seek, that they never pray, in vain.

The prevailing power of prayer is directly as well as strongly asserted by St James; 'The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.'

'Is any sick,' says the same apostle, 'let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him. And the prayer of faith shall save the sick; and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.'

To illustrate all these declarations, St James adduces the example of Elijah; who, although a frail man, like others, 'prayed earnestly, that it might not rain, and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit.' These great effects, it is to be remembered, were consequences of the prayers of a single man.

After the glorious prediction communicated to Ezekiel concerning the return of the Jews to their own land in the latter days, a prediction delivered in absolute terms by God himself, the same great being declares, 'Yet for all this will I be inquired of,' that is, prayed to, 'by the house of Israel to do it for them.' Absolute as the promises of these vast blessings were, still the blessings were to be given only in answer to the prayers of the recipients.

Among the divine promises concerning the millennial happiness, this is a happy one: 'My house shall be a house of prayer for all people.' From this great fact will arise inseparably the happiness itself. Without such an universal spirit of prayer as is here predicted, the peculiar blessings of that singular period would never exist; for then, as in all preceding periods, the only ordinance of God concerning this subject will be, 'Ask, and ye shall receive.'

From all these passages it is, I think, unanswerably evident, that prayer is entirely efficacious to procure blessings from God.

It ought here to be further observed, that we are not to expect anything in answer to our prayers which is not agreeable to the will of God. Nor ought we to wish anything which is not of this nature to be given to us; for nothing else will prove a blessing. Whatever is right and proper to be done, is a part of the divine will.

Nor ought we to expect the very same kinds or measures of good for which we pray. Often these would not be good for us; or if good for us at all, they would not be so at the times, and in the manner in which we ask for them. Good will always be given in answer to our prayers; but it will be real good, such as God sees to be good, and not such as we erroneously may imagine to be of this nature.

REMARKS.

1. All persons have abundant encouragement to pray to God.

This was originally proposed as a distinct head of discourse. I have chosen to introduce it in this form, because it grows so naturally out of the two preceding heads; and because it has of necessity been anticipated in the consideration of them. The usefulness of prayer by its own proper influence, and by its efficacy in procuring blessings from God, are prime encouragements to the performance of this duty.

The certain prospect of becoming better, wiser, more lovely in the sight of God, and more fitted to receive blessings from his hands, and of actually gaining the blessings by known, limited, and easy efforts, is a combination of the highest and noblest motives which can influence a rational being. To every suppliant these motives are continually presented. They are presented by God himself; they are established by his undeceiving declarations; they are obvious to our own reason; they are therefore real, and ought plainly to have their full influence on every reasoning mind. The good in view is the greatest good. Nay, there is no other real good. It is good in certain reversion for every suppliant.

In support of this scheme may be alleged, as full evidence, the numerous examples in which these great consequences of prayer have actually existed; examples faithfully recorded in the Scriptures for our encouragement in this duty.

Abimelech received an entire deliverance from the distresses in which his family were involved, as an answer to the prayer of Abraham.

As an answer to the prayers of Abraham, also, God assured him, that, if ten righteous men should be found in the cities of the plain, he would spare those cities, and not consign them to the punishment which their sins had so eminently deserved.

In answer to the prayer of Job, God forgave the sin and folly of his three friends, in not speaking of him the thing which was right.

At the prayer of Moses, the Israelites were not only delivered from many other evils, but preserved also from utter extinction.

At the prayer of Gideon, the dew fell on the ground, and not on the fleece; and again on the fleece, and not on the ground; that he might know the will of God, and be satisfied that he acted under a divine commission.

At the prayer of Samuel, the Lord thundered on the army of the Philistines, and wrought a great salvation for Israel.

At the prayer of Hezekiah, his life was lengthened fifteen years.

In answer to the prayer of Daniel, Gabriel was sent from the highest heavens, to explain the wonderful and distressing vision, disclosed to him concerning future times.

As an answer to the prayers of Cornelius, an angel was sent to direct him to send for Peter, who should 'teach him words, whereby he, and all his house, should be saved.'

The apostles lived on prayer; and received continually many great and wonderful blessings, as immediate answers to their prayers.

To these, and other examples of the same nature recorded in the Scriptures, may be added the commands, parables, and promises, which everywhere enjoin, explain, and enforce this great duty.

To all these things may also be added the perfect example of the Lord Jesus Christ, 'who in the days of his flesh offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto him that was able to save him from death; and was heard in that he feared:' or, as the Greek may well be rendered, 'on account of his piety.' This example unites all motives. It is a perfect pattern to us, as being perfectly conformed to the will of God. It is a clear proof, that no being in a dependent state, however excellent, is exempted from this duty, or from the universal law of God's providence, which connects blessings only with prayer. If God would have blessed any being without prayer, he certainly would have blessed Christ. As certainly, Christ, had such been the fact, would not have prayed, since his prayers in that case would have been a vain and useless service. The will of his Father he certainly knew; and prayed only because it was agreeable to his will. Accordingly, his prayers were heard, and always heard. This example also has the entire force of a command, and is invested with divine authority. If, then, we obey and follow him in this great duty, we shall do that which is right in the sight of God, as he did; shall be accepted for his sake, as he was accepted, and shall be rewarded and blessed as he was.

In these things, thus combined, there is plainly all possible encouragement to pray, and to 'continue stead-

fast in prayer.' 'The Father of all mercies' regards us in this situation as his children; prepares us by this duty most happily to realize his character as 'the giver of every good and perfect gift;' and fits us in the best manner also to receive his blessings, when they are bestowed. He forms us to the spirit and conduct of children; and is himself ready to give good things of all kinds to us, when we thus ask him. In our petitions we learn the nature and value of his blessings, our own absolute need of them, and his unspeakable goodness in furnishing them for our enjoyment. We learn to depend on him, to trust in him, and to exercise towards him unceasing love, reverence, gratitude, and praise. At the same time we are assured, that we shall never ask in vain.

2. From these considerations I urge, anew, the folly and sin of those who neglect prayer.

Prayer is the avenue to all good, temporal and eternal, and to us the only avenue. He who will not pray, therefore, shuts up the only passage which has been opened for him by God to the attainment of happiness. It may be alleged here, but it will be alleged to no purpose, that multitudes who do not pray are as prosperous as those who do. An ox is pampered, but it is only for the slaughter. The enjoyments of this life are never blessings to him that does not pray. If they are merely means of luxury, hardness of heart, and grossness of life, he who enjoys them will only 'treasure up wrath against the day of wrath.' On the part of God, indeed, they are always kindly given; but on the part of the recipient, they are regularly abused, by being made incentives to sin. They are therefore curses to him by his own perversion; and are styled blessings, only by an abuse of language.

Without prayer there is no virtue, no piety, no obedience to God. The commencement of piety in Saul of Tarsus was thus announced by the Holy Ghost, 'Behold he prayeth?' But without piety there is no blessing reserved for man. He may indeed be rich, and great, and luxurious; 'may be clothed in purple and fine linen; and may fare sumptuously every day.' Such was the condition of the rich man in the parable. But at the end of a short life, 'he lifted up his eyes in hell, being in torment;' and found, that he had received all his good things in this life.

What excuse then can be devised for the neglect of prayer? Is it a hard service? Be it so. Is not the reward sufficiently great to retribute the toil? Good in hand, of every kind which is real and desirable, and good to come, inestimable and endless, are certainly deserving of any labour or suffering which men can undergo. However severe may be the labour of performing the duty, the compensation is certainly ample and complete.

But is it more severe than the daily toil of laborious men? This you yourselves see cheerfully undergone, merely for the common gains of avarice, by millions who do not and cannot know, that those gains will be good at all. To every sincere suppliant 'all things work together for good.' How vast the difference in these rewards!

Is it harder than profane swearing and cursing? In them, as in prayer, all the labour which exists, exists only in the utterance of words: and multitudes in these evil practices expend much more time and breath than is demanded in prayer. All these also 'labour in vain, and spend their strength for nought.' Nay, what is infinitely worse, they labour only to be 'poor and wretched, and miserable.'

But is it hard at all? Is it a hard condition, for the attainment of all good, to ask it; and, above all things, to ask it of the infinitely blessed and bountiful God?

It has been, and undoubtedly will be again, objected by multitudes, some of them probably in this audience, that they cannot pray. Let me ask those who make this objection, Have you tried?—tried, I mean, in earnest. You will be obliged to answer in the negative. You have never seriously attempted to perform this duty. Whence then do you know that you cannot pray? How do you know that God will not willingly do for you whatever you find it impossible or difficult to do for yourselves? He is infinitely willing to give, in answer to your prayers. Whence have you learned, that he is not equally willing to befriend you in your attempts to pray?

The truth is, you do not choose to make such attempts. You have wants endlessly numerous, and incalculably important. They might be supplied; but you will not ask God to supply them. You have souls of infinite value. They might be saved; but you will not ask God to save them. You are sinners, and exposed to perdition. From these tremendous evils you might be delivered; but will not ask God to deliver you. You are made candidates for heaven; and might be received into that glorious world of everlasting joy. Rather than pray, you choose to perish.

All blessings are opened for your enjoyment. The condition, on which you may obtain them all, is to ask. No sacrifice, expense, or loss, is demanded of you. None will be incurred. On the contrary, praying is in itself unspeakable gain, and solid pleasure; higher, more rational, more unmingled pleasure, than you ever found, or ever will find in sin. The condition therefore is a gainful condition of a reward without bounds, and without end. What then is your conduct, but supreme and unmingled folly?

'Fools,' saith Solomon, 'despise wisdom and instruction, and hate knowledge.' This wisdom, of supreme import, has been taught to you a thousand times. Hitherto you have despised and hated it. The evil of neglecting prayer has been often urged on you; but hitherto it has been urged in vain. Hitherto you have deceived yourselves with the folly of believing that God will bless you, while you refuse to pray to him; in other words, that he will bless you in direct contradiction to his own express declarations. What specimen of folly can be greater? That you should be thus deceived with your present character is not strange; since the Scriptures inform us, that it is the nature of folly to be deceitful. That you should think yourselves right in these views, and in the conduct which grows out of them, is as little strange; for persons of this character, according to the same divine testimony, usually think themselves right. But let me remind you from the same sacred book, that 'fools die for want of wisdom.' In your present course, you are in the road to death. For want of wisdom only, do you continue in it a single day. Should the same folly be prolonged, the period is not distant when you will die for ever

SERMON CXLIII.

THE MEANS OF GRACE.—ORDINARY MEANS OF GRACE.—THE OBJECTIONS TO PRAYER CONSIDERED.

What is the Almighty, that we should serve him; and what profit shall we have, if we pray unto him?—Job xxi. 15.

The five first subjects, originally proposed as themes of discourse concerning the duty of prayer, have been examined at length in the four preceding Sermons. The sixth, viz., *objections* against this duty, will now occupy our attention.

In the text, a general objection is made against all obedience to God, and is professedly founded on his character. 'What is the Almighty, that we should serve him?'—There is nothing in the character of God, nor in our relation to him, which requires our obedience to his will. We are neither obliged by any duty, nor drawn by any interest, to his service. This impious sentiment is exhibited in the context as the sentiment of abandoned men only; and is plainly of a nature too impious to be uttered by any other. The following one, proceeding from the same mouth also, is with perfect propriety exhibited to us as resulting from the same spirit. Yet there are multitudes, who are far from deserving the character of profligacy, who yet say concerning God, 'What profit shall we have, if we pray to him?' This objection, it will be observed, is an universal one. 'What profit shall we have?'—that is, we shall not be profited at all, either in our minds, or in our circumstances. We shall not be profited by the proper influence of prayer on ourselves, nor by its efficacy in procuring blessings from God. All objections against prayer may be justly regarded as being summed up in this single question.

It cannot, however, be expected, that on this occasion every objection which an irreligious mind can devise against this duty, will be taken up, and refuted. Several such objections have been anticipated in the preceding Discourses. Of such as remain, I shall examine those only which may be supposed to have some real weight in the mind of a sober man. These, so far as I recollect them, respect the predetermination, immutability, knowledge, and wisdom of God; and, the supposed vanity and presumption of prayer.

I shall consider them in their order.

The two first of these subjects are commonly united in the scheme of the objector; and may therefore with propriety be here considered together. If God be a changeable being, although he may have predetermined all things, yet he may be supposed to alter his plans, in consequence of requests presented to him by his intelligent creatures; and may therefore be addressed as a changeable being. On the other hand, if God be immutable, and yet have formed no system of things in his own mind, he may perhaps constitute his designs, from time to time; with some degree of conformity to their supplications.

The first objection which I shall mention, and which is derived from these sources, is usually stated in terms like the following:—

'Prayer is fruitless, or, in the language of the text, unprofitable, because all things are determined from everlasting by an immutable God, and will therefore take place according to his determination. Hence our prayers, making no alteration in anything, must be an idle, perhaps an impious service: idle, because they can effect nothing; impious, because they are expressions of our desires for blessings, which God has not chosen to give. If God has determined to give us these blessings, we shall receive them without prayer. If he has determined not to give them, we shall not receive them, however fervently we may pray. So far then as we pray for things which God has determined to give, our prayers are useless. So far as we pray for those which he has determined not to give, our prayers are directly opposed to his pleasure.'

I have endeavoured to state this objection at full length, because I wish to present it with all the force which it has, or can have, in the mind of the objector. To the several things contained in it, I answer,

1. There cannot possibly be any impiety in prayer, offered up in the manner stated in these Discourses.

The original definition which I gave of prayer, and with which all the subsequent accounts of it have accorded, is that of the Westminster Assembly of Divines; That 'prayer is an offering up of our desires to God for things agreeable to his will.' To desire that, and that only, which is agreeable to the will of God, cannot be impious. Evangelical prayer supposes, in its very nature, that we ask either for those things for which the Scriptures have expressly permitted us to pray; or for those which we professedly submit to his will in our petitions. In this conduct, impiety cannot exist. On the contrary, no human being was ever the subject of piety who did not pursue this conduct.

The objection is now reduced to a single article; viz., The fruitlessness of prayer; or its inefficacy to change the purposes of God, and therefore to procure blessings. To this I answer,

2. This objection lies, with exactly the same force, against every other human effort, as against prayer.

If the predetermination and immutability of God render it improper for men to pray, because their prayers cannot change his purposes; then the same things must render it equally improper for men to plough, sow, reap, or make any other effort for any end whatever. All these, without the divine blessing will be in vain; and can no more change the purpose of God than prayer. With just the same propriety and force may the farmer say, 'It is in vain for me to plough, or sow, or reap: since, if God has determined to give me a crop, I shall have it without either of these efforts. On the contrary, if he has determined not to give me a crop, I shall not have it, however faithfully I

may labour My ploughing, sowing, and reaping, therefore, must be all idle, because they will all be fruitless.'

In the same manner may the student say, 'If God has determined that I should possess learning, I shall possess it without study; but if he has determined that I shall not possess learning, I shall not acquire it, although I study with ever so much diligence.'

In the same manner may every man say concerning his exertions.

This reasoning, were we governed by it, would plainly put an end to all human exertions at once; and we should neither plough, nor build, nor collect food, or fuel; nor teach, nor study, nor make any other attempt to promote the good, either of ourselves or others. Conclusions, so evidently false as these, and so fraught with necessary mischief, cannot flow from sound principles. Safely, therefore, may we pronounce the proofs by which they are professedly established, to be hollow and deceitful.

3. There is a radical and gross error in this objection; viz., that God has predetermined the end, and not the means.

This opinion is equally contradictory to the Scriptures, and to common sense. St Paul, a little before his shipwreck, was informed by an angel, that God had 'given him all them that sailed with him.' Yet afterward, when the 'shipmen were about to flee out of the ship; when they had let down the boat into the sea; Paul said to the centurion, and to the soldiers, Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved;' Acts xxvii. 22, 30, 31. The end here determined was the preservation of the ship's company. The means indispensable to this end, were the continuance of the seamen in the ship, and their exertions to bring it to land. These were predetermined equally with the end, and were absolutely necessary to its existence. Equally necessary are ploughing and sowing, rain and sunshine, to the existence of a crop; studying to the acquisition of knowledge; and all other efforts of men, to the purposes which they actually accomplish. All these are equally predetermined with the ends accomplished, and equally parts of the divine system.

Another error is involved also in the same objection; viz., that God bestows blessings upon mankind which are not given in answer to prayer. Of such a determination there is not, and there cannot be any evidence. The Scriptures decisively teach us, that the only condition of receiving is asking. Prayer, therefore, as means to the end, that is, the reception of blessings, is itself a part, and an inseparable part, of the predetermined plan of God. When any man considers how useful prayer is to form us into a fitness for the reception of blessings, he will easily discern one great and solid reason of this divine constitution of things.

There is no moral subject concerning which mankind appear to have fallen into more and greater errors than concerning this. The character of God, with respect to both these subjects, is undoubtedly far removed, in many particulars, above our comprehension. In several others, it seems to be capable of a satisfactory illustration to a sober mind, not unwilling to be satisfied. Nothing is more certain, than that, if God ever was, is, or will be, the subject of any determinations, he must have formed them from eternity. In him 'there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.' Of course, he can never be the subject of any new determinations. He can have no new ideas, thoughts, or views. 'All his works were known to him from the beginning.' This is certain even to reason; for all his works were contrived by him, and therefore were unquestionably known. Hence, no being, and no event, can be anything but what he contrived and knew. As he is perfectly the same; as the being and the event in each case is also invariably the same as when originally contemplated by him; whatever choice or preference he originally experienced, must for ever be his invariable choice or preference. If therefore he did not originally determine, choose, or prefer, he certainly never will.

Farther: the existence of God is one unvarying present existence; and his duration an eternal now, without part or future; nearer in its nature to one indivisible moment of our existence, than to anything else which we experience or know. He literally 'inhabits eternity,' or fills it all at once; just as he fills immensity at once, and not successively its several parts. When therefore we say, that God predetermined all things, it is as true, in the metaphysical sense, that he determines them after, as before their existence. In strict truth, there is no proper comparison between our successive being, and the unchanging existence of God. One thing only is present to us at any present time. Everything and every time is absolutely present to God. His creation and providence, together with all their beings and events, are always before his view, as a picture, containing many images, is present before ours.

Every part of God's predetermination is founded on exactly the same reasons with those on which the same determination would be founded, if all beings and events had already existed; and God, in possession of the same omniscience, should then survey them with a perfect discernment of their natures and relations, form his own determinations concerning them and pronounce, with respect to every one, his unerring judgment. Of course, his predeterminations are exactly the same with such determinations as would exist in his mind, after everything had taken place; and are all exactly just and right; such as perfect wisdom and goodness, understanding them entirely, would dictate and approve.

Nor is the immutability of God at all more liable to objections. God from everlasting was exactly what all beings ought to wish him to be; possessed of every excellence in an infinite degree, and the subject of no imperfection, either natural or moral. He knows, and ever knew, all things, both actual and possible. He can do all things: and is infinitely disposed to do everything, and that only, which is absolutely right and good. Consequently, there is nothing, there never has been, there never will be, anything which, considered merely as a work of God, is not exactly right. In that vast kingdom, which fills immensity and eternity, there will never exist a single being or event, which perfect wisdom and goodness could wish not to have existed.

Who can rationally desire a change in such a character as this? What would the change be? A change from perfection to imperfection; from knowledge to ignorance; from truth to falsehood; from justice to injustice; from kindness to cruelty; from universal excellence to universal turpitude. Perfection can be

changed into nothing but imperfection. The immutability of God, is indispensable to the glory of his character, and is itself a part of his perfection; for no mutable being can be perfect in the same sense with one who is immutable. Equally is it the corner-stone on which the universe rests. Were the support taken away, the immense fabric would tumble into ruin. To his creatures there would be neither safety nor hope; but immensity and eternity would be filled with suspense, terror, and anguish.

Particularly, there would not, in this case, be the least foundation for encouragement in prayer. If all the determinations of God were not settled in heaven, who could divine what new decisions would exist; what new laws; what new systems of administration? Prayer, commanded to-day, might be forbidden to-morrow. Prayer, acceptable to him to-day, might be hateful to him to-morrow. The things for which we now ask with certain assurance of being heard, might speedily be denied. He who at one season did his duty, might at another, by the very same conduct, be only exposed to punishment. Nothing in this case could be known by creatures to be permanently agreeable to his will, and finally secure of a reward. The government of the universe would be a government of fickleness and caprice; and consequently more or less, and no finite being can conjecture how far, a government of oppression and cruelty. Think what would be the exertions and effects of infinite knowledge and power, wielding the sceptre of the universe under the control of so dangerous a disposition. For aught that can be foreseen, the time might speedily, as well as easily arrive, when, under such a dominion, this vast empire might, in a moment of change, be reduced to a desert of ravage and ruin.

As things are actually ordered by God, every part of the system is established on immovable foundations. Every intelligent creature knows therefore, or may know, on what he is absolutely to depend. If he is obedient, his obedience will always be acceptable to his Maker. The law, once established, will never be changed. 'Sooner shall heaven and earth pass away, than one jot or tittle of it shall pass, until all be fulfilled.' Every declaration of God is true; every promise will be exactly accomplished. Whatever sins or backslidings the children of God may have committed, his promise assures them of everlasting life. Whatever gross guilt, or impious rebellion, a Christian may have been the subject of, if they do not involve the sin against the Holy Ghost, still, if he exercises repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ, he will be received in the end.

Of this unchangeable system, one great and glorious part is, that every humble, faithful prayer shall be certainly heard, accepted, and answered. Not one ever was, or ever will be, offered up in vain. This scheme of things contains every possible encouragement to pray, and displays the absolute necessity, as well as the superior usefulness and efficacy of prayer. Any other scheme would exceedingly lessen, or entirely destroy, both the encouragement and the usefulness of prayer.

So far then are the predetermination and immutability of God from preventing and discouraging prayer, that they hold out infinitely more and greater inducements to this duty than can be furnished in any other manner.

I have dwelt the longer, and the more particularly, upon this objection, because I consider it as the fundamental one, and because I believe it to be in some minds regarded as possessing real weight, and attended by real difficulties.

2. It is also objected, that it is useless and impertinent, to declare our wants to an omniscient Being, because he knows them already.

That God knows all our wants, that he knows them more perfectly than ourselves, and that he thus knew them from eternity, will, it is presumed, be universally admitted here. This knowledge must be attributed to God by every man who believes the Scriptures, or considers him as the author of all things. To give him therefore any information concerning ourselves, with a supposition that he needs thus to be informed, can never be the intention of a Christian suppliant, nor any part of a Christian prayer.

The true end of reciting our wants before God is, doubtless, far distant from anything that is even glanced at in the objection. Unquestionably, it is the same end with that which we proposed in confessing our sins; viz., the production of proper views in our own minds. It is to awaken in ourselves a strong sense of our feebleness, our guilt, our dependence on God for all good, and our indebtedness to him for every blessing which we receive. By such views deeply impressed, we are more happily prepared for the reception of blessings than we otherwise can be. We are rendered humble, submissive, affected with the greatness of our necessities, the importance of those supplies which we ask, and the glory of that goodness by which such wants of such beings are supplied. This state of mind is the happiest of all dispositions for the reception of mercies, and is inwrought effectually in us only by prayer. Unless man, therefore, has an interest in not acquiring this disposition, the objection is groundless.

3. It is farther objected, that, as God is infinitely wise and good, whether we consider him as having predetermined all things or not, his wisdom and goodness will prompt him to give us whatever is proper to be given, and to withhold whatever is not, equally with, and without our prayers. Our prayers, therefore, must at the best be useless. 'We cannot,' says the objector, 'prevent, change, or influence the dictates of infinite wisdom and goodness by our prayers. If we could, it would be wrong and undesirable, and ought plainly neither to be done nor wished.'

All this is readily admitted; and, were the design or the nature of prayer such as is here supposed, the impropriety of praying would, I presume, be also admitted. Certainly, it could never be a proper design in any creature, to attempt a change in the dictates of infinite wisdom and goodness.

But it may be very proper for infinite wisdom to bestow on an humble suppliant, that which it would very properly withhold from him who refuses to pray. The question is not here concerning what infinite wisdom will, or will not, give; but concerning the persons to whom it will give. Infinite wisdom may bestow all its favours on those who are willing to ask for them; and not on those who are unwilling: on those who feel their dependence upon himself; not on those who say in their conduct, 'What is the Almighty, that we should serve him, and what profit shall we have, if we pray unto him?' on those who cheerfully and implicitly subject

themselves to its dictates; not on those who speculate ingeniously concerning them.

Finally: Infinite wisdom may with propriety communicate its blessings to those who, by such means as are in their power, become prepared to receive them with a spirit of gratitude, reverence, and obedience; and may with equal propriety withhold them at the same time from such as are too proud, too indolent, too indifferent, or too worldly-minded to regard them with serious attention, or to receive them with a grateful or reverential spirit. Until all this can be disproved, the objection will stand for nothing. But this can never be disproved. Reason declares it all as her own decision; and revelation places it beyond a cavil or a doubt. In the Scriptures we are taught expressly, that such is the real system of infinite wisdom and goodness; and that blessings actually descend only as answers to prayer.

4. It is farther objected, that to suppose our prayers sufficiently efficacious to procure blessings for ourselves, and especially for others, indicates vanity and presumption.

If we thought our prayers sufficiently meritorious in the sight of God, to deserve such blessings as are bestowed either on ourselves, or on others, there would be some ground for this objection. But when we pray, as an act of obedience to his will, it is obviously unfounded. There can be neither presumption nor vanity in believing that God is pleased with obedience, and that he will bless those who obey. God has commanded all men to pray to him. There is no presumption in believing this precept. He has declared, that faithful prayer is pleasing to him. There is no presumption in believing his declaration. He has promised to bless those who thus pray. Without presumption we may rely on his promise.

He has commanded us to pray for all men; and has promised to answer such prayers, when faithfully presented. In the Scriptures he has recorded numerous instances, in which he has actually answered such prayers, by giving blessings to those for whom they were asked. To obey this command, to confide in this promise, and to receive this testimony, is neither vain nor presumptuous. The contrary conduct is chargeable with this criminality; for the objector supposes, that God will give him blessings in a way directly opposed to that in which alone he has encouraged men to expect them.

But farther: does not God make one man the instrument of blessings to another—to many—to thousands—to millions; and that in an immense variety of ways? How does it appear that the heart, the desires, the supplications of a good man, may not be the means of such blessings, as truly, as properly, and as often as his voice or his hands? All these blessings come from God. Will not he, who 'seeth not as man seeth, but looketh on the heart,' as willingly regard the virtuous efforts of which he is there a witness, as those of the hands, or the tongue? How few blessings do we enjoy, in which others have not been more or less instrumental? For our daily food and raiment, nay, for our very being, we are indebted to those who have lived in every age of time. In the same manner we are now reaping the benefits flowing from the prayers of good men in all past ages. The salvation of every Christian, is a direct answer to the prayer of Christ; John xvii. 21, 22.

These are all the material objections usually made against prayer, as a duty of man; I mean, all which are customarily exhibited as material by the objectors themselves. If the observations which have here been made in answer to them, have the same weight in the minds of others, as in my own, it will be seen that they have no solid basis. Notwithstanding the speciousness which, in the eyes of some individuals, they have seemed to wear, the encouragements to this duty mentioned in these Discourses stand altogether unassailed, and possessed of their whole strength. The objectors have conceived erroneously both of the nature and design of prayer, and misapprehended the proper influence of the several things from which they derive their supposed difficulties.

Let every one of my audience then go fearlessly and constantly to the duty of prayer; and be perfectly assured that, if he prays faithfully, he will not pray in vain. Let him remember, that prayer is a duty instituted by God; that he cannot but honour his own institution; and that he cannot but be pleased with those by whom it is obeyed. To pray is to obey God, to please him, to honour him. Those 'who honour him he will honour; while those who despise him shall be lightly esteemed.' He has set before you every motive to induce you to perform this duty; commands, examples, particularly that of Christ, promises, instances of the actual and wonderful efficacy of prayer, and the clearest testimonies of his own approbation. At the same time, while he has taught you that no blessing is given but in answer to prayer, he has assured you also that all good, temporal and eternal, descends as its proper answer from heaven. Nothing has he left untried to persuade you to this duty.

With his good pleasure all your own interests conspire in urging you to pray. Prayer will make you daily better, wiser, and lovelier in his sight, by cherishing in you those views and emotions which constitute the character of a good man. It will soothe every tumult of your bosoms, allay your fears, comfort your sorrows, invigorate your hopes, give you peace in hand, and anticipate glory to come. It will restrain you from sin, strengthen you against temptation, recall you from wandering, give life and serenity to your consciences, furnish you with clearer views concerning your duty, alarm you concerning your danger, and inspire you with ardour, confidence, and delight, in the Christian course.

In prayer God will meet you, and commune with you face to face, as a man with his friend. He will 'lift upon you the light of his reconciled countenance;' will 'put joy and gladness in your hearts;' and will awaken in you the spirit of 'thanksgiving and the voice of melody.' 'When you pass through the waters he will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you; when you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle on you: for he is the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Saviour.'—'In an acceptable time he will hear you, and in a day of salvation will he help you.'—'The mountains will indeed depart, and the hills be removed; but' (if you seek him faithfully) 'his kindness shall not depart from you, nor his covenant of peace be removed.'—'Seek, then, the Lord, while he may be found: call ye upon him, while he is near.'—'When you call he will answer; and when you cry unto him, he will say, Here I am.'

SERMON CXLIV.

THE MEANS OF GRACE.—ORDINARY MEANS OF GRACE.—FORMS OF PRAYER.

After this manner, therefore, pray ye. Our Father, which art in heaven: hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.—Matt. vi. 9—13.

In the preceding Discourse I finished the observations which I thought it necessary to make concerning the nature and seasons of prayer; the obligations to pray; the usefulness of prayer; the encouragements to it; and the objections against it.

The next subject, which claims our attention in a System of Theology, is *forms of prayer.*

In the first verse of the text, our Saviour directs us to pray 'after the manner' begun in that verse, and continued through those which follow. There are two modes in which this direction may be understood. The first is, that this is a form of prayer prescribed to us; a form which therefore we are required to use, when we approach to God in this solemn service. Hence it has been considered as a strong proof that we are required to use a form of prayer, at least in the public worship of God, if not in that which is private. Even the candid and enlightened Paley says, 'The Lord's prayer is a precedent, as well as a pattern for forms of prayer. Our Lord appears, if not to have prescribed, at least to have authorized, the use of fixed forms, when he complied with the request of a disciple, who said unto him, 'Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples,' Luke xi. 1.

The other mode of construing this direction is this: Christ is supposed to have taught here those subjects of prayer which on all occasions are its proper subjects; the spirit with which we are to pray, and the simplicity of style and manner with which our thoughts are to be clothed, when we are employed in this duty.

That our Saviour is not here to be considered as prescribing a form of prayer to his followers, seems not improbable from a comparison of the text with the context. In the context he directs us 'not to do our alms before men, but in secret; when we pray, to enter into our closets; when we fast, not to be of a sad countenance, that we may not appear unto men to fast; and not to lay up for ourselves treasures upon earth.' None of these passages is, I apprehend, to be understood in the absolute, or literal sense. We may give alms before others. It is our duty to give bread to a starving man in the sight of our families. Nay, it is often our duty to contribute publicly to public charities. We are warranted and required to pray and to fast before others; and commanded to 'provide for our own, especially for those of our own households.' As none of these assertions will be disputed, they demand no proof. I shall only observe, therefore, that the object of our Saviour in these precepts was to forbid ostentation, and covetousness; and to establish a sincere, humble, self-denying temper in our minds.

As these directions, which are unambiguously expressed, are evidently not to be construed in the literal sense; there is no small reason from analogy to believe, that the direction in the text, which is plainly ambiguous and indefinite, ought also not to be construed in this manner. There is, to say the least, as little reason to suppose that our Saviour has here directed us to use this form of prayer, as that he has required us to do alms, pray, and fast, only in secret; and not to lay up property for the exigences of a future day.

This presumption is, I think, changed into a certainty by the following arguments:—

1. According to this scheme, we are required always to use this form, and no other.

The words, 'After this manner pray ye,' if understood literally, plainly require, that we always pray in this manner; and therefore in no other. If they require us to use this form, they require us always to use it. But this will not be admitted by those who hold the opinion against which I contend.

2. When our Saviour gives directions to his disciples, at another time, to pray after this manner, he uses several variations from the form which is here given.

In Luke xi. 2, &c., our Saviour recites, in substance the form of prayer which is contained in the text, and adopts no less than ten variations. These he, who is 'the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever,' adopted unquestionably with design. Of this design it was not improbably a part to teach us, that mere words are matters of such indifference, as at any time to be altered, with propriety, in whatever manner the occasion may require.

One of the variations used by our Saviour in this place is the omission of the doxology. I am aware, that this is also omitted by a considerable number of manuscripts in the text. But the authority for the admission of it is such, as to have determined in its favour almost all critics, and given it a place, so far as I know, in almost every Bible. It is therefore to be considered as a genuine part of this prayer of our Saviour. This shows that the substance even of this prayer may without impropriety be varied, in one part or another, as the particular occasion may demand, or allow.

3. The petitions here recited are not presented in the name of Christ.

But our Saviour says, John xvi. 23, 24, 26, 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name. Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full. At that day ye shall

ask in my name.' St Paul also, in Col. iii. 17, says, 'Whatsoever ye do in word, or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God, even the Father, by him.' This prayer therefore is defective in one particular which Christ and St Paul have in these passages made essential to the acceptableness of our prayers.

4. Christ himself does not appear to have used this prayer.

We have several prayers of Christ recorded. All of these are such as plainly arose out of the occasion on which they were offered up. They were, in the strictest sense, extemporaneous: the mere effusions of his heart concerning the subjects by which they were prompted. So far then as the example of Christ may be supposed to bear upon this question, it is unfavourable to the supposition, that we are obliged to use this form; and favourable to the use of extemporaneous prayer.

5. The apostles do not appear ever to have used this prayer.

There are many prayers of the apostles recorded. All these were extemporaneous, like those of Christ, and the prophets who went before him, and sprang out of the occasion. If it be admitted, that the apostles are here an example to us, it will follow, that our own prayers may, to say the least, be with the strictest propriety extemporaneous, and grow out of that state of facts by which we have been induced to pray. A full proof is also furnished here, that the apostles did not consider this form as obligatory on themselves.

6. This prayer contains no expressions of thanksgiving.

St Paul, in Phil. iv. 6, says, 'Be careful for nothing; but in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.' A similar injunction is recorded, 1 Tim. ii. 1. From both these it is evident, that St Paul considered thanksgiving as universally and essentially a part of prayer. Had he considered this form as obligatory on himself, or upon Christians in general, or had Christians in general so considered the subject at that time, he must I think have added a form of thanksgiving as a supplement to this prayer; and not left them to express their thanksgiving extemporaneously in their own words. There is no perceptible reason why Christians should utter thanksgiving extemporaneously, in words of their own, rather than adorations, petitions, or confessions for sin. If the Spirit of inspiration thought proper to prescribe a form to us, in which we were required to present our petitions, it is reasonably believed that he would also prescribe to us a form in which the other parts also of this devotion were to be uttered.

7. St Paul refutes this supposition, when he requires us to 'pray always with all prayer,' Eph. vi. 18.

From the prayers recorded in the Scriptures, of the ancient saints, of Christ, and his apostles, we know that there is much prayer which, unless by very distant application, cannot be said to be contained in this form. In the sentence which contains this precept of St Paul, he directs the Ephesians to pray that 'utterance might be given unto him;' and that 'he might open his mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel.' It will hardly be pretended, that this request is clearly contained in the Lord's prayer. The same thing is true of a vast multitude of other prayers found in the Scriptures. The truth plainly is, that the prayers contained in this sacred book almost universally sprang from particular occasions; are exactly such as suited those occasions, the natural effusions of the heart contemplating their nature, and feeling their importance. This fact effectually teaches us what it is to 'pray always with all prayer:' viz., what I formerly explained it to be: to pray on every proper occasion with prayer suited to that occasion. But this cannot be accomplished unless we pray often, at least, without a form, and in the extemporaneous manner.

These arguments, if I mistake not, prove that the Lord's prayer was not prescribed to Christians as a form which they were intended or required to adopt. That it may be used both lawfully and profitably, at various times, both in public and private, and that it may be very often thus used, I entertain not a single doubt.

The question concerning forms of prayer is now become a question of mere expediency. If the Lord's prayer is not enjoined upon us; it is certain, that no other form of prayer can lay the least claim to such an injunction.

It is well known that various sects of Christians are attached to forms of prayer in the public worship of God, and sometimes even in private worship. Such forms are prescribed by them as directories of public worship; and all those who belong to their communion are required to worship in this manner. Every objection to extemporaneous prayer is considered, and I think justly, by these Christians as evidence of the advantages of a liturgy; and may, without any inconvenience, and without any discrimination, be blended with the positive arguments in favour of worshipping by a form. I shall therefore blend them in the following examination. These arguments I consider as collected by Dr Paley, so far as they have any force. I shall therefore follow this respectable writer in this discussion.

In behalf of forms of prayer, as directories of public worship, it is pleaded,

I. *That the use of them prevents the use of improper prayers; such, particularly, as are absurd, extravagant, or impious.*

'These,' says Dr Paley, 'in an order of men so numerous as the sacerdotal, the folly and enthusiasm of many must always be in danger of producing, where the conduct of the public worship is intrusted, without restraint or assistance, to the discretion and abilities of the officiating minister.'

To the argument here alleged, I reply, That this complaint has been originated by those who have used liturgies, and not by those who have worshipped with extemporaneous prayer. Yet these persons are incomparably more interested to complain; because, if the evil exists, they, and they only, suffer by it. At the same time, they are also the only proper judges, as being the only persons who have sufficient experience of this evil, or the want of a liturgy, to enable them to judge. The allegation was invented therefore to justify the use of a liturgy already adopted; and not admitted as a proof of the necessity of worshipping by a liturgy; and as a truth forced upon the conviction of men by the existence of the evil, which in this case it would be intended to remedy.

Facts are often discordant with theories, and often

refute them. Such, I apprehend, is the truth in the present case. In the vast multitude of Christian congregations who in Switzerland, Protestant France, Germany, Ireland, and America, in Holland, England, and Scotland, worship without a form, no material difficulty of this nature has ever been perceived. Within the many millions of mankind who for centuries have worshipped in this manner, there has certainly been a sufficient number of enlightened men, a sufficient length of time, and a sufficient variety of character and circumstances, to have presented, and to have felt, this evil, if it has actually existed, in every manner and degree in which it is capable of existing. Yet no complaint has ever prevailed to any extent, in any Protestant age or country, among those who have worshipped without forms of prayer. It will not be pretended that among these persons, religion, in the proper sense, has not had as extensive and happy influence as it has had during the same period among any of the human race.

That there have been solitary instances of this nature, I readily admit. But that they have been sufficiently numerous to furnish ground for this allegation, cannot be seriously maintained for a moment by any man who considers this fact with candour, or even with sober attention.

I speak not here of the performances of ignorant men, who thrust themselves into the desk, without right, propriety, or even decency; nor of those who, without any appearance of piety, are admitted into the church, merely because they are (in the language of Dr Paley) 'descendants of large families,' and for the purpose of furnishing them with easy means of subsistence: men who, as this writer says, are 'no farther ministers of religion, than as a cockade makes a soldier.' From the former of these classes, extravagant addresses to God, from the latter, such as are impious, and from both such as are absurd, may indeed be expected. But the existence of such persons in the desk, although an indelible reproach to those who are bound to 'lay hands suddenly on no man,' and to all who voluntarily attend the ministry of these persons, infers no objection against extemporaneous prayer. Among the men who are educated and morally qualified for the ministry, too few will always be found guilty of this conduct to furnish any serious argument in favour of a liturgy. While among so many and so discreet Christians, who through many ages, and in many countries, have worshipped in this manner, no difficulty of this kind has ever been seriously felt, the objection is plainly imaginary.

Prayer is, of all kinds of discourse, that which least demands elegance of style. Every professed ornament it rejects with disdain. The simplest, plainest, and least artificial manner of uttering his thoughts alone becomes the character of a suppliant, or the occasion and design of his supplication. He who feels inclined to pray will loathe all critical phraseology in his prayers. Decency, everywhere demanded, is indispensable in the worship of God; but beyond this nothing is necessary in our prayers, beside humility, faithfulness, and fervour. But decency is easily attainable by men of moderate talents, without the aid of a superior education. Plain men, as is not unfrequently seen both in private and public religious assemblies, pray with much propriety, and with no small edification to their fellow Christians. He who has universally made prayer a prime duty of man, has qualified man for the performance of this duty; and, as I apprehend, much more happily than this objection supposes.

2. It is objected also, that extemporaneous prayer must be attended with confusion in the mind of the hearer.

The ignorance of each petition before it is heard, the want of time to join in it after it is heard, the necessary suspension of devotion until it is concluded, the necessity of attending to what succeeds, the detention of the mind from its proper business by the very novelty with which it is gratified, form together the sources of this confusion, and furnish, in the view of Dr Paley, a fundamental objection against extemporary prayer, even where the minister's office is discharged with every possible advantage and accomplishment. Concerning this objection I observe,

(1.) That it attaches a gross and fundamental impropriety to the prayers of inspired men, mentioned in the Scriptures.

The prayer of Solomon at the dedication of the temple was, I think, unquestionably intended to awaken the spirit of devotion in the great assembly before which it was uttered, and to become the vehicle of their own supplications. But this design was impracticable on that occasion, and with respect to that assembly, as truly and as extensively as with respect to any modern congregation of Christians. There are many instances also in which the apostles and their fellow Christians assembled for prayer. The prayers actually uttered on these occasions were, I think, with a degree of probability next to certainty, extemporary. The persons who heard them could no better tell the import of each petition before they heard it, than modern Christian assemblies. Their devotion was as much suspended, until a petition was concluded. They were as much held in continual expectation; were detained as much from their proper business of joining in prayer; and were in all other respects subjected to as many disadvantages. The unavoidable conclusion from these premises is, that the apostles prayed in a manner unfitted for the purposes of devotion, unedifying to those with whom they prayed, and of course unapproved by the Spirit of God.

This conclusion no objector will admit. But if the objector refuse to admit the conclusion, he must, I think, give up the premises. If men could profitably unite in extemporary prayer in the days of Solomon, or in the days of the apostles, they can do it now.

(2.) The same objection lies with equal force, to a great extent, against the union, which the objectors themselves suppose to exist, and will acknowledge to be absolutely necessary, in other parts of religious worship.

A considerable number of persons, from perhaps one half to seven-eighths of the whole number, usually gathered in religious assemblies, are, throughout almost all Christian countries, unable to read. Of these it may be properly observed here, that from the confused manner in which the responses in a liturgy will ever be read by a numerous and mixed assembly, they must very imperfectly hear and understand this part of the prayers. That which they gain by hearing, however, is all which they gain. All these, unless they learn the prayers by heart, a fact which, it is presumed, rarely happens, must be in a much less favourable situation in some respects, and better situated in none, than when they are present at extemporary prayers.

Equally unable are these persons to read psalms. If

men cannot join in the prayers uttered by a minister, it will be difficult to show how they can unite in the praises sung by a choir.

My audience well know, that hearing the word of God is in my own view a part, and a very solemn and important part, of public worship. To receive divine truth and divine precepts, as being really divine, with reverence, faith, and love, is an ordinance as truly appointed by God, and as acceptable means of honouring him, as prayer or praise. To hear with any advantage, it is necessary, that we should both understand and feel what we hear. In order to understand, it is indispensable that we examine everything uttered by the preacher, which is not absolutely obvious, with a momentary investigation employed upon each of his assertions. In order to feel, it is equally necessary that a little longer time should be spent upon every part of a discourse, which is fitted to awaken feeling. The time necessary for both these acts of the mind must, at least, be equal to that which is demanded for such union in prayer, as will make the several petitions our own. But all the confusion, suspense, detention, and embarrassment from novelty, will here have as much influence to prevent us from hearing a sermon in a proper manner, as from joining in extemporary prayer. Here also the labouring recollection, and embarrassed or tumultuous delivery of which Dr Paley complains, will have their full effect. Most men, unless when destitute of self-possession, speak extemporaneously with more distinctness and propriety than they read; and are therefore more readily and perfectly understood. But if an audience do not understand and feel a sermon, they fail as effectually of performing this part of religious worship, as of performing the duty of prayer, when they do not join in the petitions. The same difficulties therefore attend, thus far, the performance of both these religious services, which are here supposed to attend extemporary prayer. It is presumed, however, that they are imaginary in both cases: for,

(3.) The answer to the former objection is applicable, with the same force, to this: viz, That the difficulties complained of have never existed in such a manner as to be of serious importance, in the view of those who have worshipped publicly with extemporary prayer.

In the long periods throughout which, and among the numerous millions by whom, this mode of worship has been adopted, no complaint of any magnitude has ever arisen concerning this subject. It will not be asserted, and with decency cannot, that these persons have been less serious, less scrupulous about their worship, or less anxious to perform the duties of religion aright, than an equal number of their fellow Christians. Experience therefore is wholly against both these objections; and experience is the only evidence, or umpire, in the case.

The advocates for forms of prayer admit that they are attended by some disadvantages. Among these, Dr Paley considers the two following as the principal.

1. That forms of prayer composed in one age become unfit for another, by the unavoidable change of language, circumstances, and opinions.

This objection must, doubtless, be allowed to have some degree of force. I do not, however, think it necessarily of very serious importance. To make frequent alterations in so solemn a service, would certainly be dangerous. Nor ought they ever to be made without extreme caution. Yet when they are plainly demanded by existing circumstances, it can hardly be supposed, that a collection of Christians would refuse their consent to safe and reasonable changes: especially after the evil had become considerable.

2. That the perpetual repetition of the same form of words, produces weariness and inattentiveness in the congregation.

This I esteem a more serious difficulty than the former, so far as such a repetition exists; while I readily acknowledge, that its existence appears to me unnecessary. For this evil Dr Paley observes, 'Devotion may supply a remedy.' I admit that it may, and doubt not that in individual minds it does, at least in a considerable measure. Still the objection is far from being removed. Every mode of worship ought to be so formed, as to awaken devotion, always too languid, and not so as to diminish a flame which is scarcely perceptible. It is the nature of all repetition, as well as of continual sameness, soon to weary minds, formed like ours with an inherent love of change and novelty. This, in every other case, is perceived and acknowledged. No reason appears why it should not be acknowledged in this. Devotion easily languishes in the most pious minds, and ought therefore to be assisted, not repressed. The best men complain often and justly of lukewarm affections, and wandering thoughts. What then shall be said of others? Certainly the fervour of devotion referred to, must be unsafely relied on, to remedy the evils of a wearisome service in the midst of a congregation at large.

To obviate the force of these remarks, it may be said that psalms and hymns are sung in frequent repetition. I reply, that these are rarely repeated, when compared with repetitions in forms of prayer. Yet even these, when sung several times within a short period, become obviously tiresome.

But besides that the psalms are given us in the Scripture, and are therefore regarded with a reverence which can be claimed by no human composition, both psalms and hymns are always sung; and are therefore recommended to the hearer by the powerful aid of music. This is an advantage which nothing else can boast, and counterbalances whatever tediousness would otherwise be found in any necessary or proper repetition. These therefore may be fairly laid aside, as being without the debate.

3. To these objections ought to be added another; That the mode of uttering the forms of prayer in actual use is unhappy.

This mode, as is well known, is the audible union of a whole congregation in reading each prayer, throughout a considerable part of the service. The effect of this practice, so far as I can judge from my own experience, is, in a greater or less degree, to disturb the attention, and confound the thoughts of the several suppliants. How far the power of habit may go towards lessening or removing these evils, it is impossible for me, without more experience of the effects of this mode of worship, to judge. But, independently of this consideration, so many voices, set by nature to so many different keys, and directed in so many different methods of modulation, are certainly an embarrassment of that quietness and steadiness of thought, that entire self-possession, so desirable during the time of religious worship. Sounds which are very numerous are,

when uttered at the same moment, almost of course perplexing. Discordant sounds are necessarily unpleasant; and no circumstances can prevent this effect on the mind.

4. Forms of prayer must necessarily be general; whereas, the nature of prayer demands that our petitions should in a great measure be particular.

It is no part of the design of prayer to change the purposes or conduct of the Creator. Its whole import consists in exciting our obedience to him, and the amendment of ourselves. By awakening in our minds a sense of our guilt, dangers, necessities, helplessness, dependence, and indebtedness; of our own littleness, and the greatness, wisdom, and goodness of our Maker, we are improved in our moral character, and fitted to receive the blessings which we need. The more these emotions are excited, the more effectually are these ends accomplished. Of course, the most advantageous means should always be used for this purpose.

Hence, it will be easily seen, that prayers ought, as far as may be, to consist of petitions, confessions, thanksgiving, and adoration, formed in particular (not in general) thoughts and expressions. General declarations and images of all kinds, except when eminently important, are feeble and unimpressive. Particular ones, on the contrary, are deeply and alone impressive.

Whenever the end of what we speak or write, is to interest either the imagination, or the heart, it is a rule of every rhetorical writer, and ordinarily the practice of every man who follows nature, to use particular images and expressions. No reason appears why this rule, founded in the native character of man, may not be applied to the present case with the same propriety as to any other.

The principal end of prayer is, not to teach, but to move the heart. The more this rule is followed, the more will the end be attained. In all the warrantable means of quickening the affections, prayer ought plainly to abound. Both the sentiments and language ought to be simple, artless, apparently the result of no labour, derived from the occasion, and springing directly from the heart. To this scheme, the confessions, petitions, and thanksgivings should, I think, be generally conformed, wherever it is intended to be made deeply impressive.

This is a purpose which no form of prayer, however admirably composed, can successfully accomplish. Designed for so many persons, occasions, and ages, it must of necessity be to a great extent general; and so far defective. The mind, deeply interested by the occasion, must be disappointed of what it naturally expects, and displeased when it finds the strain of sentiment falling short of its own feelings. In this degree, therefore, it will fail of being edified. The emotions which it wishes to have excited, and which the occasion demands and awakens, are either faintly excited, or suffered to sleep. If persons accustomed to the use of a liturgy find, as they think, those difficulties in extemporary prayer which are alleged by Dr Paley, such as are accustomed to prayer of this nature complain, with not less feeling, and as they apprehend with not less reason, of the general, unimpressive character of forms, and their want of perceptible adaptation to the particular circumstances of the suppliants.

Almost every prayer recorded in the Scriptures sprang out of the case which prompted it, and expresses its particular, important, and most affecting circumstances. Such are Abraham's for Ishmael, Gen. xvii.; Abraham's for Sodom, Gen. xviii.; Lot's for himself, Gen. xix.; Isaac's for Jacob and Esau, Gen. xxvii.; Jacob's for himself, Gen. xxviii.; those of Moses for Israel, Exod. xxxii. and xxxiii.; Gideon's, Judges vi.; Samson's, Judges xvi.; Hannah's, 1 Sam. ii.; David's, 2 Sam. vii.; Solomon's, 1 Kings viii.; Jehoshaphat's for Judah, 2 Chron. xx.; Hezekiah's for Israel, 2 Kings xix.; Hezekiah's for himself, 2 Kings xx.; Ezra's for Judah, Ezra ix.; the prayer of the Levites for Judah, Neh. ix.; those of Jeremiah and Daniel, that of Josiah, those recorded of Christ, and those recorded of the apostles.

In all these, and several other instances, particularly many contained in the Psalms, the prayer is chiefly directed to the occasion in hand, whether a public or private one; for it is to be remembered, that several of them were prayers of the most public nature; and, although uttered chiefly by individuals, were uttered in the midst of great assemblies, and offered up in their name. Nor is there, so far as I remember, a single prayer recorded in the Scriptures (the text being here laid out of the question), which has at all the aspect of having been a form, or a part of a standing liturgy.

From these observations it will be seen, that prayer is no other than the thoughts of a devotional mind, ascending silently to God, or audibly expressed. What these thoughts are in the mind, the prayer of the voice ought ever to be. Hence, as the thoughts will vary, so the prayer will also vary, according to the numberless cases of suppliants; the cares, wants, fears, distresses, supplies, hopes, and joys. In this manner, the prophets, apostles, and our Saviour himself, prayed. Thus the Spirit of God directed those who alone were under his express direction. Whatever 'infirmities: we, who are uninspired, may labour under, the same 'Spirit' may with humble confidence be expected to 'help,' so far as it shall be necessary for us, as he helped theirs. Their example he has recorded both for our instruction and encouragement. As their circumstances gave birth both to their thoughts and expressions, no reason appears why our prayers should not arise also out of our circumstances. The difficulties supposed to attend this manner of worshipping God will, it is believed, vanish, if our hearts are engaged in our services.

Such are the views which have occurred to me concerning this subject. Still, I have no controversy with those who think forms of prayer most edifying to themselves. They undoubtedly must be their own judges. Particularly, as their experience concerning this side of the question has been far greater than mine, I cannot controvert the decisions of this experience, so far as they are to respect themselves only. Very many unquestionable and excellent Christians have worshipped in both these methods. In both these methods, therefore, men may be excellent Christians, and worship God in an acceptable manner. On this subject, whether considered as a subject of speculation or of practice, no debate ought ever to arise, except that which is entirely catholic and friendly; and no feelings, besides those which are of the most charitable nature. Zeal, however commendable it may be in some cases, seems here out of place.

I have now finished the observations which I have thought proper to make concerning forms of prayer,

and concerning the Lord's prayer, considered as either requiring or warranting us to pray by a form. It may, however, be proper to add, as a mere opinion of my own, that it is perfectly proper, and will be wise for all such persons as are in danger of losing their self-possession, or of being otherwise embarrassed when they are to perform this duty, whether in public or in private, to obtain well-written forms of prayer, and make them their directories in the performance of this duty. This practice I should recommend also so long as the danger of embarrassment should continue, even if it should continue through life. To pray by a form may not be the best method of directing this duty at large, and may yet be the best method which, in given circumstances, will be in our power. It certainly will be far more desirable to use a form of prayer, than to pray in an embarrassed and interrupted manner.

In the beginning of this Discourse, I have suggested that the Lord's prayer was intended to teach us the subjects, the spirit, and the manner of our prayers. Concerning the subjects we are taught particularly, that we ought to pray continually and extensively for the prosperity of the kingdom and worship of God, and the conversion and obedience of mankind; to ask daily for our daily bread; for the forgiveness of our sins; for a spirit of forgiveness towards others; for security against temptations; and for protection and deliverance from evil, both natural and moral. We are also here directed to look to God, as our Father and Friend, for parental love, tenderness, and blessings; and to rejoice that 'the kingdom, the power, and the glory,' are his, and will be his only, and for ever.

These things are all plainly taught in this very remarkable form of prayer. They are, however, far from being all that are taught. No composition, it is presumed, ever contained more, or more valuable instruction. Among the truths which are obviously involved in it, are the following:—

1. That we are not to expect a gracious audience of God, 'for our much speaking,' but for the sincerity, humility, and piety, with which we pray.

2. That all places, where we can pray with decency, and without ostentation and interruption, are proper places for the performance of this duty.

All men are to use this prayer, at least in substance; but all men cannot resort for this purpose to the temple of Jerusalem, to a church, nor to any other places supposed to be consecrated.

3. That prayer is a social employment.

'Our Father' is the language of numbers; of a family, or of a congregation: not of an individual. Similar phraseology runs also through the whole form.

4. That we are to pray for others.

Three of these petitions are employed as prayer for others; viz., the three first.

5. That we are equally dependent on God for spiritual good, as for temporal; and for safety from moral, as well as from natural, evil.

6. That our desires for natural good must always be moderate and humble.

We are here taught to pray daily, not for wealth, but for 'daily bread.'

7. That we cannot pray acceptably, unless we exercise a spirit of forgiveness towards our enemies.

8. That we are to pray equally for those things which God has foretold, as for those which to us are unknown and uncertain.

God has foretold, that 'his name shall be hallowed, his kingdom come, and his will be done,' in the manner here specified: yet for these things we are directed to pray.

9. That the predetermination of God, therefore, ought never to be a hinderance, nor discouragement to prayer.

That God has predetermined that his kingdom shall be built up, his name hallowed, and his will done, throughout the earth, will not be questioned by any man, who reads and believes the Bible. Yet for these things we are here required to pray.

Finally: We are taught by this prayer, that he who does not sincerely desire that 'the name of God may be hallowed,' that 'his kingdom may come, and his will be done;' who cannot heartily rejoice, that 'the kingdom, the power, and the glory, are his,' and will be his throughout eternity; and who cannot subjoin to all these things his own solemn 'Amen;' does not and cannot pray in the manner required by the Redeemer of mankind.

SERMON CXLV.

THE MEANS OF GRACE.—ORDINARY MEANS OF GRACE.—INTERCOURSE WITH RELIGIOUS MEN.

He that walketh with wise men shall be wise.—Prov. xiii. 20.

Having finished the proposed examination of the great Christian duty of prayer, I shall now proceed to the next subject in the order formerly mentioned: viz.,

Intercourse with religious men.

The text informs us, that 'he who walketh with wise men shall be wise.' Wisdom, it is well known, is extensively employed by the divine writers, particularly by Solomon, to denote religion. 'Wise men' therefore are, in the language of the Scriptures, religious men.

To 'walk,' denotes, in the same language, to converse familiarly and frequently, or to have our whole course of life intimately and familiarly connected with the persons or objects with whom, or amid which, we are supposed to walk.

The following doctrine is therefore obviously con-

tained in the text: That he who lives and converses frequently and intimately with religious men, may ordinarily be expected to become religious. The declaration in the text is absolute; but I understand such declarations as usually meaning no more than I have here expressed. Thus, 'Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it,' another expression of the same nature, intends not, that every child thus educated will certainly become religious, but that this will ordinarily be the fact, and may therefore always be fairly expected.

There are two senses in which the text, without any violence, may be understood: the obvious one,

That persons hitherto destitute of religion will assume this character; and the more remote one,

That persons already religious will by this intercourse become more so. 'He that walketh with wise men shall be wise:' that is, emphatically, or eminently.

I shall take the liberty to consider the subject with respect to both these senses.

I. *Those who are destitute of religion, and converse frequently and religiously with religious men, may ordinarily be expected to become religious.*

In proof of this position, I observe,

1. Religion, in the conduct of a man really and eminently possessed of this character, appears to others to be real.

The Bible exhibits religion with abundant proof, and with supreme force and beauty. It presents this great subject to us, in the form of doctrines, precepts, and, so far as history can furnish them, of examples also. It presents us at the same time with the most satisfactory arguments, to prove that these exhibitions are made by the hand of God himself. Still, although the mind is unable to deny the sufficiency, force, and beauty of the representation, or to refute the arguments by which it is supported, it can withdraw itself from both; and in this manner can avoid the conviction which it is intended to produce, and the emotions which it is fitted to inspire. The subject is naturally uncongenial to the taste of man, and from every such subject man almost instinctively wishes to withdraw his attention, and turn his eye away. To do this is almost always in his power; and however dangerous may be the conduct, and however desirable the contrary conduct, will almost of course be the dictate of inclination. The subject which he disrelishes he can shun. To the arguments which sustain it he can refuse to listen. Against the evidence which they convey he can close his eyes. In this manner it will be easy for him to say, in the case under consideration, 'The religion presented to us in the gospel forms indeed an excellent character, and would be not a little desirable, were it real and attainable by such a being as man. But, out of the Scriptures, where shall it be found? There are, it is true, those who profess to be religious; and who, it must be acknowledged, are somewhat more grave, specious, and imposing in their deportment than most other men. But I see nothing in their character which may not be rivalled by other men; nothing which may not be explained by the common principles of our nature; nothing which proves them to possess the extraordinary spirit exhibited in the gospel. I think therefore it may be reasonably concluded that the religion taught in the Scriptures, although beautiful and desirable to the eye of the mind, exists in the Scriptures only, and has no real or practical being in the hearts of men. As a speculative object it is commendable, as a practical one, it is I think chiefly imaginary.' Such may be, such I doubt not often have been, the sentiments of persons living under the gospel concerning religion; persons who have read the accounts concerning it given in the Scriptures, and at the same time have surveyed the conduct of its professors only at a distance, and seen it only in the gross. Nor can it be denied, that these sentiments, although false and groundless, are yet natural, frequent, and in a sense common.

But in real life the subject plainly wears a different aspect. There are many persons and many cases, by whom and in which the spirit of the gospel is manifested so unambiguously as to allow of no doubt concerning its reality, nature, and efficacy, in the mind of an honest beholder. The evidence is of such a nature that it cannot be evaded, unless by a prejudice too gross, a violation of conscience too palpable, to be admitted by a man, who can lay any claim to fairness of character. It would be oftener seen, and oftener acknowledged, were the person on whom the sight and acknowledgment might have the happy influence under consideration, to converse more frequently and more intimately with men of piety. If we were really to walk with wise men, if we were to live by their side, mark their conduct, compare it with that of others, and inquire concerning the principles from which it was derived, it would be difficult for us to mistake the nature of this subject. We should see the conduct itself to be exceedingly different, nay, in many respects directly opposite in the two cases. Effects of this diverse and opposite nature we should be compelled to attribute to diverse and opposite causes. One class of them we should, in a word, be obliged to ascribe to religion, and the other to the native character of man. Even in our secret thoughts we should be forced to make this acknowledgment. The understanding could not withdraw itself from conviction, and conscience would not fail to hold up the subject in full view.

2. In the conduct of such men religion also appears solemn, dignified, and superior.

All wicked men, unless when under the influence of violent passion, necessarily feel the superiority of those who are truly and unaffectedly virtuous. A sense of this superiority, and of their own comparative depression, is the source, in an extensive degree, of that hostility, which they so often manifest towards persons of this character. From these emotions no such man can escape. In the neighbourhood of virtue they are always in the shade, and are not unfrequently shrunk and withered. Milton, after having recited the rebuke of Zephon to Satan, says very justly, as well as very beautifully,

> 'Abash'd the Devil stood,
> And felt how awful goodness is, and saw
> Virtue in her shape how lovely.'

Such, in multiplied instances, has been the effect of rebukes administered by virtuous men to those who were wicked.

The awe, the reverence, the consciousness of superiority, inspired in the minds of sinners by virtue, appearing with its own solemn and venerable dignity, are not always accompanied nor followed by hatred. If I mistake not, they in many instances terminate in a settled respect and admiration for the virtuous persons by whose conduct they were excited; emotions,

not unfrequently productive of the happiest effects on the hearts and lives of those by whom they are entertained. It is unnecessary to prove, that men naturally seek the company of those whom they respect and admire. As little is it necessary to show, that the sentiments and opinions of such persons have, of course, no small influence over the minds of such as thus seek their company. Between reverencing and embracing the sentiments of persons thus situated, the steps are few, and the transition is easy. There is the utmost reason to believe that this happy progress has often taken place.

3. In the conduct of such men also religion appears lovely.

The consciences of sinful men, perhaps of all such men, when their consciences are permitted to testify at all, testify to the loveliness of evangelical virtue. In their language, I confess, it is often denied; and still more frequently, perhaps, is given in a grudging niggardly manner. By their consciences it is acknowledged of course.

Wherever the judgment of the mind is allowed to decide without a bias, it of course pronounces the law of God to require nothing but what is reasonable, excellent, and useful. Of this nature, beyond a question, is piety to its Author, and benevolence to his creatures. In no form can these exercises of mind be manifested, without being seen to be amiable by every unprejudiced eye. Justice, kindness, truth, disinterestedness, forgiveness to enemies, and mercy to the suffering, are always desirable, always lovely. With the same amiableness is the government of our passions and appetites, regularly adorned. Meekness, gentleness, sobriety, and temperance, are indispensable to an amiable character; and all persons who wish to be loved by others, are forced invariably either to assume, or at least to exhibit, these characteristics to their fellow men.

The union of these attributes is the consummation of moral excellence to man, and involves whatever is really and eminently lovely. Wherever they are thus united, and are at the same time exhibited in their native light, without the obscuring influence of characteristical passions, prejudices, uncouthness, or vulgarity, the understanding is compelled to acknowledge their excellence, and, secretly at least, to pronounce them lovely. Even gross and hard-hearted men, much more persons possessing dispositions naturally sweet and susceptible, are often greatly affected by the sincere and artless display of these attributes. In many instances, there is good reason to believe, they produce in the minds of unrenewed men a conviction of the reality of religion, which argument has never been able to produce; and a sense of its worth, followed by the happiest consequences.

A man of my acquaintance, who was of a vehement and rigid temper, had many years since a dispute with a friend of his, a professor of religion, and had been injured by him. With strong feelings of resentment he made him a visit, for the avowed purpose of quarrelling with him. He accordingly stated to him the nature and extent of the injury, and was preparing, as he afterwards confessed, to load him with a train of severe reproaches; when his friend cut him short by acknowledging with the utmost readiness and frankness the injustice of which he had been guilty, expressing his own regret for the wrong which he had done, requesting his forgiveness, and proffering him ample compensation. He was compelled to say, that he was satisfied; and withdrew full of mortification, that he had been precluded from venting his indignation, and wounding his friend with keen and violent reproaches for his conduct. As he was walking homeward, he said to himself to this effect: 'There must be something more in religion than I have hitherto suspected. Were any man to address me in the tone of haughtiness and provocation with which I accosted my friend this evening, it would be impossible for me to preserve the equanimity of which I have been a witness; and especially with so much frankness, humility, and meekness to acknowledge the wrong which I had done, so readily ask forgiveness of the man whom I had injured, and so cheerfully promise a satisfactory recompense. I should have met his anger with at least equal resentment, paid him reproach for reproach, and inflicted wound for wound. There is something in this man's disposition, which is not in mine. There is something in the religion which he professes, and which I am forced to believe he feels; something which makes him so superior, so much better, so much more amiable, than I can pretend to be. The subject strikes me in a manner to which I have hitherto been a stranger. It is high time to examine it more thoroughly, with more candour, and with greater solicitude also, than I have done hitherto.'

From this incident a train of thoughts and emotions commenced in the mind of this man, which terminated in his profession of the Christian religion, his relinquishment of the business in which he was engaged; and his consecration of himself to the ministry of the gospel.

4. The conversation of religious persons has often great power upon the consciences of sinners.

None can set the truths of the gospel in so strong or solemn a point of view as those who feel them. None can speak of sin so justly, so clearly, or so pungently, as those who under alarming convictions have realized their guilt and their danger, and been roused by a strong sense of their ruin to the most anxious and laborious efforts for their recovery; and who with an ingenuous contrition of heart, have learned to realize its hateful nature, as well as its dreadful consequences. None can speak of holiness like those who understand its nature, the delightful tenor of its affection, the peace which accompanies it, and the joy which it inspires, by their own undeceiving, impressive, and happy experience.

Who can present in such strong, affecting, awful colours the world of perdition, as will naturally be employed by those who have beheld its transcendent evils with realized conviction, and deep amazement, who have seen it naked before them, felt their own near approach to its sufferings, and still tremble under a sense of their marvellous escape?

Who can bring heaven before the eyes, and delineate with a glowing pencil, in living colours, its immortal glory, like those who have thought long and often of that happy world, with the 'faith which is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen,' and 'the hope,' which 'entereth into that within the veil?' Who can discourse concerning the celestial paradise like those who, with a divine relish already formed in their minds, are prepared to enjoy the bless-

ings of eternal life; who, conscious that they 'are pilgrims and strangers here,' regard themselves as citizens of the New Jerusalem, and look forward with delightful anticipation to that period, when they shall there be united to all who love them, and to all whom they love?

Who can reprove with such pungency, with such efficacy, with such success, as those who are believed to be in earnest, to loathe and shun the sin which they reprove, and to delight in the holiness which they inculcate? Who can reprove in so acceptable or so persuasive a manner, as those who perform this delicate and difficult duty with the meekness and gentleness, the humility and forbearance of the gospel, and whose lives, 'adorning the doctrine of God our Saviour,' add to every remonstrance the peculiar weight of an unblemished example?

What is true of these subjects, is equally applicable to all others which are made the themes of religious conversation. 'The words of the wise,' that is, of religious men, says Solomon, 'are as goads, and as nails fastened by the masters of assemblies.' 'The words of the wise,' says Peter, in his translation of this passage, 'are as goads, or as if planted with briars.'

When the disciples went to Emmaus, they expressed the influence of Christ's conversation in these remarkable terms: 'Did not our hearts burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the Scriptures?' The conversation of pious men is not, indeed, that of Christ; but it possesses in some degree the same influence; and wherever it is conformed to the gospel, and conducted with the prudence which the gospel requires, cannot fail to leave behind it desirable effects.

In the revivals of religion, when conversation concerning this subject prevails, and the tidings of conversion are multiplied, when the power of sympathy is awake, and the soul is prepared readily to interest itself in the spiritual affairs of its fellow men, everything pertaining to their religious circumstances appears to have a peculiar influence upon the minds of others. Their views and affections, their conversation and their conduct, nay, the bare narratives of whatever pertains to their religious interests, appear, through the power of sympathy, to produce great, extensive, and happy effects on those, to whom they are made known. It is a remark of President Edwards, derived from his own observation during an extraordinary revival of religion, that 'nothing seemed to produce greater effects on the minds of his own congregation, than recitals of the prevalence of religion in other places.'

The more frequent and the more intimate our intercourse with such persons is, the greater and the happier is its efficacy. The same thing is true, when the persons with whom we converse and live are possessed of characters peculiarly venerable, or of manners and dispositions peculiarly lovely. Amiable companions, near and affectionate relatives, parents, ministers, and rulers, when persons of unaffected piety, contribute more by their conversation and example than can be easily imagined to spread religion among mankind, and to preserve the world from profligacy and ruin. The 'light' of these persons 'so shines before others, that they, beholding their good works,' actually 'glorify their Father, who is in heaven.'*

* Matt. v. 16.

II. *Persons already religious will by this intercourse become more so.*

All the observations made under the preceding head are applicable to this also, and with additional force. But there are other considerations peculiar to this, and those of distinguished importance.

1. Persons already religious are prepared to realize whatever is communicated to them by others of the same character.

'As face answereth to face in the water, so doth the heart of man to man.' This observation may be emphatically applied to the hearts of Christians. Their views are substantially the same, their taste is the same, their character is the same. They have all a common interest, are engaged in common pursuits, and are bound towards a common home. They are all of one family; are children of one Parent, and followers of one Redeemer. All of them discern 'spiritual things in a spiritual manner,' and relish them with a spiritual taste. To the interests of the divine kingdom, and to the concerns of the least individual who belongs to it, not one of them is indifferent. All are prepared to feel the concerns of all; and by every one, so far as they are communicated, they are actually felt. Everything therefore in the life and conversation of one Christian, will easily be transferred to his own circumstances by every other.

It is easy to perceive, that mutual communications among persons of such a character, and in such circumstances, will of course be regarded as the communications of friends and brethren. Every man knows with what a welcome he hears, how readily he believes, how deeply he feels, and how much he is influenced by the conversation and sentiments of a beloved friend. The importance of this consideration is peculiarly seen in every case of reproof. The difficulties which usually attend the administration of reproof, and its frequent want of efficacy and success, are subjects of complaint in the mouth of every thinking man. All these difficulties plainly lie in the character, either of the reprover or the reproved. It is indispensable, that the reprover, if any hope be entertained of success, be regarded as a friend; and that he assume the lowliness, meekness, long-suffering, and forbearance of the gospel. Such is the character of the Christian in the eye of his fellow Christian; and such is the disposition with which his reproofs will be administered. They will therefore have all the advantage furnished by the fact, that they are derived from the best source.

At the same time, religion prepares the person who is to be reproved in the best manner to receive this office of friendship. It teaches him his own frailty, the guilt and danger of backsliding, the absolute necessity of reproof to himself, as well as to others, the obligations which his fellow Christians are under to administer it, the benevolent ends which it is designed to answer, and the peculiar friendship employed in reproving agreeably to the injunctions of the gospel. Thus the Christian is by his disposition prepared to discern, that 'the reproofs of instruction are the way of life;' and thus 'a reproof entereth more into a wise man, than a hundred stripes into a fool.'

Nor is the Christian less fitted to derive instruction, improvement, and enjoyment from other religious communications. By a kind of instinctive application he makes the cases, views, and feelings of his fellow Chris-

tians his own. From their dangers he learns the means of safety to himself. From their backslidings he derives watchfulness. From their victories he acquires courage. Their fortitude, patience, and resignation he transplants into his own life. In their faith and hope, their comfort and joys, he exercises an evangelical communion, which makes them all his own. In their sorrows also he experiences a refined and affectionate interest, springing from the very nature of Christian sympathy, and rendering him better and lovelier whenever it is experienced. In this manner, while on the one hand his heart is softened and purified, he acquires on the other the rare and difficult science of regulating the affections, and directing wisely the conduct to which they gave birth.

2. Notwithstanding this sameness of character, the views of different Christians concerning the same objects, and the emotions excited by them, are in many respects different.

It is a remarkable fact, that in the creation and providence of God, we find no two beings or events exactly alike. In this diversity, God undoubtedly designed to exhibit the endless diversities of beauty and utility existing in his own endlessly various wisdom; so that everything might, in some respect, be a new display of his perfect character. In nothing is this variety more conspicuous than in rational minds. These undoubtedly differ not a little in their original structure, and vary unceasingly in their views, affections, and efforts. The very optics of the mind, although possessing the same common nature, are nevertheless so diverse from each other, as to see the same objects in lights often widely different, and to rest on very different parts of each individual object. Let any two persons who have been employed in contemplating the same subject, or viewing the same object, recite their respective views; and this difference will be strongly evinced. All these varieties are also predicable of the human heart. Affections very variously modified are continually awakened in different persons by the same events, even when they have the same common interest. The compassion excited by a scene of distress in a company of friends or neighbours, is proved by their own expressions to have many diversities of shade and character.

All these varieties of thought, feeling, purpose, and exertion are found everywhere in Christians, with respect to every religious subject. From this fact it has been often, but rashly, concluded, that men were so made, as necessarily to form inconsistent views of the same doctrine or the same precept; and hence an apology has been made for error, which is intended to excuse it from criminality, and to quiet the minds of men, when chargeable with false religious opinions. This scheme attributes to God such indifference to truth, or such love to falsehood, as to have induced him to make men incapable, either from their nature, or from their circumstances, of discerning truth, and avoiding error. It is fairly presumable, that those who hold this scheme are not intentionally guilty of charging God thus foolishly.

But although God has not made the reception of error necessary, he has plainly formed us so as to receive truth, perhaps necessarily, certainly in a manner highly advantageous to us as social beings, in an unceasing diversity of lights. In a careful investigation of a complicated subject, it is not improbable that of a thousand persons thus employed, every individual would discern something not discerned by the others, and that something true and just. Everything in the character of man, in his understanding, affections, and habits, contributes to this diversity.

Let me illustrate this subject by a familiar, and at the same time unobjectionable example. There are in the Scriptures, perhaps one hundred writers and speakers, all of whom have spoken truth only; while each has yet uttered it in his own characteristical manner. How universally various are these manners, and how much additional beauty, force, and profit are in this way added to the truth in the mind of every reader! Luke, Paul, and John are the most voluminous writers in the New Testament; and have communicated the greatest number of doctrines and precepts to mankind. How unlike each other are these writers, in their several modes of viewing the interesting subjects which they communicate to mankind. Paul and John, particularly, are remarkably eloquent and sublime, as well as remarkably instructive. Yet how different is the simple, artless, gentle manner of John, from the bold, ardent, abrupt manner of Paul! Both at the same time are pre-eminently impressive, useful, and happy.

All Christians have their peculiar views of divine subjects, and their peculiar affections. All these also, when just and true, have their own peculiar utility. In the familiar intercourse of Christians these views are continually interchanged, and these affections mutually communicated. By this interchange, the views of all become more just, more expanded, more noble. The varieties of divine excellence, the multiplied relations of divine truth, and the endless modifications of duty, are in this way far more extensively perceived by every one than would otherwise be possible. The difference between the knowledge thus imbibed, and that which would be gained by a Christian in absolute solitude, is substantially the same with that which exists between a savage and a man educated in enlightened society.

Nor is this mutual communication of affections less improving. Piety, benevolence, and self-government are capable of being endlessly modified. In a solitary mind it is impossible, in the present state of man, that they should fail of being sluggish, contracted, austere, or in some other unhappy manner defective. Even where persons of the same sect, class, or character, consort with each other only, a narrow-minded, prejudiced, bigoted, and often very censurable spirit is diffused, cherished, and confirmed. An expansive correspondence among Christians, on the contrary, enlarges the heart, exalts its feelings, and dignifies its designs. Let it be remembered, that to this immense good every Christian may contribute, whatever is his station, whatever the extent of his talents, and whatever the characteristical tenor of his affections. The greatest may learn and amend by the assistance of the least; the wisest, by that of the most uninformed. Thus, 'as iron sharpeneth iron, so every Christian sharpeneth the countenance of his friend,' Prov. xxvii. 17.

3. The affections of Christians are strongly invigorated by their frequent intercourse with each other.

Social beings are formed in such a manner as to be easily and deeply interested in each other's concerns: and to share in each other's hopes and fears, joys and sorrows. Naturally, and in a sense instinctively, we love when others love, and hate when others hate; exult in

their prosperity, and mingle our sighs and tears with theirs. Whenever these emotions are communicated, they are caught. Heart, in this case, beats in regular response to heart; and the bosom spontaneously heaves, and glows, and throbs at the call of those by whom we are surrounded. All this is continually seen in the common occurrences of life; particularly in the zeal of parties, the agitations of political assemblies, and the distracted violence of tumultuous crowds. Much more delightfully is it exhibited in the more rational and affectionate meetings of friends, and far more delightfully still in the intercommunion of Christians, the best of all friends. Here the noblest subjects engage the attention, and the most interesting of all concerns engross the heart: concerns, approved by the conscience, and approved by God. In their nature they are fraught with peace; in their progress they are sources of unceasing and immortal good. To every person in such an assembly, 'the wisdom, which is from above,' is the supreme object of pursuit; that 'godliness, which has the promise of the life which now is, and of that which is to come.' In the pursuit of this glorious object, full of comfort, hope, and joy, the best emotions which can be felt by the human heart are awakened and reciprocated. The flame which glows in one breast is caught and kindled in another. The light which illumines one mind, sheds its lustre over all the minds by which it is encircled. The soul, raised above itself by this happy communion, feels that it 'has passed from death unto life, because it loves the brethren.' On such an assembly the Spirit of grace fails not to shower his balmy influence, and to awaken in the minds of which it is composed, delightful anticipations of future glory. Peace, and hope, and joy, descending from above, scatter here their richest blessings; and with a divine enchantment raise up a transient but delightful image of heaven on this side of the grave.

REMARKS.

1. These observations teach us the invaluable blessing of being born in a Christian land.

In such a land, all these advantages are primarily obtained. There Christians live. There religion is manifested in the life and conversation. There its reality, dignity, solemnity, and loveliness are seen by the eye, and declared to the ear. There 'the words of the wise are as goads.' They counsel, exhort, reprove, and alarm with evangelical power. The minds of sinners are there awakened in this manner to a sense of their guilt, and urged, by motives of singular import, to listen to the alarming denunciations of offended justice, and to the delightful invitations of boundless mercy. There the worth of the soul, its immortal being, and its amazing destinies, are explained and understood. There the charms of a religious example are displayed and felt. There, of course, man is taught, allured, and compelled to provide for his eternal welfare.

In other lands how dreadfully reversed is the scene! What a bleak and barren wilderness, what a dreary solitude, does their moral state present to the compassionate eye! Stretch the wings of your contemplation, and pass over them with a momentary, but painful survey. From climate to climate, not a house of God is presented to your eyes; not a pious family, not a religious example. Listen. No voice of prayer rises on the winds. No notes of praise are wafted to the heavens. Look. No sabbath smiles with peace and mercy on the desolate waste. No dews of divine grace, no showers of life-giving rain, descend on the sterile soil. 'The heaven over their head is brass: the earth under their feet is iron.'

2. The same observations teach us the peculiar blessing of being born in a religious family.

In such a family religion lives and prospers, is visible and powerful, in a still more emphatical manner. It is seen always; it is seen in the most beautiful attitudes, and the fairest colours. It is seen with an influence peculiarly persuasive and heavenly.

In their morning and evening devotions piety begins and closes the day; prepares the heart to go patiently, serenely, faithfully, and gratefully through its active concerns; and the eyes to close in peace, and to enjoy the sleep of such as are beloved by God. The interval between these solemn seasons is filled up with successive acts of justice, truth, and kindness to others, and to the happy circle where they originate; and with a watchful, assiduous, and faithful superintendence of themselves. In the blessings of their intercourse with others, all around them successively share; while their friends and neighbours are delighted, strangers are welcomed, and their enemies are not excluded. The poor and suffering not only make peculiar claims, but find those claims cheerfully admitted.

With each other, life is only a sweet interchange of lovely affections, and evangelical offices; and assumes an aspect on which angels would smile with complacency, and heaven descend in a shower of blessings. Every day which passes over their heads calls forth from them all new displays of evangelical love, new efforts to make each other happy. Every place furnishes them new opportunities of showing how much 'more blessed it is to give, than to receive.' But the sabbath, of all days, surrounds them with peculiar lustre and loveliness. Of all places, the sanctuary most unfolds their excellence, sublimes their virtues, and prepares them to meet 'the assembly of the first-born.'

How can those who are young grow up in such a family, in the midst of such conversation, by the side of such examples, and in the sight of such excellence hourly displayed, and fail of becoming wise! The example is that of parents; the most venerable, and the most impressive which in this world was ever presented before their eyes. The excellence is that of brothers and sisters; the most lovely, the most alluring, which is found below the sun. Must not 'the angels of the Lord encamp round about' such a family? Will not God behold them with uninterrupted and unclouded smiles? Who can be a witness of the piety, the benevolence of such a family, and not exclaim,

> 'Thus on the heavenly hills
> The saints are bless'd above;
> Where joy like morning dew distils,
> And all the air is love?'

3. These observations teach us the wisdom and goodness of Christ in establishing a church in the world.

The church is one great family, in which all Christians are united, and enabled to walk together, and derive wisdom from each other. Here their correspondence is intimate, and their advantages are all concentrated. Their instructions, their reproofs, their prayers, their example are here mutually exhibited and mutually enjoyed. Here also these blessings are perpetuated. Religion here is visible from day to day, and from age

to age; and piety and beneficence shine, like the sun, with perennial beams. 'The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob. Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God. The Lord hath chosen Zion; he hath desired it for his habitation. This is my rest for ever; here will I dwell. I will abundantly bless her provision. I will satisfy her poor with bread. I will clothe her priests with salvation; and her saints shall shout aloud for joy.'

In this assembly of the faithful, the word and worship of God, the means of eternal life, and the religion of the gospel, have all been preserved. By the example, the labours, the prayers, and the piety of the church in one land, and in one age, have piety and salvation been extended and perpetuated, through other lands and other ages. This is the stem, from which have sprung all the blossoms and fruits of righteousness which have gladdened this desolate world. Here sinners in millions have seen, felt, and acknowledged the reality and power of religion; and under its divine influence have 'turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God.' Of Zion it shall be said, 'This and that man was born in her. The Lord shall count, when he writeth up the people, that this man was born there.'

4. We hence learn also how important it is, that Christians should adorn their profession with a holy life and conversation.

Considerations very numerous and highly interesting urge the performance of this duty. On this occasion I shall, however, omit them all, except those which have been insisted on in this discourse. These ought to be more than sufficient for a design so strongly commended by its own inherent importance, and so necessary to peace of mind, and the final approbation of God.

If religion be not fervent in the heart, it will not be conspicuous in the life. If it be not conspicuous in the life, saints will not be edified, and sinners will not be saved.

A dull, cold, stupid heart, and its necessary consequence, a dull, cold, and stupid life, a life resembling more that of a heathen moralist, than that of a disciple of Christ, robs a Christian of his proper usefulness, prevents the comfort which he might enjoy, and overcasts his brightest hopes of future acceptance. I speak of this man as a Christian; for such Christians there are Such there were in the church of Sardis; on whom Christ calls to 'strengthen the things which remained which were ready to die.' Nay, there are churches of this character. At Sardis there was such a church. But all persons of this character, whether churches or individuals, are mere burdens upon the kingdom of Christ; heavy weights, under which Christianity struggles, and languishes, and faints. Their profession is so extensively contradicted by their life, as to wound every good man, and to provoke the censure, scorn, and ridicule of every bad one. Not only is their own profession esteemed insincere, and themselves regarded as hypocrites; but Christians universally are scandalized for their sakes, and their religion pronounced to be a farce, a pretence, a cheat. The injury done in this manner is incalculable. Instead of improving at their side, in the enjoyment of their communion, and by means of their example; Christians learn from them only to be dull and slothful, as they are; to languish in all their duty; and, although they have 'a name to live,' to become the subjects of such a benumbing torpor as is scarcely distinguishable from the chill of death.

In the mean time, unrenewed men, discerning the mighty difference between the religion described and required in the gospel, and that which is displayed in the lives of such professors, not unnaturally though very unhappily, conclude, that practical religion is nowhere to be found. To induce this conclusion, such examples need not be very numerous; but, whenever they become frequent, it is drawn of course. Thus by a lukewarm life, and a profession violated by stupidity and negligence, the hearts of Christians are broken, and the salvation of sinners prevented. Vice and infidelity, in the mean time, rear their heads in triumph. 'The ways of Zion mourn, because few come to her solemn feasts,' and the path to heaven is trodden only by here and there a solitary traveller. He who would not be chargeable with the guilt of effectuating these deplorable evils, must 'awake to righteousness;' must watch, and strive, and pray alway; must resolve to do 'whatever his hand findeth to do with his might;' and must remember, that the day is approaching, when 'every man's work shall be made manifest: for that day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire.'

SERMON CXLVI.

THE MEANS OF GRACE.—ORDINARY MEANS OF GRACE.—RELIGIOUS MEDITATION.

Ponder the path of thy feet, and let thy ways be established.—Prov. iv. 26.

Our next subject of consideration, in the order formerly proposed, is religious meditation.

This duty is enjoined in the text. 'Ponder,' says David to Solomon, 'the path of thy feet; and let all thy ways be established.' By 'the path,' here mentioned, is undoubtedly intended the course of life; including all the thoughts, affections, and conduct of the man. The latter clause is rendered in the margin, 'And all thy ways shall be ordered aright.' The consequence therefore of pondering our course of life is

here declared to be, 'that all our way shall be ordered aright.' Of course, the text obviously contains this doctrine,

That habitual, religious meditation is a direct mean of our present and eternal well-being.

This subject I shall discuss under two heads:

I. *Religious meditation*, generally considered;

II. *Self-examination.*

Of the former of these I observe,

1. That it alone enables us to make religious truths a part of our own system of thought.

Knowledge is never of very serious use to man until it has become a part of his customary course of thinking. This is accomplished, when by familiar acquaintance we are enabled to call it up to view at pleasure, to arrange the parts so as easily to comprehend the whole, to perceive readily their mutual connexion and dependence, to discern the evidence by which each is supported, to refer each to its proper place, and to judge concerning the whole with correctness and expedition. In this manner every man of common sense thinks concerning every subject with which he is well acquainted; and the power of thinking in this manner he gains only by meditation. Whatever information we may possess, it is of no serious use to us, until it is thus made our own. The knowledge which barely passes through the mind, resembles that which is gained of a country by a traveller, who is whirled through it in a stage, or by a bird flitting over it, in his passage to another.

No interesting subject is examined by the mind in this cursory way. Every such subject it instinctively turns over and over; and never desists, until it has gained a familiar and comprehensive knowledge of the whole. In this situation we may be said to understand a subject, so as to constitute it a part of our system of thought, and to make it a directory of our opinions and conduct.

This truth is at least as applicable to religious subjects, as to others. Whatever knowledge we derive, either from the Bible, or from other sources of instruction, is thus made our own, only by meditation,

2. Meditation enables us to feel religious subjects with strength and efficacy.

Every person who has attended to the state of his own mind, must have discovered that there is a wide difference between perceiving and feeling; and that of two things equally understood, one has passed lightly over his mind, while the other has left a deep impression. A religious man particularly will easily remember, that the truths of the gospel have at times barely swept the surface of his mind; and at others have powerfully affected his heart. He will easily remember, that the same things, whether arguments, images, or motives, have affected him in these widely different manners. If he will bestow a little pains on this subject, he will farther remember, that he has often been astonished at this fact, and has looked back to find what mysterious cause prevented him from realizing at one time, what he so deeply felt at another.

That, and that only, which we feel, moves us to useful action. What is merely perceived, or understood, scarcely moves us at all. The 'pipe' must be relished, before the 'dancing' will begin. The 'mourning' must be felt before we shall unite in the 'lamentation.' A great proportion of mankind in Christian countries believe loosely and generally the divine origin and the genuine doctrines of the Scriptures. But while they thus believe, they live, and feel, and act, just as if there were no Scriptures. Almost all men believe the existence and government of God. Still they live as if there were no God; or as if he exercised no government over the world, or over themselves. Multitudes believe that Christ is the Saviour of men; and yet never think of applying to him for their own salvation!

Religious meditation is the only method in which men learn to feel the concerns of religion. In this method the doctrines, precepts, and motives, presented to us in the Scriptures, which are quietly and carelessly admitted by most men in Christian countries, and which thus neither amend the life, nor affect the heart, are, when often and deeply pondered, brought home to the soul, set strongly before its view, applied to itself, and felt to be of real and momentous import. In this way we begin to fear and hope, to mourn and rejoice, to desire and loathe, and to seek and shun them according to their respective natures. In this way only do we regard the things of religion with profit to ourselves, and consider them with an efficacious attention. In every other situation of mind, we are 'settled upon our lees,' and instinctively say, 'The Lord will not do good; neither will the Lord do evil.'

3. Religious meditation renders the thoughts and affections thus gained habitual.

Nothing in the moral concerns of man is of much importance to him, until it is formed into a habit. Every opinion and every impression which is transiently entertained, is entertained to little purpose. If it produce any consequences, they are momentary and useless. In the mean time, other things of an unhappy tendency, having already become habitual, and possessing the controlling power of habit, return with speed and violence, and drive away the feeble and short-lived influence of such opinions and impressions. Thus that which, if continued, might become the 'glory and beauty of man, is as the flower of the grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away.'

Habits are formed only by repetition. That which is often repeated becomes, by the mere tendency of nature, more and more interesting and necessary; and acquires, therefore, a daily increasing power over man. After it has continued for a season, and gained a certain degree of strength, it becomes in a sense immovable; acquires a decisive control over the conduct, and is rarely, and not without extreme difficulty, overcome.

This influence of habit seems to be inwrought, as a primary characteristic, in the very nature of intelligent beings. No other consideration will explain, at least in many situations, the permanent continuance of either virtue or vice. Under this influence only does the drunkard resist all motives, and adhere immovably to his cups, the idler to his sloth, the swearer to his profaneness, the spendthrift to his prodigality, the thief to his stealing, and all other sinners to their respective iniquities. Under this influence the mature Christian overcomes the most powerful temptations, and advances firmly to the rack or the fagot. Under the same influence will the inhabitants of hell persist in their rebellion, in spite of all the motives which so powerfully persuade them to cease from sin. Finally, 'the church of the first-born,' and the 'innumerable company of angels,' will, under the same influence also, persevere

in their obedience, whatever temptations may solicit them to revolt from God.

Moral habits, their strength, and their consequences, are all produced by a repetition of those things of which they are constituted in the mind. In other words, they are produced by frequent meditation on the several subjects out of which they are formed, together with a repeated indulgence of the emotions which such meditation creates. Ultimately, therefore, they grow out of religious meditation.

Of self-examination, proposed as the second head of discourse, I observe,

1. That it alone makes us acquainted with ourselves.

Every man has a certain moral character, partly like that of others, and partly peculiar to himself. This character in both respects is incapable of being known without self-examination. Our own hearts answer, generally, to the hearts of others, 'as the face to the face in water.' By knowing our own hearts only, can we therefore know effectually the general character of man. It may, perhaps, be said, that this character is delineated with perfect exactness and supreme skill in the Scriptures, and by searching them may therefore be known. The position I admit; the consequence I deny. The instruction given us in the Scriptures concerning this subject will never be understood, unless applied to ourselves in the examination of our own hearts. Invaluable as the knowledge is which they communicate concerning this subject, it is, like all other knowledge, never realized, never made our own, except by meditation.

But there are many things in our own characters which are peculiar to ourselves. All these exist in the heart alone; and there only can they be either taught, or learned. Even the very opinions which we entertain, together with the manner and degree in which we entertain them, will never be perfectly understood by us, without this investigation for ourselves. We suppose ourselves to embrace many opinions, which a critical inquiry will show we have never received. Many others we imagine ourselves to have admitted without a doubt, which by this trial we shall find regarded by us only in an uncertain and conjectural manner.

Still more ignorant are we of our dispositions. About no subject have the apprehensions of man been more erroneous, than about his will, affections, and propensities. Self-knowledge, in this respect chiefly, has been proverbially acknowledged to be extremely difficult, as well as highly important. Hence the memorable observation, *Id, γνωθι σεαυτον, e cælo descendit:* an observation grounded perhaps equally on the usefulness and the difficulties of the precept. Whatever man can accomplish in this arduous concern must be accomplished by self-examination. He must watch carefully every movement of his disposition; the commencement and the progress of every affection, aim, resolution, and habit; the manner in which everything affects him; and the means by which he is affected; the causes of his success and his failures, in regulating the state of his mind; and, generally, all his movements within, and all his impulses from without.

In this way, and in this alone, can the sinner learn effectually that he is a sinner. In this way only will he discern the nature and extent of his guilt, the strength of his evil propensities, the obstinacy of his unbelief and impenitence, the uniformity of his disobedience, the completeness of his ruin, his exposure to final condemnation, and his utter indisposition to return to God. All these things he learns only and effectually by observing them as they exist and operate in himself, or arise, as consequences, from the state of his own mind. Whatever knowledge he may possess of them from instruction, even from that of the Scriptures, it can never be of any serious use to him, until he has made it his own, by an investigation of his heart and life. Whatever he may have heard or read of sin, and guilt, and danger, it is to him merely news concerning other men, not knowledge of himself. Other men, according to the views which he entertains before he commences the examination of himself, are sinners, odious to God, children of wrath, and in danger of perdition. But for himself, he is almost innocent, and perhaps entirely safe. Should you prove the contrary to him by arguments which he will acknowledge to be unanswerable, you have gained nothing. The application to himself will still be wanting, and the story might almost as well have been told to another person, or communicated in an unknown tongue.

In the same manner only does the Christian learn that he is a Christian. To decide this great point even hopefully, his heart and his life must pass before him in continual review. The doctrines by which he is governed, the affections which he exercises, the actions which he performs, and the views with which they are performed, must be daily scrutinized; and from them all must be derived the momentous result. Without this diligent investigation of himself, no man, however long, or however eminently he has possessed the Christian character, can even with well-founded hope conclude that he is a Christian. In the same manner also must every question which we ask concerning our moral character be answered. Unless we thus explore ourselves, whatever may be our state, we cannot understand it; and shall on the one hand, be exposed to all its evils, and lose, on the other, no small part of its blessings.

2. Self-examination naturally prepares men to turn from sin to holiness, and to advance from one degree of holiness to another.

Conviction of sin is eminently the result of self-examination, as, I think, must already be evident to a very moderate attention. Equally applicable is this remark to all apprehensions concerning our future destiny, all efficacious fears concerning the anger of God, all affecting views of our helplessness, all thorough convictions of the necessity of betaking ourselves to Christ for salvation. 'They that are whole need not a physician.' But all are whole, in the sense intended by our Saviour, until convinced of their diseased condition, by solemnly attending to their own case. So long as this is not done, there will be no recourse to the physician of the soul.

Two objections, or at least two difficulties, may here perhaps arise in the minds of my audience. One is, that the effect which I have attributed to self-examination is to be attributed to the Spirit of grace. The other is, that I have elsewhere attributed the same effect to prayer. On the former I observe, that the Spirit of grace operates on the mind, in this state of its moral concerns, chiefly by leading it to a solemn investigation of itself. On the latter I observe, that prayer has this efficacy in the manner recited in a former discourse,

principally by prompting us to examine ourselves more effectually, than any other exercise of the mind, and more thoroughly to explore our moral condition. Self-examination is the primary mean by which the Spirit of God brings the soul into this state. This glorious agent can, I acknowledge, accomplish this work in any other manner which he shall choose. But this seems plainly to be the manner in which it is usually accomplished. Indeed, it seems difficult to conceive how convictions of sin, whatever might be their cause, could exist, at least to any extent, without self-examination. To such convictions it seems absolutely necessary that the soul should know its own guilt; and to this knowledge it seems equally indispensable, that it should explore its own moral character and conduct.

Of prayer it may be truly said, that its nature is very imperfectly understood by him who does not know that, to a considerable extent, it is employed in the most solemn, the most intimate, and the most effectual examination of ourselves. The advantages which prayer furnishes for this employment are singular and supreme. But no man will ever avail himself of them, who does not more or less occupy the intervals between the seasons of prayer in 'communing' diligently 'with his own heart.' It was in this view of prayer, that I exhibited it as contributing so efficaciously to a solemn conviction of his guilt in the mind of a sinner.

Nor is this employment less effectual in enabling us to advance from one degree of grace to another. To do this, the Christian must know his present and past condition, that he may renounce whatever is amiss, and retain whatever is commendable. Unless he know his sins, how can he renounce them? Unless he know his weaknesses, how can he guard against them? Unless he perceive the means of his success in past cases, how can he adopt them again? Unless he discern the causes of former failures, how can he be safe from future ones? If he have no acquaintance with his backslidings, how can he either repent, or reform? If he be ignorant of the means by which he has heretofore improved in holiness, how can he be enabled to improve hereafter? Thus the most important conduct of man, as a moral being, is eminently dependent on the investigation of himself.

From self-examination also spring, in a great measure, all our resolutions of amendment. The seasons in which, by looking into ourselves, we learn our guilt, our danger, and the indispensable necessity of an alteration in our lives, are those in which the mind exerts itself in earnest to accomplish such alteration. In this situation alone are resolutions made of sufficient strength and solemnity materially to affect the life. To resolve firmly against any evil, we must feel it. To resolve with efficacy on the pursuit of any good, we must realize that in an important sense it is good to us.

Finally: some of the most affecting views of the Divine character grow out of this employment. God is never seen in the most interesting manner, except when seen in relation to ourselves. Whether we regard his hatred of sin, and his determination to execute vengeance on the impenitent, or his boundless goodness in forgiving, redeeming, and sanctifying mankind; we see these things in a far clearer light, and feel them with far greater strength, as exercised directly about ourselves, than as employed about others. When we come to discern our own sins, their guilt and their aggravations, we first begin to form proper views of the awful justice of God in our condemnation. At the same time, the first sound and affecting apprehensions which we entertain of the goodness of God, are awakened by a strong sense of our own need of his mercy, and an humble hope of our own interest in his forgiving love.

The omnipresence of God is then only realized, when we consider him as present with ourselves, as dwelling with us and around us. The omniscience of God is never brought to the view of the mind, until it regards him as exploring its own recesses, tracing all its secret windings, and accompanying itself with his all-seeing eye, while employed in unravelling the mysteries of its own iniquity. Generally, God is seen and realized in our religious meditations, particularly in those which are directed to our own hearts, to be a vastly different being from that which we imagine for ourselves in loose contemplation, and lukewarm inquiry.

From these observations it is evident, that religious meditation is not only the effect, but the cause also, of that soberness of mind, exhibited in the Scriptures as indispensably necessary to sound wisdom. Of this character, it scarcely needs to be observed, the benefits are numberless, and surpassing estimation.

3. Self-examination is a principal source of self-government, and therefore of peace of mind and solid enjoyment.

On the knowledge of ourselves, obtained in this manner only, the knowledge of our imperfections, passions, appetites, sins, temptations, and dangers, and an acquaintance with such means as we possess of strength, encouragement, and safety, our self-government almost entirely depends. In acquiring the knowledge of these things, we both learn how to govern ourselves, and gradually obtain an earnest and fixed desire to perform this duty.

Without self-examination there can be little self-government: without self-government there can be no peace of mind. Peace of mind is the result only of a consciousness of having done our duty. But of this duty self-government is one of the three great branches; the other two being piety to God, and beneficence to mankind. These can never be separately performed. Evangelical virtue, the only spirit with which either was ever truly performed, is a thing perfectly one; without any variety or division in its nature. Towards all the objects of our duty, whether God, our neighbour, or ourselves, it operates in the same manner.

Besides, self-government is indispensable in its very nature to the performance of all other duty. This might be evinced with respect to every case in which duty can be performed; but may be sufficiently illustrated in the following: If we do not control our envy, wrath, or revenge, we cannot be contented, meek, or forgiving. If we do not subdue our selfishness, we can never, in the sense of the gospel, love either God, or mankind.

But, without recurrence to these proofs, the case is perfectly plain in its own nature. In the experience of every man it is abundantly evident, that, so long as his passions and appetites are unsubdued, they keep the mind in a continual agitation. The appetites are syrens, which sing only to deceive, and charm only to destroy. He who listens to them is certain of being shipwrecked in the end. The passions are equally

dangerous, equally fatal, by their violence, and toss the soul with the tempestuous fury of billows which never rest. Without a pilot, without a compass, without a helm, no hope of safety remains for the unhappy voyager, but in the hushing of the storm, and the subsidence of the tumultuous ocean.

Ungoverned desire, and fear, and rage, and revenge, dwell only in the gloom of a dungeon, and in the midst of maniacs. In such a cell it is impossible for soft-eyed, gentle-minded, peace even to enter From such companions she can only fly. These unclean spirits must be subdued, and chained, and banished, their curses and blasphemies must have died upon the ear, the windows of their mansion must be opened to the light of day, the house must be swept and garnished anew, before this divine guest can be induced to bless the habitation with her presence, her smiles, and her joys.

But without peace of conscience there is, there can be, no solid, rational, lasting enjoyment. Real and enduring good must begin at home. The soul, which is not self-approved can never hope for the approbation of God. The soul which is not at peace with itself, cannot be at peace with its Maker, nor exercise a pacific spirit towards its fellow creatures. What real good then can it hope for? What permanent enjoyment can it possibly share?

REMARKS.

1. From these observations it is plain, that religious meditation is of high importance to mankind.

It has been shown, if I am not deceived, that from this source are derived our profitable possession of religious instruction, whencesoever obtained, our realizing useful sense of religious things of every kind, our attainment of desirable habits, both of thinking and feeling, our knowledge of ourselves, our best preparation to turn from sin, and to advance through superior degrees of holiness, and our self-government, peace of mind, and solid enjoyment. Each of these benefits is sufficiently great to justify the remark which has been made above; and all of them united, place religious meditation in a light eminently strong, clear, and affecting. As a mean of salvation it holds a high rank, a place of distinguishing importance. Most reasonably, most kindly, then, are we required to 'prove ourselves,' to 'examine ourselves, whether we be in the faith,' obedience, and kingdom of God. Most mercifully are we directed to 'ponder the path of life:' for the natural, the proper, the inestimable consequence is, that 'our ways will be ordered aright.'

2. The same observations teach us the pre-eminent folly of those who neglect religious meditation, especially the examination of themselves.

In the minds of these persons, instructions from abroad will be like furniture thrown into a garret, out of place, and out of use; incapable, until it shall have been arranged in its proper order, of being applied to any valuable purpose. In these minds, also, nothing good will be either strongly felt or habitually exercised. Every moral, every valuable thing, whether a truth, a precept, or an affection, will, in such minds, float at random, as the down of the thistle through the atmosphere. In the moment of its appearance it will vanish. The best purposes, the firmest resolves, of such minds, are mere abortions, and exist only to expire.

Men of this character can never become possessed of self-knowledge; a kind of knowledge so useful, so excellent, that even the heathen supposed the precept enjoining it to have descended from heaven. If they are deformed by sin, if they are in the most imminent hazard of ruin, they can never know this as it ought to be known. They can neither understand nor feel their real guilt, their real danger, or the real necessity of providing for their escape. They are, therefore, utterly unprepared to 'turn from the error of their ways,' and to 'save their souls alive.'

There are in the Christian world men who, under the influence of strong convictions of conscience, and with the aid of that anxious investigation of themselves which always accompanies such convictions, have, by the influence of the Holy Ghost, been 'turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God;' and who yet have afterward become lukewarm in religion, and, with a Laodicean spirit, in a great measure ceased to 'commune with their own hearts.' All these persons linger at the point where they originally stood, and yield up both the means, and the hopes, of improvement in the Christian character. I do not intend, that this is absolutely the fact; for no Christian is absolutely destitute of self-examination. But, so far as this destitution exists, he who is the subject of it, will cease to keep his body and spirit in subjection, to 'grow in grace,' to acquire peace of conscience, and 'joy in the Holy Ghost.'

Why do sinners refuse to examine themselves, and to gain the blessings to which this conduct gives birth? Plainly, because they are too slothful, or too much alarmed at the thought of uncovering the mass of sin and guilt in their hearts. Thus they would rather decline every hope of good, than encounter the labour of searching themselves, or turn their eyes upon the dismal prospect within. The latter is the usual and predominant evil. The picture is too deformed, too dreadful, and, sooner than behold it, they will run the hazard of damnation. But is not knowledge always better than ignorance? Is not truth always more profitable than delusion? To know the truth in this case, might prove the means of eternal life. To continue ignorant of it cannot fail to terminate in their ruin. What folly can be more complete than to hazard this tremendous evil, rather than to encounter the pain of looking into ourselves; a pain abundantly overpaid by the profit which is its certain consequence? Such persons hoodwink themselves, and then feel safe from the evils of the precipice to which they are advancing, because they cannot see their danger. They make the darkness in which they grope, and stumble, and fall.

3. These observations also teach us, that this neglect is inexcusable.

Meditation on every moral and religious subject is always in our power. Every man is able to look into himself, and into every moral subject concerning which he has been instructed. Nor is the performance of this duty attended with any real difficulty. The motives to it are infinite. God has required it; our own temporal and eternal interest indispensably demands it; the benefits of it are immense. Sloth only, and a deplorable dread of knowing what we are, can be alleged in behalf of our neglect.

But to how low a situation must he be reduced, how forlorn must be his condition, who can plead for his

conduct, in so interesting a case, no reasons but these! Can these reasons excuse him even to himself? Will they excuse him before the bar of God? What can even self-flattery, with her silver tongue, allege in his behalf, but that he is too slothful, or too indifferent, to the command of God? This is worse than the wretched plea of the unprofitable servant in the parable. Even he was able to say, that he thought his Master was 'an austere man,' and 'hard' in his requisition.

But, whatever may be thought of these excuses, let no sinner pretend that he has laboured for eternal life, until he has thoroughly examined his heart, and devoted himself to religious contemplation. This is a duty which every man can perform, a duty to which every man is bound, a duty, in the way of which reason can find no obstacle. He who will not perform it, ought therefore to say that he will not; and to acknowledge that he values the indulgence of his sloth, or the sluggish quiet of self-ignorance, more than the salvation of his soul.

SERMON CXLVII.

THE MEANS OF GRACE—ORDINARY MEANS OF GRACE—THE DUTY OF EDUCATING CHILDREN RELIGIOUSLY.—OBJECTIONS.

Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.—Prov. xxii. 6.

The next subject of inquiry, in the order proposed, is the religious education of children.

In a former Discourse I observed, that the word 'train,' originally denotes to 'draw along by a regular and steady course of exertions;' and is, hence, very naturally used to signify drawing from one action to another by persuasions, promises, and other efforts, continually repeated. The 'way in which a child should go,' as was also observed in that Discourse, is undoubtedly the way in which it is best for him to go; particularly with respect to his eternal well-being. With this explanation, the text will be seen,

I. *To enjoin upon parents the religious education of their children.*

II. *To teach the manner in which this duty should be performed.*

III. *To promise a blessing to such as faithfully discharge this duty; and thus to present powerful motives to the performance.*

These I shall examine in the order proposed.

The duty enjoined in the text has, by multitudes of mankind, been strenuously denied. "Children religiously educated," say these persons, "will regularly be biassed to one side of the case, and equally prejudiced against the other. Should they then believe in the divine revelation of the Scriptures, and adopt any one of those numerous systems of doctrines and precepts which have existed in the Christian world, their belief would spring from prejudice only, and not from candour, investigation, or evidence. Consequently, it will be destitute alike of solid support and useful efficacy. Children would, therefore, be incomparably better situated, were they permitted to grow up without any extraneous impulse, with respect to religion; and, being thus unprejudiced, would select for themselves, with much more probability, whatever is true and right."

To oppose this scheme will be the design of the following Discourse; and in the progress of the opposition all the proof of the propriety of performing this duty may be advantageously alleged. As the scheme is addressed to Christians, the arguments against it must be also addressed to Christians. I observe, then,

1. That the mind, when uneducated, is a mere blank with respect to all useful knowledge; and with respect to the knowledge of moral subjects, as truly as any other.

Both infidels and others (for unhappily there are others who adopt this scheme) will acknowledge the truth of the proposition here asserted. It will therefore need no proof. What then will be the consequence of the omission contended for? The uneducated child will grow up without any knowledge of moral subjects, until the season allotted by God for instruction, and the only useful season is past; all future instructions will find his attachments and his memory pre-occupied, and will make and leave feeble impressions, little regarded, and soon forgotten. His passions and appetites, having from the beginning increased their strength by the mere course of nature, and the want of seasonable control, will effectually resist every attempt to communicate and impress such doctrines as oppose their favourite dictates. The authority and influence of the parent also, which are indispensably necessary to infix all important lessons in the mind of the child, will in a great measure have ceased. Of course, the instructions thus given will slide over the understanding, and leave no trace of their existence upon the heart.

Besides, the child will naturally believe that things so long untaught cannot, in the parent's own view, be of any serious consequence. Instinctively will he say, "If these things are true, and of such importance, why have I hitherto been kept a stranger to them? I might have died in my childhood, or in my youth. Had this been the case, where should I have been now? Did parental tenderness disregard the eternal well-being of my soul, and leave me to become an outcast of heaven, merely because I had not arrived at adult years? Is then the eternal life of the soul at twelve or fifteen of

no value, and at twenty-five of infinite importance? Can it be, that I am destined to endless happiness, or misery; and yet that my father, and still more my mother, should have felt this vast subject, and loved me so little as to let me lie to the present hour in profound ignorance of this amazing destination? Had I died before this time, I had died 'for lack of vision.' The things themselves are therefore not true: at least, they have never been seriously believed by those from whom I have derived my being." To these remonstrances, it is hardly necessary to observe, there could be no satisfactory answer.

At the period proposed, therefore, the instructions in question would be useless. The mind, already grown up with those views only which a savage entertains of moral subjects, few, gross, false, and fatal, would now be incapable of imbibing better; and, in the chief concern of man, would continue, notwithstanding all the light and all the blessings of the gospel, a savage for ever.

2. If children are not educated to just moral principles, they will of course imbibe those which are false.

The mind is by nature prone to wrong. By this I intend, that it is prone to forget God; to exercise towards him neither love, reverence, gratitude, nor submission; to be governed by selfish, and not benevolent affections towards mankind; and to indulge pride, envy, wrath, sloth, lewdness, intemperance, and lightness of mind. In a word, it is prone, to be impious, unkind, insincere, unjust, and dissolute. These, and the like things, notwithstanding the ingenious discoveries of infidel philosophy, I call wrong; because they are, beyond a doubt, dishonourable and displeasing to God, injurious to our fellow men, and debasing to ourselves. They do no good; and produce all the evil which exists. That the human race are naturally prone to these things is certain; because children evince their propensity to them as soon as they commence moral action. Every man who sees at all, sees some or other of these characteristics in every one, except himself.

There are but two methods in which these propensities may be either removed, or checked: the grace and providence of God, and the labour of man: I mean the labour of man, especially when in the best manner exerted in the beginning of life, to educate children in virtue. That God may be expected to remove, or even to check them, will hardly be admitted by most of the men against whom I am contending. But they will universally acknowledge that the labours of man are important to this end, and that they coincide in their efficacy, if he acts at all, with the agency of God. So far then as these evils can be exterminated or restrained, the labours of man are not only useful, but indispensable.

Childhood is the seedtime of life; the season in which everything sown in the mind springs up readily, grows with peculiar vigour, and produces an abundant harvest. In this happy season the garden is fitted by the Author of our being for the best cultivation. If good seeds are then sown, valuable productions may be confidently expected; if not, weeds of every rank and poisonous kind will spring up of themselves, of which no future industry will be able to cleanse the soil.

What is implanted in childhood takes deep root also, and can never be eradicated in future life. The principles established in this golden period are regarded with more veneration and attachment, are retained longer, and are more powerfully operative, than any other. They re-appear, after having been for a great length of time invisible; and renew their energy, after having been supposed hopelessly extinct. Such then being confessedly the importance and strength of early instructions, how interesting must it be in the view of every sober man to prevent, while they can be prevented, the immense evils of wrong principles, and to secure, while they can be secured, the inestimable benefits of those which are right.

The child who is not religiously educated in the dawn of life must, even with the happiest future advantages, be ignorant of many interesting moral doctrines during all that season in which doctrines are capable of high and happy influence. In the mean time, he will also imbibe many others which are false and malignant. No man is better than his principles will make him. Virtue is nothing but voluntary obedience to truth; vice is nothing but voluntary obedience to falsehood. The doctrines which he obeys will form his whole character. If they are false, they will form him to sin, to odiousness, and to ruin; and that they will be false, at least chiefly, if he is left to choose for himself, needs no proof. Thus the child left, according to this scheme, without a religious education, will become a savage in his morals, not from disposition only, but from ignorance also. In his mind there will be no good principles to counteract the bad; nothing to enlighten or direct him in the path of virtue; nothing to suggest the necessity, the wisdom, or the duty of resisting sin, and avoiding temptation. Such a child will, of course, become a mere beast of prey; and he who sends him out into society is more hostile to its peace, than he who unchains a wolf, and turns him loose into the street.

3. The abettors of this scheme contradict it in their own conduct.

Many of these men assiduously teach their children industry, economy, justice, veracity, and kindness to their fellow men. Why do they educate their children in this manner? They will answer, Because they think these things useful to their children, and childhood the time in which they can be most effectually taught. Let us examine their conduct by their own rules.

All these things are by a part, and not a small part, of mankind denied to be useful. They are of course in dispute. I return them, therefore, their own reasoning, and say, "You ought not to teach your children industry until they are grown to adult years, lest they should practise industry through prejudice, and not from candour and conviction. Multitudes think sloth preferable to industry. Why do you forestall the judgment of your children, and give them by education a bias to the other side of this question?

"Why do you teach them economy? Great numbers of mankind, and among them many persons of superior talents, have thought profusion preferable to economy, and have proved the sincerity of their opinion by their own prodigality. The question is hitherto undecided. You ought not to prejudice the minds of your children, but leave them to examine for themselves.

"Why do you teach them justice? Fraud has a numerous train of advocates, who will strenuously urge the error of your judgment. Ought not your children to find the field of decision unoccupied?

"Why do you teach them truth? David 'said in his haste, that all men were liars:' and universal experience proves that the number is very great of those who think truth of little value. Preclude not your children from the chance of judging candidly on this important question.

"Why do you so sedulously teach them kindness? Mark the vast multitude of those who prove by their conduct that they think this attribute a weak and contemptible characteristic of man. You are therefore prejudicing your children concerning a subject which is far from being settled, and of pre-eminent importance to their success in the world. All these things are as strenuously opposed and disputed in the world, as piety, faith, repentance, or evangelical good-will. There is, therefore, no justification of your conduct on this ground.

"Can you pretend that piety is not as rational, and as important to man, as either of the things which you enjoin upon your children? If love and reverence to God are not important, nothing is. All good comes from God. When he gives, we enjoy: when he withholds, we are destitute. But he cannot be expected to give, he certainly will not give, to those who finally neither love nor reverence his character. If he is not believed nor trusted, he cannot be reverenced nor loved. Without faith, therefore, piety cannot exist. If sin be not hated, regretted, nor renounced, or in other words, 'repented of,' piety will in like manner be impossible.

"Besides, you teach your children, as you teach others, both with diligence and ardour, to disbelieve, despise, and hate the Scriptures. The Scriptures, you know, profess themselves to be a revelation from God. To the question whether they are such a revelation, Christians believe the positive, and you the negative answer. You will not deny, that they have the same right to adopt their belief, and their consequent obedience, which you have to adopt your disbelief, and your consequent disobedience. Neither can you doubt that he who believes with the best evidence is the wisest man. Their arguments you have utterly failed to answer. Your objections they claim to have refuted; and can plead this strong proof of the justice of their claim, furnished by yourselves, that for many years you have quitted the field of discussion. On good grounds, therefore, they regard you as vanquished. In this respect, at least, you must acknowledge that they have an advantage over you, which is infinite. Should the Scriptures prove to be false, they will lose nothing by believing them. Should they prove to be true, you will gain nothing, and lose your all!

"The case of yourselves, and Christian parents, is the case of your children and theirs. By teaching your children to disbelieve the Scriptures, you expose them to infinite loss. Christians, by teaching their children to believe the Scriptures, do what is in their power to secure to them infinite gain. You may therefore be challenged to show, that their conduct is not wiser and more defensible than yours.

"But it is enough for the present purpose, that you prove yourselves insincere in your scheme, by pursuing the contrary conduct. You prove unanswerably that, in your opinion, children ought diligently to be taught that system of moral principles which you think good and useful. The conduct to which you object in Christians is exactly the same. All that they teach, they think good, eminently good, and infinitely useful."

4. As virtue is nothing but obedience to truth, so truth must be taught, before virtue can be practised.

If the former part of this position be admitted, the latter will be self-evident. As the former cannot be denied with even a pretence of argument, I shall take it for granted that truth must be taught to children, in order to render them virtuous. But the religion of the Scriptures is the only system of truth which will make children virtuous. This I say with confidence, because no other system of doctrine has ever made men virtuous. Cicero testifies this of the western heathen philosophy. The Brahmins frankly acknowledge it of the eastern.* Every man of common information knows it to be true of infidel philosophy.

If, then, children are to be rendered virtuous while they are children, that is, while there is the best reason to hope that they may become virtuous, they must be educated in the religious system of the Scriptures.

5. Virtue is a simple, indivisible thing; and must therefore exist, and be taught entire, or not at all.

There never was an instance in which a man was possessed of half the character of virtue; or in which he exercised the affections and voluntarily performed the duties of virtue towards one class of objects, and not towards another, and towards all. A man may unquestionably be virtuous, and yet not perfectly virtuous: but it is impossible that he should be the subject of piety, and not of benevolence; or of benevolence, and not of piety. It is impossible that he should 'love God, whom he hath not seen, and hate (or not love) his brother, whom he hath seen.' It is equally impossible to love our fellow creatures, and not love him who made, preserves, and blesses both us and them. Equally impossible is it, as was shown in the preceding Discourse, to love either God or man, without governing our selfish passions. Thus it is plain, that virtue cannot exist in parcels, or by halves.

As virtue cannot exist in this manner, so it cannot to any purpose be taught in this manner. The whole use of teaching is to execute the practical end of the instructions which are given. If these are limited in such a manner as not to comprise the objects in view, they will necessarily fail of their effect. Partial instructions on this subject fall utterly short of teaching what virtue is; and must therefore be fruitless. Virtue is love to God, love to mankind, and the subordination of all our passions to this great affection. If this be not taught, nothing is taught to the purpose in view. The very doctrine, that a part of this is virtue, will, by leading him into a fundamental and fatal error, effectually prevent the child from becoming virtuous. Thus the Christian system alone teaches what virtue is, and leads alone to the attainment of this glorious attribute, and the practical obedience of its dictates. If children, then, are not religiously educated, they will be perfectly destitute of all human aid towards becoming virtuous. Should they die before they arrive at adult years, they must, if this scheme be pursued, die without a hope.

6. If children are not religiously educated, they will, instead of being candid, be strongly prejudiced against Christianity.

The professed intention of those with whom I con-

* They declare that in the present *Yogue* all men are only sinful See Asiat. Research.; Maur. Ind. Antiq.; and Bapt. Miss. Reports.

tend, is to establish candour in the minds of children, and prevent them from bias and prejudice. This, undoubtedly, wears a fair appearance; but, like many other specious things, is false and hollow. Children, by means of the evil propensities which I have mentioned, are naturally prejudiced against everything which is morally good. They are unfriendly to the Scriptures, to God, and to their duty; and are prone to all unbelief, and to all sin. The sin which they love and practise, the Scriptures forbid; and threaten the commission of it with the most awful penalties. Still they choose to practise it; and therefore hate the Scriptures, by which it is thus forbidden and threatened. Thus their minds are spontaneously prejudiced against the religion of the Scriptures. If, then, they are not religiously educated, the very bias, the very want of candour, which the authors of this scheme professedly design to prevent, will exist of course in the highest degree. Thus the scheme defeats itself, and frustrates the only purpose for which it is proposed.

These truths are obvious in fact, particularly in the conduct of the objectors themselves. Both they and their children are always prejudiced against Christianity. Among all the infidels whom I have known, I do not recollect an individual who appeared to me to have examined thoroughly even the objections of infidels against the Scriptures; much less the arguments which have been adduced by Christians in support of their divine origin. I do not remember one who appeared to have investigated with serious attention the truth, evidence, or excellence of the doctrines which they contain. So far as my knowledge extends, they have all rejected them both in the gross, and without a single earnest inquiry. Such cannot be the conduct either of candour or common sense.

7. Children, however religiously educated, cannot think too favourably of Christianity: and in this sense cannot be prejudiced.

The Christian system is the only system of moral truth, and Christianity is the only real virtue. 'All things pertaining to life and to godliness' are revealed in the Scriptures, either expressly, or by plain and necessary implication. Man has added nothing defensible to what they contain on the subjects of duty and salvation, the character of God, or the moral character of himself. Obedience to the law, which they alone publish, is the only virtue; the only voluntary conformity to the will of God; the only foundation of praise and reward.

But truth and virtue cannot be loved too intensely; neither can be so highly regarded as its worth demands. All men esteem and love these divine objects incomparably less than they merit. In the estimation and affection of glorified beings, their excellence will rise higher and higher, and their lustre become more bright, beautiful, and lovely, throughout all eternity. It is impossible for a created being to regard them so highly as their importance deserves. The martyr, who expired on the rack, or perished in the flames, for his attachment to these inestimable objects, gave to their worth the highest testimony in his power. But even this testimony was faint and languid, compared with their inherent glory and beauty. Should the truth of this assertion be questioned; let it be remembered, that the Son of God became incarnate, and died on the cross, to restore the love of truth and the exercise of virtue to the soul of man.

Thus the argument on which this scheme is built is itself founded on a gross and miserable falsehood, and a proof of lamentable ignorance concerning the subject in question. Who can estimate truth too highly, when he remembers that it is the basis and the support of the divine kingdom; or virtue, when he perceives that it is the object of boundless complacency, and eternal reward; when he remembers especially that truth and virtue are the beauty and glory of Jehovah?

8. God has expressly commanded men thus to educate their children.

'The foolishness of God is wiser than men.' The objector here attributes foolishness to God; but it is easily seen that his own arrogated wisdom terminates only in folly; that his scheme is idle and ruinous; and that the argument on which it professedly rests, is a mere falsehood. Such, in the end, are to the eye of sober investigation, all the devices of that vain, deceitful philosophy, which men so proudly exalt in opposition to divine wisdom.

But were we unable to detect either the folly or the mischief of this scheme; or to evince, by arguments of our own, the wisdom of the divine command; still every Christian would find his doubts satisfied, and his duty clear, in the command itself. 'Thus saith the Lord,' is to him a pole-star, an infallible guide over the ocean of doubt. To know that anything is the will of God, is enough. He obeys, and asks no reasons to prove his obedience wise and safe. Would he even preserve the character of consistency, he cannot fail to perform this duty. Religion he esteems infinitely important to himself; can he fail to teach it to his children, that they also may share in so vast a blessing?

Were he to omit this duty, he would sacrifice his children; for he would lose the best opportunity of doing them the greatest good which is ever to be in his power. But to omit it wholly, would be impossible, unless he should cease to live like a religious man. All his religious conduct would teach with commanding efficacy the very truths which his voice denied. They would unceasingly behold religion in all the duties of his life; they would hear it every morning and every evening in his family devotions.

REMARKS.

From these observations it is evident,

1. That the scheme of education against which I have contended is false, vain, and mischievous.

It is false, because the argument by which it is supported is false; because the opinions which accompany it are erroneous; and because the views with which it is professedly supported are hypocritical. This is clear from the conduct of those who defend it; since that is directly contradictory to the scheme itself, and to the reasons alleged in its defence. It is vain, because, instead of accomplishing the purpose intended, it would effectuate the contrary purpose. Instead of increasing candour, and producing investigation, it would only prevent investigation, and advance prejudice. It is mischievous, because it would prevent children from knowing and embracing truth in the highest of all concerns, their duty and salvation; and would lead them only to ignorance, error, and iniquity.

Indeed, all this is so obvious, and so certain, that I hesitate not to pronounce those who propose it, whenever they are men of understanding, wholly insincere in the proposal. It is, I think, impossible, that they should be so blind to such obvious truth, as for a moment to imagine the education which they urge to be consistent with reason and common sense. On the contrary, it may without any want of candour be asserted, that their design is of a very different nature. Instead of aiming at the promotion of candour in children, they unquestionably intend to persuade men to educate their children in ignorance of the Scriptures, in an habitual disregard to them, and ultimately in a confirmed hatred of their precepts. They are sagacious enough to discern, that all persons are best fitted to receive religious impressions in childhood; and that, if they are suffered to grow up without them, they will either never receive them, or receive them with excessive difficulty. By prescribing and urging this mode of education, they expect to see children habituated to irreligion, and confirmed, without argument or conviction, in infidelity. In this manner, far more easily and surely than in all others, they hope to exterminate religion from the world.

Of all these observations, complete proof is furnished by the conduct of modern infidels. In defiance of this very scheme, they have laboured with immense industry and art to possess themselves of the education of children throughout France, Germany, and other countries of Europe. Nor have they laboured without success. Distinguished infidels have extensively become instructors of those who were born to wealth and greatness; and men corrupted by themselves have still more extensively taught the mass of mankind. All these they have trained up to the principles of infidelity, and to the unlimited practice of vice. The mind, almost from its infancy, they have debauched by sentiments and images of pollution; withdrawn it from duty, from God, and from heaven, by fraud and falsehood; and allured it to sin and to hell, by art and ingenuity, by sophistry and entanglement, by insidious temptation and impudent example. With a smooth, soft, and lubricous progress, they have crept into the bosoms of the rising generation, and pierced them to the soul with fangs of poison. A general dissolution of health, a hopeless decay of the vital energy, has followed the incision. The bloom of life has vanished, a livid hue overspread the frame, and every harbinger of death hastened to announce the speedy dissolution.

Here no anxiety has been ever pretended concerning the preoccupancy of the early mind, or the prevention of future candour. No succeeding investigation has been even hinted, and no intentional discussion of the great question proposed. Such fairness, indeed, was not to be expected from such men. Their only object has ever been to destroy the Bible, truth, and virtue; and to the nature of all means, provided they will accomplish the end, they are perfectly indifferent. The man who is deceived by such a scheme, supported by such arguments, and recommended by such men, must be a dupe of choice; a gudgeon, caught even without a hook.

2. From these observations it is also evident, that the religious education of children is a high and indispensable duty.

In the text, and in many other passages of Scripture, it is solemnly commanded by God. If the considerations suggested throughout this Discourse are just, it is powerfully enforced by reason. Our children are 'bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh;' endeared to us by a thousand ties, and a thousand delightful offices. All their interests are ours, and often nearer to our heart than our own. They are committed to us in solemn charge by our Maker, to be educated by us for his service and kingdom. He has made all things in their situation and ours conspire to this great end. Their helpless state calls for the habitual care and watchfulness, the uniform kindness and control of their parents. Their minds, unoccupied by falsehood, are easily susceptible of truth, and fitted to receive and retain every useful impression. If the best impressions are not made, the worst will be; and parents are the only friends from whom may rationally be expected the communication of good, or the prevention of evil. If this duty be not early done, they may die before it is done, and their souls be lost. If they live, we waste the golden season of doing them eternal good.

Who, that is not dead to conscience, to humanity, and even to instinct, can thus act the ostrich; and leave his little ones to be crushed by every foot? Think of the awful account to be given of wrapping this talent in a napkin, and burying it in the earth. Think of the infinite difference between ascending with them to heaven, and accompanying them down to the regions of perdition. Think of the reflections which must arise in their minds and ours throughout eternity, when their ruin shall be seen to have sprung from our neglect.

Nor is this duty incumbent on parents only. Every instructor is bound indispensably to second their endeavours, where they are faithful, and to supply, as far as may be, the defect, where they are not. Education ought everywhere to be religious education. The master is as truly bound to educate his apprentice or his servant in religion, and the schoolmaster his pupil, as the parent his child. In the degree of obligation, and of sin in violating it, there may perhaps be a difference. In the nature of it there is none. The command is, 'Train up a child in the way he should go;' directing all who are intrusted with the care of children to educate them in this manner.

At the same time, parents are farther bound to employ no instructors who will not educate their children religiously. To commit our children to the care of irreligious persons, is to commit lambs to the superintendency of wolves. No sober man can lay his hand on his breast, when he has placed his child under the guidance of an irreligious teacher, and say that he has done his duty, or feel himself innocent of the blood of his child. No man will be able, without confusion of face, to recount this part of his conduct before the bar of the final Judge.

SERMON CXLVIII.

MEANS OF GRACE.—ORDINARY MEANS OF GRACE.—THE MANNER IN WHICH RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IS TO BE CONDUCTED.—MOTIVES TO THIS DUTY.

Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it.—Prov. xxii. 6.

In the last Discourse, I considered the duty of educating children religiously. In this I propose,

II. *To point out the manner in which religious education should be conducted.*

III. *To exhibit some of the motives to the performance of this duty, suggested by the promise in the text.*

The terms, in which the command in the text is communicated, teach us, as I have heretofore observed, that children, in their education, are to be drawn from one action and attainment to another, by persuasion, promises, and other efforts, continually repeated. Under the general meaning of this phraseology may be easily included whatever I shall think it necessary to observe concerning this subject at the present time.

Some of the observations formerly made concerning the general education of children, will be applied here to their religious education. So important a subject deserves to be presented in a full light. No interesting, useful adjunct ought to be forgotten by the mind, while employed in the consideration of a duty which holds so high a rank. So far as the narrow limits necessarily assigned to it in such a system of discourses will allow, I shall endeavour to omit nothing, which is of peculiar weight.

I. Religious education should be begun in the dawn of childhood.

The earliest days, after intelligence is fairly formed in the mind, are incomparably the best for this purpose. The child should be taught, as soon as he is capable of understanding the instructions which are to be communicated. Nothing should be suffered to pre-occupy the place which is destined to truth. If the intellect is not filled with sound instruction as fast as it is capable of receiving it, 'the enemy,' who never neglects to 'sow tares,' when parents are 'asleep,' will imperceptibly fill it with a dangerous and noxious growth. The great and plain doctrines of religion should be taught so early, that the mind should never remember when it began to learn, or when it is without this knowledge. Whenever it turns a retrospective view upon the preceding periods of its existence, these truths should seem always to have been in its possession, to have the character of innate principles, to have been woven in its nature, and to constitute a part of all its current of thinking.

In this manner the best security which is in the power of man will be furnished against the introduction and admission of dangerous errors. The principles of infidelity have little support in argument or evidence; but they easily take deep root in the inclinations of the mind, and hold but too frequently a secure possession of its faith by the aid of passion and prejudice. No human method of preventing this evil is so effectual as engrossing the assent to evangelical truth, when the mind is absolutely clear from every prepossession. A faith thus established, all the power of sophistry will be unable to shake. In the same manner ought its religious impressions to be begun. No period should be within the future reach of the memory, when they had not begun. Every child easily imbibes at this period a strong and solemn reverence for his Creator; easily realizes his universal presence, and the inspection of his all-seeing eye; admits without difficulty, and without reluctance, that he is an awful and unchangeable enemy of sin; and feels that he himself is accountable to this great Being for all his conduct. The conscience also is at this period exceedingly tender and susceptible; readily alarmed at the apprehension of guilt, and prepared to contend, or to fly, at the approach of a known temptation. All the affections also are easily moved, and fitted to retain permanently, and often indelibly, whatever impressions are made. The heart is soft, gentle, and easily won; strongly attached by kindness, peculiarly to the parents themselves, and generally to all others with whom it is connected. To every amiable, every good thing it is drawn comparatively without trouble or resistance; and united by bands which no future art nor force can dissolve. Against every odious and bad thing its opposition is with equal ease excited, and rendered permanent. Its sensibility to praise for laudable actions is exquisite; and no less exquisite its dread of blame for conduct which is unworthy. Its hope also of future enjoyment, and its fear of future suffering, are awakened in a moment, without labour, by obvious considerations, and with a strength which renders them powerful springs of action.

This susceptibility, this tenderness of heart and of conscience, constitute a most interesting, desirable, and useful preparation of the mind to receive evangelical truths and religious impressions, and invest it with all the beauty and fertility of spring. Almost everything which the eye discerns is then fair, delightful, and promising. Let no person to whom God has committed the useful, honourable, and happy, employment of cultivating minds, be idle at this auspicious season. On faithful, wise, and well directed labours, busily employed at this period of the human year, the mildest winds of heaven breathe, its most fertilizing showers descend, and its softest and most propitious sunshine, sheds its happy influence. He who loses this golden season, will, when the autumn arrives, find nothing in his fields but barrenness and death.

Nor is this period less happily fitted for the establishment of useful moral habits. Habits, as has been heretofore observed, are the result of custom or repetition, and may, in this manner, be formed at any age. But in early childhood the susceptibility is so great, and the feeling so tender, that a few repetitions will generate habitual feeling. Every impression at this period

is deep. When these, therefore, are made through a moderate succession, the combined effect can rarely be effaced. Thus good habits are soon and durably established, and all that course of trouble prevented, of which parents so justly and bitterly complain, when this work is to be done at future seasons of life.

But habits constitute the man. Good habits form a good man, and evil habits an evil man. Subtract these from the character, and it will be difficult to conceive what will be left. It is plain, therefore, that habits are of supreme importance to the well-being of the child, his character, his all. Of course, the establishment of those which are good is the first object of parental duty.

2. Religious education should be continued with steadiness and uniformity.

In the whole employment of educating a child, steadiness of character in the parent is indispensable to success. The parent, as was formerly observed, should be decisively seen always to approve and love the same things, and always to disapprove and hate such as are opposed to them. A settled purpose should be continually discovered in the conduct of the parent, with regard to this great concern; a purpose to fix in the mind of the child just views and principles of religion, and dispositions really and evangelically virtuous. From this purpose nothing should appear to divert his attention, or withdraw his efforts. The religious education of his child should evidently appear to be a commanding business of his life; not a casual or occasional employment. A changing, vibratory character in the parent will prove him to be either unstable, or not in earnest. No attribute which is not obviously vicious is, perhaps, more unhappily found in the parental character.

The parent who exhibits a steady, firm, unalterable disposition, will naturally be believed by his children to love religion as he ought, to make it the chief business of his life, to be deeply engaged in rendering them religious, and in all his instructions to mean whatever he says. The whole weight of his character will, therefore, accompany his precepts, and enforce them in the most efficacious manner upon the minds of his children.

To convince the child of this character in the parent, uniformity is of the last moment. Whatever is pursued at times only, and in a desultory manner, children will never believe to be a serious object in the view of the parent. Whatever is sometimes exhibited in the light of importance, and at others in that of unconcern, will only awaken doubt, and ultimately produce indifference. Important objects, it is well known, always wear this character in the view of him who regards them as important, and are, therefore, felt and exhibited in one, and that a serious, manner. So plainly, and so entirely, is this the fact, that children, as easily as men, discover at once the true place which any thing holds in the estimation of those around them, by the uniformity, or the inconstancy, with which they attend to it; and by the seriousness, or levity, with which it is accompanied in their communications. That, and that only, which is taught every day, or on every proper occasion, and which is always taught seriously and earnestly, is ever believed by the pupil to hold a place of high importance in the mind of the instructor. On the contrary, whatever is taught occasionally only, with levity, or with indifference; or taught in a manner now grave, now light, sometimes earnestly, and sometimes with negligence, regularly at one period, and with long intermissions at another, can scarcely be supposed to be of any great significance in the view of the teacher. This language of nature can be misunderstood by none. The earliest and the weakest mind perceives it in a moment, as well as the oldest and the wisest. If then parents wish to make deep and solemn impressions on their children, let them remember that uniformity in their instructions is indispensable to this end.

Besides, uniformity in teaching is absolutely necessary to the establishment of habit, both in thinking and feeling. If instructions succeed each other after considerable intervals, or are given with a diversity of feelings on the part of the instructor, one truth, and one impression will, in a degree, be worn out, before another is introduced. In the mean time, others of a different, and often of a contrary nature, will be imbibed. Thus the work, like the web of Penelope, will be woven at one period, only to be destroyed at another. In this way the parent will find his task always discouraging, and often fruitless.

It ought to be remembered, that uniformity should extend to everything which concerns this subject. The instructions, the spirit with which they are enforced, nay, the very deportment of the instructor, as well as the control, the example, and life, should always wear one consistent appearance of solemnity, earnestness, and entire conviction.

3. In a religious education the Scriptures only should be taught.

The youngest mind, which can perceive moral truth at all, clearly discerns that no doctrines can be invested with an importance, comparable to that of the doctrines taught by God. The character of this great and awful Being is seen by the humblest intelligent creature to be immeasurably distant from every other. This distinction of supreme consequence in itself, should be preserved in its full force by the parent throughout all his instructions. Religious truth, that is, whatever is an obligatory object of faith, or rule of duty, whatever 'pertains to life and to godliness,' is wholly and only taught by God. This great doctrine should be originally impressed on the early mind; and should afterward be never suffered to escape from its attention. Scriptural truths should, for this reason, be clearly distinguished at every period as the unquestioned word of God, and come to the child with the sanction of divine authority. In this method the child will imbibe a reverence for these truths entirely peculiar; and, if no human opinions should be mingled with them in the instructions, will carry it through life. A little mixture of philosophy, however, will, in a great measure, prevent this desirable effect; and imperceptibly lower the Scriptures from their supreme dignity, and inestimable importance, down to the humble level of mere human opinion.

4. Such parts of the Scriptures only should be taught at any time, as may be made distinctly intelligible to the mind of the pupil.

The plainest things are universally the most important. God, in his infinite wisdom, has in this respect mercifully brought the means of religious knowledge, our duty, and our salvation, within the reach of the young and the ignorant, who always constitute the

great body of mankind, and are equally interested in them with the experienced, and the knowing. The most important things are thus placed in the power of children.

At the same time it is evident, that these are the only things which are within their power. The instructor who attempts to teach them either doctrines or precepts more obscure, or more complicated, or who mixes any extraneous instruction with that which is obvious, will only perplex, and ultimately confound, the understanding of the pupil, will cloud all his views, and destroy his relish for learning.

Nor should the manner of teaching be less plain and intelligible, than the doctrines which are taught. In teaching children, there should be no display of learning, no extensive or profound investigations, no introduction of things which are foreign to the subject in hand. The simplest language, the fewest and plainest words, and the most familiar illustrations only, should be adopted, and the whole force of the instructions, and the whole attention of the child should, as much as possible, be confined to the doctrines themselves. For all superior discoveries, for objections and their answers, for the connexion and dependence of the truths which are taught, and for the proofs of their reasonableness and utility, the child should be referred to future opportunities, and the vigour of riper years.

5. The disposition discovered and felt by the instructor should always be that of tender affection.

No instructions are ever advantageously imbibed by children, except from those whom they love; and they love none, except those by whom they think themselves beloved. The real air, aspect, and proof of affection, are as discernible by a child, as by a man, and his real friends as easily known. No persons feel affection more tenderly, or more carefully watch the conduct in which it is discovered. But the only way to appear kind is to feel kindly; and the only way to be believed to have this character, is to possess it.

It is not easy to estimate the importance of the manner in this employment. The instructions of an unkind teacher are hated of course, of a cunning one suspected, of an uninterested one received with listless indifference. On the contrary, the affectionate instructor is viewed by his pupil as a beloved friend. No employment invests man with more amiableness than well-directed instruction, especially when his pupil is a little child. From such a friend everything is received, retained, and obeyed, with reverence and delight. By a teacher of this character more good can often be done in a day, than by a disgusting one in a life.

6. Religion should always be exhibited in a solemn and pleasing, and never in a gloomy and discouraging light.

There are persons, usually very ignorant, and frequently of a melancholy cast, who seem to suppose themselves and others required to be always of a sorrowful and downcast demeanour. The only religious duties which appear to arrest their attention, are those which belong to self-mortification. Between the licentious gaiety of loose men, and the serene cheerfulness of religion, they make, and are apparently willing to make, no distinction. A smile, they mistake for an expression of unwarrantable levity; and the grateful, cheerful lives of their fellow Christians, they construe into mere courses of worldly ease, and sinful security. Of these persons, some are undoubtedly self-deceivers, some are gross hypocrites, especially those who make great pretensions to sanctity, and much bustle about their religious attainments. Others of them also are unquestionably Christians. Those of this class are all persuaded that their views of religion are just; and, both from a sense of duty, and the exercise of affection, feel themselves obliged to communicate them to their children. What they teach they exemplify. Accordingly, both the instructions and the examples are only gloomy and awful, and are regarded by their children only with dislike and dread. From the mere force of nature the teacher may be loved, and his instructions reverenced; but both will still be met and listened to only with pain and disgust. Both the precepts and the religion which they inculcate, will be dreaded beforehand, and disrelished afterward. A release from them will be regarded as an escape. No useful impressions can be made by them, no desirable conduct effected. Children thus taught, usually dislike religion, even more than those who are not taught at all. A moderate share of common sense must, one would think, banish forever this disastrous mode of instruction.

It is far from being my intention to deny that there are painful considerations connected with religion. One of its employments is to form just views of sin, and another, to regard it with suitable emotions. Sin is always a painful subject of contemplation. Nor is repentance without its mixture of pain. Self-denial, also, is at many times, and in various respects, a source of serious suffering. But sin itself is no part of religion; and the anguish of repentance is, in the beautiful language of Mrs Steele, 'a painful pleasing anguish;' incomparably more desirable than the sinner's hardness of heart. There is something so pleasant, so sweet, so congenial to the proper taste of a rational being, in ingenuous sorrow for sin, an honest confession of it to our heavenly Father, cordial resistance to temptation, and faithful resolutions of new obedience, in victory over our lusts, in a consciousness of evangelical worth, in the conviction that we have glorified our Creator, and in an humble hope of his approbation, all involved in the exercise of repentance, as to render this affection of the heart too welcome to the penitent, ever to be deliberately exchanged by him for the gratifications of sin. The same enjoyments also accompany Christian self-denial too obviously to demand proof; and to every mind, controlled by religion, render it universally agreeable and frequently delightful. What, then, shall be said of the Christian's faith, and love, and peace, and hope, and joy; all of them other names for refined and elevated pleasure? Look into the writings of David and Paul, and learn from their own expressions how Christianity can allay the storms of trouble, and gild the gloom of a sorrowful life with serenity and sunshine.

If, then, religion itself is presented by an instructor with gloom and discouragement, it is falsely presented; truths may be taught, but they are exhibited in a false garb. With this garb they will always be associated in the mind of the pupil; and the whole effect will be misconception and error.

In this mode of instruction children are kept at a distance from religion by a regular repulsion, and scarcely approach so near as to learn its real nature.

Even truth itself will to them be odious truth; religion will be hated and dreaded before it is known; and to receive instruction will be regarded as a mere and painful task. That which is taught, the child will neither love, respect, nor remember; and the teacher's own example of its influence will complete the alienation which his precepts began.

Austerity in an instructor will produce, substantially, the same effects. Religion is in its nature, and by a child is regularly seen to be, eminently solemn, and in some respects awful. At the same time, it is serene, cheerful, and lovely; the source of the purest peace, the most solid consolation, and the most refined joy. Its whole character ought to be set before the child. Let its solemnity awe; let its cheerful and delightful aspect inspire hope, and engage affection. Escape from evil, and the attainment of good, are the only motives by which a rational being can be influenced at all. Both these, therefore, should be placed in the view of the child. St Paul has thought proper to urge our obedience to the law by the consideration, that it is good, as well as just, and holy; and to recommend our duty by the argument, that it 'is our reasonable service.' Every Christian in the education of his children, is bound to follow the example of this great instructor.

7. Religious education ought to be enforced by the government, example, and prayers of the teacher.

Government is the great means by which the authority of the parent is preserved, and the obedience of the child kept alive. It is also the great means of communicating to the child lasting and influential impressions, and of preparing him cheerfully and affectionately to receive the truths which he is taught. Sound government perfectly harmonizes with sound instruction. No character is so highly regarded by man, as that which is displayed in wise, just, and benevolent control. Government also presents every instruction in the form of law, and all conduct in the solemn guise of duty; enjoins obedience with authority, and enforces its injunctions with penalties and rewards.

A child well governed, loves his parent of course. From the parent his affection is easily transferred to his precepts. He is prepared to obey, as well as to listen; and desirous to please his instructor, as well as to profit himself. An ungoverned child, on the contrary, will neither listen nor regard; neither obey nor profit. His only disposition, his only design will be to neglect whatever is taught, and oppose whatever is enjoined. The former he will despise; against the latter he will rebel. Two children, of these contrary characters, can hardly be compared. The one will learn and do everything; the other, nothing.

What government thus happily begins, example confirms. The teacher who does not live agreeably to his own instructions, will never be supposed to love, nor even to believe, what he enjoins. All his labours will therefore be attributed to sinister views, to the pursuit of his own convenience, and not to the love, either of religion, or his pupil. Instructions thus regarded, will never be welcomed to the heart, and rarely to the understanding. He, on the contrary, whose life is governed by the same rules which he prescribes to his child, will always be considered as proving his own sincerity; as teaching what he believes, and enjoining what he loves. The precepts of such an instructor are rarely disrelished, and never doubted.

All our instructions, however, like our other efforts, are in vain without the blessing of God. This blessing, to be obtained, must be asked. Prayer for the success of our instructions should accompany them of course. The child should be a witness of the parent's supplication to God for him, and should be taught to supplicate for himself. All the duties of religion are eminently solemn and venerable in the eyes of children. But none will so strongly prove the sincerity of the parent, none so powerfully awaken the reverence of the child, none so happily recommend the instruction which he receives, as family devotions, peculiarly those in which petitions for the children occupy a distinguished place.

At the same time, God will actually bless those who seek his blessing. But, where it is not sought, it will not be given; and where it is not given, our best exertions will be in vain. 'Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it.'

III. *I shall now exhibit some of the motives to the performance of this duty, suggested by the promise in the text.*

'Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it.'

This promise has been differently construed by different commentators. Some have supposed it to be an absolute promise; declaring, that in every instance in which a child is thus educated, he will persevere 'in the way he should go.' Others have supposed it to declare merely the usual result of such education. The former class say, that every instance of failure on the part of children is owing to a want of faithfulness on the part of the parents. They add, that if parents were perfectly faithful in this duty, their children would never come short of eternal life. With this construction I cannot agree, for two reasons:—

(1.) The Scriptures abound in such absolute declarations, which are not, and cannot be, understood in this absolute manner. Thus it is said, that 'neither drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.' Yet some men of all these classes unquestionably become penitent, and by the reformation of their lives, prove themselves to be Christians. Should it be said, that sinners of these several characters, who leave the world without repentance, will not inherit the kingdom of God; and that this is what is intended: I answer, 'The declaration would undoubtedly be true; but would, I think, be nugatory; because it would be equally true of all other sinners.'

(2.) According to this construction, there would be nothing declared. No person ever educated his child with perfect faithfulness. On this ground, therefore, no child would persevere in this desirable way. Of course, the promise, considered in a practical light, would be nothing to mankind.

If these observations are just, it will, I suppose, be admitted without difficulty, that God intended this promise as a direct encouragement to parents, who should be faithful in such a degree as we sometimes see exercised in the education of children. The amount of the promise to these parents is, I apprehend, that their children will, generally, when trained up in the way they should go, not depart from it. This, as it appears to me, has also been the course of providential dispensations.

To this declaration, however, it probably will be, as it often has been, objected, that the course of providence

here alleged is against the promise; and that it is contradicted by plain facts. 'The children,' it has been often said, 'of religious parents, the children particularly of clergymen, who, if any, must be supposed to be religiously educated, exhibit as few proofs of a virtuous character, and as many proofs of a sinful one, as the children of other men.' Nay, it has been said, I have frequently heard it said, that 'the children of professing Christians, and particularly of ministers, are less virtuous, and more distinguished for profligacy than other children.' These observations are not always made with an intention to utter slander, and with a conviction that they are false. They are sometimes uttered by sober men. Nay, they are sometimes countenanced by Christians, and even by ministers; especially in the indulgence of zeal against the doctrine, that there are means of grace. I have heard it asserted, and apparently with some feelings of victory, that in a given case or cases, persons who have not been religiously educated, had become subjects of piety, in as great and greater numbers than those who had received such an education. That many persons who have not been religiously educated are sanctified, is undoubtedly true. That their number is proportionally so great as is here indicated, will be affirmed only by the 'zeal which is not according to knowledge.' Let any man read the history of the revivals of religion, and he will need no farther arguments on this point. Still, as this doctrine has spread so far, and assumed so serious an aspect, I shall now make a few brief remarks concerning the subject.

(1.) All professors of religion, and all ministers, are not Christians. From those who are not of this character, the religious education of their children cannot be expected.

(2.) Some who are Christians, perform this duty very imperfectly. Men of both these classes are not unfrequently too much engrossed by other concerns. Professors are sometimes so deeply engaged in their business, and ministers by their studies, as to neglect this and many other duties. Some of them, also, are negligent, through a characteristical easiness and carelessness of temper. Some are injudicious, and pursue ill-devised plans. Some are of a changeable disposition, and undo to-day, partially at least, what they did yesterday. From these, and other causes of the like nature, the manner in which they educate their children is very imperfect. Of this imperfection the consequences will be experienced of course.

(3.) Some Christians govern their children unhappily. They are passionate, and govern with fickleness and violence. They are indulgent, and scarcely govern them at all. They are austere, or gloomy, and thus discourage and disgust their children, insensibly alienating their minds both from their instructions and themselves.

(4.) One of the parents is sometimes irreligious, and thwarts the labours of the other.

(5.) Some Christian parents, though it is believed this number is small, do not pray in their families; and in this manner fail of receiving blessings upon themselves, and upon their children.

(6.) The children of Christian parents, for various reasons, are often educated chiefly by others, who are incompetent, or unfaithful.

(7.) The children of Christian parents are not unfrequently corrupted by evil companions; and that, perhaps, during the best education.

(8.) Christian churches extensively neglect the discipline which they ought to administer, both to the parents and the children, when negligent of their respective duties. By this neglect the spirit of educating children religiously has been suffered to languish; and the obligations to this duty have ceased to be felt, as its importance demands.

These remarks will, if I mistake not, sufficiently explain the real state of facts, so far as to show that they are consistent with the promise, as it has been interpreted above.

But the truth is, the assertion itself is substantially false. That there are children of religious parents, who are themselves destitute of religion through life, that the whole number of these is considerable, will not be questioned. Who, after what has been said, could rationally expect it to be otherwise? That some of these are profligates, and some even remarkable for their profligacy, I shall not deny. Those who have broken through peculiar restraints, and sinned against powerful motives, are usually abandoned sinners. Accordingly, Dr Young says forcibly and justly, though solecistically,

'A shameless woman is the worst of men.'

But notwithstanding these exceptions, the great body of Christians is made up of those who have been religiously educated, imperfect as this education has been. Every sober man may perceive this truth by his own observation. It is true of this seminary; it is true of this country; it is true of every other Christian country; it has been always true. A striking proof of it is furnished here, by the character and offices which the sons of clergymen have holden in New England, ever since it was settled by our ancestors. A complete proof of it everywhere is furnished by the history of revivals of religion. Every contradictory instance, it is to be remembered, is regarded with surprise; a fact which could not exist, if the declension were common; and is made, very improperly, a representative of multitudes. Nor ought it to be forgotten, that when members of irreligious families become pious, surprise is equally excited.

Having now, as I hope, removed all the objections which might be supposed to attend this subject, I proceed to remark,

1. That by a religious education of their children, parents more easily and more perfectly than is possible in any other manner, will render them dutiful, harmonious, and happy in the present world.

A family religiously educated will in a good degree become orderly and dutiful of course. The doctrines and sentiments which they are taught, and habitually imbibe, the conduct to which they are formed, the examples which they daily behold, the motives steadily presented to their view, and the worship to which they are daily summoned, all conspire with supreme force to call up every thought, affection, and action which constitutes a part of their duty. Their minds are wrought into a character, a course of action, widely different from that of other children. This difference even a stranger cannot fail to discern at once. Among those who are charged with the instruction of youth, it has long since become the object of proverbial remark.

All the tendencies of religion are dutiful tendencies, and are therefore peaceful and pleasing. Harmony of minds, and harmony of purposes, cannot without this aid be produced for any length of time, or any extent of operation. Unity of conduct may indeed be effectuated, to a considerable extent, by the rod of power; but not unity of affection or design. Constrained union can never be the source of happiness to any collection of rational beings, and will peculiarly fail of producing happiness in a family. To repress the native selfishness of the heart, means of some kind or other are indispensable. Nothing has hitherto effectually accomplished this purpose but religion. Even the mere fixed belief of its truths and duties, and of accountableness to God, will go far towards overcoming the open indulgences of passion and appetite. A cordial reception of these truths and duties will finally vanquish them all. Religious education, then, is the road to the religion of a family; and that religion is the road to domestic happiness.

As happiness in this world is chiefly enjoyed in the family, and, under God, supremely dependent on domestic peace; the religious education of children becomes plainly the chief means of the first earthly good. A glorious motive is here held out to induce us to educate our children religiously.

2. Children thus educated will persevere also in the way to eternal life.

This I consider as the main subject of the promise in the text. In the sense in which I have explained it, it has, I apprehend, been universally verified. Of this truth, the proof already alleged is presumed to be sufficient.

The parent must be an unnatural wretch by whom this motive is not deeply felt. The salvation of his child is promised to him, and in the most endearing of all methods; viz., as the consequence of his labour. He who is not a barbarian, or a brute, must wish his children to be happy, favoured of God, and beloved by his own companions, throughout eternity. To the heart of him who knows the tenderness of nature, this desire must come home with supreme and unmingled power. The very thought of presenting one's children to the Judge, at his right hand, on the final day, and of being able to say, 'Behold, here am I, and the children whom thou hast given me,' is a thought of ecstasy, which bewilders the heart with joy. Let no parent, who is not compelled by this consideration to a duty so delightful in itself, pretend to love his children at all.

If we 'train up' our children 'in the way' they 'should go,' they will enter it almost of course; follow us to heaven, and be our companions for ever. There they will be everlasting witnesses of our tender affection to them, and our faithful care of their souls, while we were both in the present world. At their dying bed, if we survive them, on our dying bed, if they survive us, we shall be saved also from the distressing reflection, that through our negligence they have been lost, and are destined to sin and suffer for ever.

3. In this manner parents perform their prime duty.

The great end of our being is the performance of our duty. In this God intends that we should find our happiness, and that a greater happiness than we can otherwise attain. All parts of our duty are plainly to be regarded according to their importance. To parents, that which is enjoined in the text is primarily important. On their children they can usually have more and better influence than they can possibly have on others. In a high and endearing sense they are their property, are united to them by the tenderest ties, are ever in their presence, and regard them with singular reverence and affection. From all these sources parents derive the power of making more, deeper, and happier impressions, than others can make, or than they can make on others. This power God has required all parents faithfully to exert; and in religious education alone is it faithfully exerted. To perform this duty is, therefore, the chief end for which we are made parents; the chief good which men are usually able to do, the chief means of glorifying our Creator. If, then, we wish to please God, to enjoy the greatest happiness in this world, or to carry our children with us to heaven, and enjoy their company for ever, we shall not fail, with deep solicitude, watchful care, and unshaken constancy, to 'train them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.'

SERMON CXLIX.

THE MEANS OF GRACE.—EXTRAORDINARY MEANS OF GRACE.—THE CHARACTER OF MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH.

Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers.—2 Cor. vi. 14.

In the last Discourse I finished the observations which I have thought it necessary to make concerning the ordinary means of grace. In the several Discourses on this subject, I have endeavoured to show, that—there are means of grace;—what they are;—and what is their influence;—and to answer the objections usually made against this scheme of doctrine. I then severally considered each of these means, at some length; and gave such directions concerning the use of them, such explanations of their efficacy, and such answers to objections against them, severally, as this system of discourses appeared to require.

The next subject in order is—

Those means of grace which are of limited appli-

cation: viz., baptism; the Lord's Supper; and the communion of Christians.

But, before I enter upon the immediate discussion of these subjects, it will be necessary to consider the character and circumstances of those, by whom these means of grace are to be used; viz., that collection of persons which is denominated the church of Christ. In examining this interesting subject, I shall

Describe the church of Christ, as exhibited in the Scriptures; and then

Explain the nature of its peculiar ordinances and employments.

The church of Christ is composed of its ordinary members and its officers. In the present Discourse, I shall attempt to exhibit the character of its ordinary members, as presented to us in the Scriptures.

To this subject we are naturally led by the text: 'Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers.' The word, here translated 'unequally yoked,' is in the Greek, ἑτεροζυγουντες, and denotes, literally, being yoked to those of a different kind; and here means being yoked unfitly, or improperly. Concerning the communion here forbidden there have been various opinions.

(1.) It has been frequently supposed to be marriage.

That this is not a just interpretation is evident, because there is not, before or afterward a syllable said concerning this subject; and because the direction given in the 17th verse of the context, concerning the communion here specified, would, if marriage were intended, contradict the precept given by the apostle, 1 Cor. vii. 12, 13. Here the direction is, 'Wherefore come ye out from among them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you.' The precept there is, 'If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him; let him not put her away. And the woman, that hath a husband that believeth not, if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him.'

(2.) It has been supposed, also, to mean common social intercourse with mankind, whether more or less intimate.

This, I think, cannot be the meaning; because the direction above mentioned would then contradict the declarations of the apostle in 1 Cor. v. 9, 10, 'I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators. Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters: for then ye must needs go out of the world.'

(3.) It has been supposed, also, to be religious communion with the worshippers of idols.

This, indeed, is undoubtedly forbidden; as being fairly included in the phraseology of the text. The worshippers of idols, are one class of unbelievers; but no reason can be given why a particular class should be intended in the text, and not all other classes. The prohibition is general, without an exception. We are obliged to receive it as it is; and, since the apostle has not thought proper to limit it, we cannot warrantably annex a limitation.

That the communion here intended is religious communion, I have not a doubt. This is forbidden with unbelievers. To illustrate the impropriety of religious communion with persons of this character, the questions following the text in the fourteenth and fifteenth verses, are asked by the apostle. For this end only are they asked; as might easily be made evident by a particular comment, if the occasion would permit. I shall, therefore, consider the text as containing this doctrine:—

That Christians are bound not to enter into religious communion with unbelievers; or, what is equivalent, The church of Christ ought to consist of Christians only.

The truth of this doctrine is strongly exhibited in the words themselves; particularly as they have been illustrated. The proper meaning can, indeed, be nothing else.

The same interpretation is also unanswerably evident, because,

(1.) There are but three kinds of communion, of which man is capable; marriage, social intercourse, and religious communion. I have shown, that the two first cannot be meant in this passage. The last, therefore, is meant.

(2.) That all unbelievers are intended in the text, is evident, because in the 17th and 18th verses, God says, 'Wherefore, come ye out from among them, and be ye separate; and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father to you; and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.'

These things, it will be remembered, were written to the Corinthian church. Of the members of this church it is said, that if they will come out from among the persons with whom their communion was forbidden, and be separated from them, God will receive them, and be a Father to them; and that they shall be his sons and daughters. But this promise could not be made to those who were not Christians, however decent, moral, and unobjectionable they might be in their external deportment. The persons to whom the text is addressed were addressed as Christians only, because the promise cannot have been made to any others. But if this church had, in the apostle's view, been intentionally and scripturally made up of others beside Christians, the apostle could not have addressed them in language applicable only to Christians. The text, therefore, in connexion with the context, furnishes clear evidence of the truth of the doctrine. As, however, it is a doctrine of great importance, and not a little debated even in the present age, I shall consider it more at length; and endeavour to illustrate it by the following considerations:

I. *The original formation of the church in the world:*

II. *The establishment and character of the Jewish church, as exhibited in the Scriptures:*

III. *The nature of the covenant between God and the members of the church:*

IV. *The nature of Christian communion:*

V. *The nature of Christian discipline:* and,

VI. *The manner in which the Christian church is spoken of in the New Testament.*

These subjects, if I mistake not, involve everything of importance in the concerns of the church. If, then, they all point the same way, and prove the same things, the consequence will, it is hoped, be a fair and scriptural determination of the point in debate. It will be expected, from a consideration of the limits beyond which the discussion cannot here proceed, that many things must be omitted which might be fairly demanded in a regular treatise. It will also be supposed, that whatever is said must be said in a summary manner. Having premised these things, I observe,

I. *This doctrine is illustrated by the original foundation of the church in the world.*

Of this event we have a summary account, Gen. iv. 26 : ' And to Seth, to him also, there was born a son : and he called his name Enos : then began men to call upon the name of the Lord ;' or, as in the margin, ' to call themselves by the name of the Lord.' The meaning of this declaration is plainly, that they took upon themselves the title of the ' sons of God ;' considering themselves as his children by adoption, in distinction from wicked men, who were children of God by creation only, and had forfeited this relation by their apostasy. By this title they professed themselves to be penitents, believers, obedient, to have the disposition of children, and to reverence, love, and serve God. As this title is adopted afterward by the divine writers throughout the Scriptures ; it is fairly presumed to have been directed originally by God himself; for it is scarcely credible, that God would everywhere call his church by a name derived from mere human assumption.

I have observed, that this phraseology is ever afterward used to denote the church. The members of the church are called ' sons of God ' twelve times in the Scriptures ; his ' children ' twice in the Old, and ten times in the New Testament ; and his ' people ' in instances, too numerous to be reckoned. In all these instances, the ' sons ' and ' children of God,' denote those who are such by adoption ; and in very many the phrase, ' the people of God,' has the same meaning. But the adopted children of God are Christians. The original church, therefore, consisted of Christians; or, in other words, those who were subjects of faith, repentance, and holiness. This is evident also from the fact, that the holy angels are called the ' sons of God :' an application of the phrase which indicates, that holy beings only are designated by this title.

The same doctrine is also illustrated by the ordinance of baptism. In the administration of this ordinance, persons are ' baptized ' (not *in*, but) ' *into* the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost :' that is, by his appointment ' they are introduced into his family, and take his name upon them, as being his children.'

This title also was adopted at first to distinguish those by whom it was adopted, from persons who were destitute of faith, repentance, and holiness; and therefore was a direct profession of piety on the part of those by whom it was assumed.

II. *The doctrine is illustrated by the establishment and character of the Jewish church, as exhibited in the Scriptures.*

The establishment of the Jewish church was not the formation of a new church, but a continuation of the original, or patriarchal church, under a form in some respects new. Particularly, it was confined to a single family, that of Abraham ; was furnished with a series of written revelations, from the time of Moses ; and had new sacraments instituted ; viz., circumcision in the time of Abraham, and the passover in the days of Moses.

A new ritual was also given at this latter period, for the universal direction of its worship ; typifying in a decisive manner the mediation of Christ, and the worship of Christians. Agreeably to this scheme, the church was established on the same foundations as before. In Genesis xvii. we have an account of this establishment, from the 4th verse to the end of the 14th. The amount of this covenant was plainly, ' That God would be the God of Abraham and his seed ;' as God himself explains this subject, Ezek. xvi. 8 ; where, speaking of the Jewish nation, as his church, he says, ' I sware unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee ; and thou becamest mine.' In accordance with this exhibition, God directed Moses to say to Pharaoh, ' Thus saith the Lord, Israel is my son, even my first-born.'

The same thing is also evident from the manner in which the Israelites renewed, and took upon themselves individually, the covenant made with Abraham. Of this transaction we have an account in Deut. xxvi. 16, &c. ' This day the Lord thy God hath commanded thee to do these statutes and judgments. Thou shalt therefore keep and do them with all thine heart, and with all thy soul. Thou hast avouched the Lord this day to be thy God, and to walk in his ways, and to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and to hearken unto his voice ; and the Lord hath avouched thee this day to be his peculiar people, as he hath promised thee ; and that thou shouldst keep all his commandments, and to make thee high above all nations, which he hath made, in praise, and in name, and in honour : and that thou mayest be a holy people unto the Lord thy God, as he hath spoken.'

Here it is manifest, that the Israelites avouched, that is, publicly and solemnly declared, Jehovah to be their God, whom they chose, as such ; and whom, as such, they covenanted faithfully to obey in all his commandments, with all the heart, as a holy people. Equally evident is it, that God avouched them to be his people ; whom he had chosen to be a peculiar people to himself. Accordingly, on the one hand, it was perpetually enjoined upon them, that they should ' love the Lord their God with all the heart ;' in which case he promised to keep his covenant with them (see Deut. vii. 9) ; and on the other he declared repeatedly, that he had chosen them to be a ' special ' and ' peculiar people ' unto himself : Deut. vii. 6, and xiv. 2.

The same thing is also evident from God's express prohibition to the wicked, of taking his covenant into their mouths. Psal. l. 16. ' Unto the wicked, God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant into thy mouth ?' —' Unto the wicked ;' that is, to all included under this title, or to all wicked persons, ' God saith,' that is, universally, as an expression of his will at all times.

This declaration was made immediately to the Israelites, to the wicked members of the Jewish church, and contains an absolute prohibition of this conduct on the part of sinful men. No national connexion, therefore, with a church, no descent from Abraham, gave a right to any wicked Israelite to take the covenant into his mouth. Although he had been circumcised, he was still abhorred in this transaction ; and exposed himself in a peculiar degree to the anger of God.

Finally : The same thing is evident from the manner in which God speaks of their sin in breaking his covenant. In Lev. xxvi. 15, &c., God says, ' If ye shall despise my statutes ; or if your soul abhor my judgments, so that ye will not do all my commandments, but that ye break my covenant ; I will also do this unto

you. I will even appoint over you terror, consumption, and the burning ague, that shall consume the eyes, and cause sorrow of heart; and ye shall sow your seed in vain; for your enemies shall eat it. And I will set my face against you,' &c. In Deut. xxix. 22, and onward, Moses says, 'So that the generation to come of your children, and the stranger that shall come from a far land, shall say, when they see the plagues of your land, and the sicknesses, which the Lord hath laid upon it, and that the whole land thereof is brimstone, salt, and burning, like the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboim; even all the nations shall say, Wherefore hath the Lord done thus unto his land, and what meaneth the heat of this great anger? Then men shall say, Because they have forsaken the covenant of the Lord God of their fathers.' See also Jer. xxii. 8, 9; Ezek. xvi. 59; Hos. x. 4.

III. *This doctrine is illustrated also by the nature of the covenant between God and the members of the church.*

As there have been various opinions relative to this subject, it seems necessary that it should be considered, with some particularity. I observe, therefore,

1. That the Israelites were required expressly to enter into an open, public covenant with God.

'Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name,' Deut. vi. 13.—'Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God: him shalt thou serve: to him shalt thou cleave, and swear by his name.' Deut. x. 20.—'In that day shall five cities in the land of Egypt speak the language of Canaan, and swear to the Lord of hosts,' Isa. xix. 18.—'And it shall come to pass, if they will diligently learn the ways of my people, to swear by my name, The Lord liveth (as they taught my people to swear by Baal); then shall they be built in the midst of my people,' Jer xii. 16.—'Them that worship the host of heaven upon the house top, and them that worship, and swear by the Lord, and that swear by Malcham,' Zeph. i. 5.

It is observed by President Edwards, that the phrase, 'Swear by the Lord,' ought to be rendered, 'Swear to, or unto, the Lord;' and that the true meaning of the phrase is, 'Ye shall enter into covenant with the Lord your God.' Accordingly, the transaction already quoted from Deut. xxvi. 16, in which God avouched the Israelites to be his people, and they avouched him to be their God, is styled both a covenant and an oath. 'Ye stand this day, all of you, before the Lord your God,' says Moses to the whole people of Israel, 'that thou shouldest enter into covenant with the Lord thy God, and into his oath, which the Lord thy God maketh with thee this day; that he may establish thee to-day for a people unto himself, that he may be unto thee a God, as he hath said unto thee, and as he hath sworn unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. Neither with you only do I make this covenant, and this oath, but with him that standeth here with us this day, before the Lord our God, and also of him who is not here with us this day.'

Of the transaction here recorded, I observe,

(1.) That it is styled both an oath and a covenant.

(2.) That it was entered into by all the Israelites, both old and young, and by the strangers who were with them: and was made, on the part of God, with their posterity:—'Him that is not here with us this day.'

(3.) It was a covenant of the same tenor with that which God made with Abraham: 'That he might be unto thee a God, as he had sworn unto thy fathers, to Abraham,' &c.

(4.) That the covenant, or oath, was the same with that recorded in Deut. xxvi. Jehovah avouched them to be his people; and they avouched him to be their God.

(5.) That it is the same covenant afterward prophesied of by Jeremiah, chap. xxxi., &c., and quoted by St Paul, Heb. viii. 8, as the covenant of the Christian church; 'I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people.'

From these remarks it is plain, that the oath here sworn by all the people of Israel, was no other than a religious covenant between God and them, as members of his church. Scarcely one in one thousand of these persons could have any lawful occasion for swearing in any other sense; and, at the time here specified, no such occasion existed to any individual: their whole business being merely to enter into this covenant with God.

As they are accused frequently of having broken this covenant in their succeeding generations, it is plain that throughout those generations they entered into it in a similar manner. Several instances of this nature are particularly recorded. A remarkable one is found in 2 Chron. xv. 12, &c. Here it is said of all Judah, and Benjamin, and strangers from Israel, that 'they entered into a covenant, to seek the Lord God of their fathers, with all their heart, and with all their soul.' Of this transaction it is said, that 'they sware unto the Lord with a loud voice; and all Judah rejoiced at the oath; for they had sworn with all their heart, and sought him with their whole desire.' The covenant and the oath, therefore, were the same thing. It was also a service commanded; for it is subjoined, 'and he was found of them:' that is, he blessed them. But God blesses men to whom he has made a revelation of his will in no religious service which he hath not commanded. 'In vain,' saith our Saviour (quoting from the prophet Isaiah), 'do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.'

Another instance is alluded to in 2 Chron. xxix. 10.

Another is recorded in 2 Chron. xxiii. 16.

Another, 2 Chron. xxxiv. 31, 32.

In a word, the whole tenor of the Old Testament teaches us, that the Israelites were required publicly to enter into covenant with God in this manner: and that this covenant is styled indifferently a covenant, and an oath. As, therefore, there is no hint of any other oath ever taken to God by this people, as a nation; as there is no conceivable occasion upon which a whole nation can be supposed, throughout its successive generations, to enter into any other oath to God; it is plain that the precepts requiring them to swear to God, required them solely thus to take upon them this covenant.

2. The members of the Christian church are, in my view, required to enter into the same covenant, in the same public manner.

In Isa. xlv. 22, God says, 'Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God; and there is none else. I have sworn by myself; the word has gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return; that unto me every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall swear.' In this passage, as quoted

Rom. xiv. 11, by the apostle Paul, the word rendered 'swear,' is translated 'confess;' ἐξομολογήσεται, as it had before been by the LXX. This, I think, is a direct proof of the real meaning of the word 'swear,' when used in this manner in the Old Testament. The same meaning appears to be given by God himself in the following verse in Isaiah: 'Surely shall one say, In the Lord have I righteousness and strength.' The verb ὁμολογεω signifies, indifferently, to *profess*, and *confess*; and being thus a translation, both by the LXX. and St Paul, of the Hebrew verb, which signifies to 'swear,' may be considered, wherever it is used with the same reference, or in the absolute manner, as having the same meaning. In allusion to the same passage of Isaiah, and with an almost literal translation of it, St Paul says, Phil. ii. 10, 'That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.' Here the same verb is used, and translated *confess*. In 1 Tim. vi. 12, the same verb, and its kindred substantive, are rendered *profess*: as also in 2 Cor. ix. 13; Heb. iii. 1; iv. 14; x. 23, &c. The truth is, the words profess, and confess, differ only in this, that one of them denotes an acknowledgment made with, the other without, any supposed present, or previous, reluctance. Wherever such reluctance is not supposed, it ought to be translated profess. The duty of men to make this profession, and their future performance of it, our Saviour clearly discloses in Matt. x. 32, 'Whosoever, therefore, shall confess me before men, him will I confess, also, before my Father who is in heaven.' In exact conformity to this declaration, St Paul says, Rom. ix. 10, 'If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart, that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.' In both these passages the word ought to be profess, and profession. It is not easy to conceive how, in so short a compass, the duty of making a profession of religion could, without a precept in form, be more strongly enjoined, than it is in these two passages. The same duty is strongly indicated from the passage above quoted from the Epistle to the Philippians.

It may naturally and reasonably be asked, Why, in a case of so much importance, we are not furnished with express precepts, solemnly enjoining this duty? I answer, that the Scriptures have pursued the same plan in this particular, with respect to this subject, which they have pursued with respect to several others of similar importance: in the cases, for example, of infant baptism, and the observation of the Christian sabbath. In the Jewish church, a public profession of religion was abundantly enjoined. The Christian church was only a continuation of the same church under a new form. It seems to have been unnecessary so far as we can judge, to repeat a command which had already been so amply given. Especially was this unnecessary for Jews, among whom the Christian church commenced, and among whom alone it continued to exist for about twelve years. All these were familiarized from their childhood to such a profession; and acknowledged that to make it was their indispensable duty.

The existence of this profession among the first Christians is often exhibited in the New Testament. Thus St Paul, 2 Cor. ix. 13, says to these Christians concerning their fellow Christians, 'They glorify God for your professed subjection unto the gospel of Christ;' better rendered, 'for your subjection to the gospel of Christ, which you have professed.' In Heb. iv. 14, St Paul says, 'Seeing, then, that we have a great High Priest, who is passed into the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God; let us hold fast our profession.' And again, Heb. x. 21, 23, 'Having an High Priest over the house of God, let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering: for he is faithful who promised.' In these instances a profession of faith, or of religion, is evidently spoken of as having been made by Christians universally. To Timothy the same apostle says, 1 Tim. vi. 22, 'Fight the good fight of faith; lay hold on eternal life; whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed' (or, having professed), 'a good profession before many witnesses.' What Timothy did in this respect, is reasonably supposed to have been done by all other Christians.

'The answer of a good conscience towards God,' mentioned by St Peter as given at the time of baptism, 1 Pet. iii. 21, denotes, in my view, the same profession.

St John speaks of the same thing; and sufficiently indicates its necessity and universality, when he says, 'Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God: God dwelleth in him, and he in God,' 1 John iv. 15. And again, 'For many deceivers are entered into the world, who profess not that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist.'

From these passages of Scripture it appears to me evident, that Christians are required, not only to believe the religion of Christ in their hearts, but also to profess it with their mouths; that such a profession was universally made by the Christians under the conduct of the apostles; and that such as did not make this profession, were not considered as Christians.

3. So far as I know, all those modern churches who do not insist on a public, verbal profession of religion, as a term of admission to their communion, either demand a private one, or consider the proposal to enter into their communion, as being, in itself, such a profession.

The difference of opinion here respects evidently, not the substance of the thing in debate—not the duty of making a profession—but merely the manner in which it shall be made. Whatever modes may be adopted by different churches, there seems to be no debate between them concerning the main object. All of them suppose a profession to be actually made. About the manner of making it, the Scriptures have, I think, left room for some latitude of opinion; about the profession itself, I think, they have left none. Every communicant is, I believe, supposed by every church, not grossly warped from the faith, to have made a profession of the religion of the gospel, when he entered the church.

Having now, as I hope, given a scriptural, and therefore a just account of this subject, I will proceed to illustrate the main doctrine of the discourse from the nature of the covenant into which Christians enter in making this profession. This transaction is obviously the most important, and the most solemn of those which exist between the soul and its Maker; its public reintroduction into his name, favour, family, service,

and eternal kingdom. The subject of it, the soul, is of inestimable value. The time is the sabbath; the place, the sanctuary; the occasion, the public worship of God; the most solemn of all occasions, places, and times. The Being with whom we are immediately concerned, is Jehovah. The foundation on which the transaction rests, is the atonement of Christ, the Mediator of the new covenant. The things which we profess, are no other than that we choose God as our God, and give ourselves to him as his children. God is the Father, the Redeemer, and the Sanctifier of men; the best Friend, the supreme Benefactor, and the highest portion. He is also the righteous Lawgiver and Sovereign of the universe. In this covenant we publicly avouch him as our God, in all these characters.

Ourselves, as children, we devote to him with all our talents, and services; engaging, through his grace, to obey, honour, and glorify him, according to his good pleasure, as revealed to us in the Scriptures.

The consequences of this transaction are eternal life, virtue, and glory.

Can it be asked, whether, in such a transaction, God requires that we should be sincere; that we should mean what we say; and that with the heart we should choose him as our God, and give ourselves to him as his children? In such a transaction can he fail to 'require truth in the inward parts?' Surely in this case, if any, he demands that we should not 'love in word, nor in tongue, but in deed, and in truth.' If Ananias and Sapphira were so awfully punished for insincerity, in professing to give their property to God, can the guilt be less of those who insincerely profess to give their souls? The views which God entertains concerning this covenant, are strongly declared, when he so frequently styles it an *oath*. He who has thoroughly considered the guilt of perjury, will, I think, be well prepared to estimate justly, that of intentional falsehood in this still more solemn transaction.

IV. *The doctrine is forcibly illustrated by the nature of Christian communion.*

Christian communion is a participation of the heart in the same interests and pursuits of evangelical religion.

That evangelical love is indispensable to such communion, is evident from 1 John i. 7, 'If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another.' Here, walking in divine light, or possessing evangelical religion, is exhibited as absolutely necessary to the existence of fellowship among Christians. The same truth is also taught in the questions immediately following the text. In these questions it is most explicitly declared, that there is no fellowship, no communion, between the righteous and the unrighteous, between believers and unbelievers.

What the Scriptures thus declare, both reason and experience unanswerably prove. The doctrines and precepts embraced by persons of these opposite dispositions may be, indeed, and have in many instances been, in substance the same. Yet even here there would often be very serious diversities, furnishing a wide foundation for very unhappy differences. The iron and the clay, however nicely fashioned into well proportioned members, and however skilfully united, so as apparently to constitute a single body, would yet whenever the form began to move, be easily separated; and show, that it was 'partly iron and partly clay.' Frequently, also, persons so unlike in their wishes, although originally agreeing in these respects, would cease from this agreement by the mere progress of events. Unrenewed men, continuing unrenewed to old age, often give up their original orthodoxy, and wander very far from the truth. All this is abundantly attested by experience.

Still more unharmonious would these two classes be in their dispositions. Men, who disagree in the essential doctrines and precepts of religion, and often in those which are unessential, are apt, whatever may be their dispositions, to agree very imperfectly in their views and measures. When they are possessed of dispositions very unlike, especially when wholly opposed, it is impossible for them to act together with harmony or success. Religion is an object of so much importance, that by men really religious it cannot be given up. It cannot be given up in parts; it cannot be modified, softened, or in any manner altered, so as to make it more palatable, or less offensive, to those with whom they have intercourse. All its doctrines are taught, and all its duties enjoined, by the authority of God. Pious men, therefore, can neither add, diminish, nor alter. Yet such alterations would often be very convenient, and therefore very pleasing, to their unrenewed brethren; and such as refuse to make them, would be pronounced illiberal, imprudent, unkind, and bigoted. Among persons so circumstanced harmony is already destroyed.

One of the great Christian duties is the reproof of our brethren for their faults. A religious man is prepared by his religion both to administer and receive evangelical reproof with the meekness and gentleness of the gospel. In his view sin is a great evil; to reclaim or be reclaimed from which is a pre-eminent blessing. Reproof is the proper, efficacious, and evangelical means, of communicating or acquiring this blessing; and will, therefore, be administered and received with the kindness of the gospel.

But to sinners, reproof is the pain; and sin the pleasure; for reproof will always be regarded merely as the means of restraining and lessening this pleasure. It will be viewed, therefore, with feelings of hostility; and he who administers it will be considered as an enemy. Nor will the sinner himself ordinarily administer it to others, unless when prompted by some selfish motive; nor without very visible emotions of superiority, resentment, or contempt. Sinners, therefore, are plainly unqualified to take any useful part in this important branch of Christian communion.

Nor are they better fitted either for giving or receiving religious consolation. It is plainly impossible for them to enter cordially and deeply into interests which they never felt; to indulge emotions which they never experienced; to feel the force of motives, whose import they cannot understand; or to derive either peace or hope from the truths or promises of a religion to which, though professing it, they are still strangers.

But a single point will set this part of the subject in the clearest light. It is this; that Christ has enjoined upon all his followers brotherly love. This affection, as I formerly observed, is that which is commonly called complacency, or the love of virtue; and is directed, not, like benevolence, towards the happiness of intelligent beings, but towards the virtue of good beings. That sinners cannot exercise this affection, will not be ques-

tioned. But this is not the point at which I aim. Christians cannot exercise this affection towards sinners; because sinners do not possess the virtue which this command requires Christians to love. Christ cannot require of his disciples anything which is physically impossible; but it is physically impossible to love virtue in those who have it not. Yet Christ has required all the members of his church to exercise this affection towards all. He intended, therefore, in this command, as well as elsewhere, that all the members of his church should be such as could be the objects of this affection.

To this command he accordingly subjoins the following declaration: 'Hereby shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another.' But it is impossible that sinners, who are not his disciples, should be known to be his disciples. Sinners, therefore, were not included by him in the number of those of whom he speaks in these passages; or, in other words, are not proper members of his church.

Universally: There is, there can be, between Christians and sinners, as members of the church of Christ, no community of interests, views, affections, or designs. A church, intentionally made up of these discordant materials, may be a decent company of men; but it will very imperfectly sustain the character of a church of Christ.

V. *With similar clearness is the doctrine illustrated by the nature of Christian discipline.*

Of this subject I can give only a very summary exhibition. Christian discipline consists of private exhortation, public admonition, and excommunication. The end of all these administrations is the amendment of the offender, and the peace, purity, and edification of the church. By every Christian they will be regarded as institutions eminently useful to himself, and eminently beneficial to that great interest which supremely engrosses his heart. To him, therefore, they will be objects of affection and reverence. When a fellow Christian expostulates with him kindly, evangelically, and between themselves, concerning a fault, which he has really committed, he will be 'gained by his brother;' because, with a Christian spirit, and with Christian views, he will feel that his brother has designed good to him, and conscientiously performed his own duty. Under the influence of the same spirit, he will receive an admonition from the church with reverence and awe; because he knows that the church is merely discharging the same duty, and aiming at the same benevolent end. Even if he should be excommunicated, an event which in such a church will rarely take place, he will of course, when his passions have subsided, and the period of self-examination has returned, resume the character of a penitent; humbly acknowledge the rectitude of the administration; and by an ingenuous confession of his fault, and the reformation of his life, become reconciled to his fellow Christians.

Sinners, on the contrary, will receive all these acts of discipline with reluctance and resentment; and will never realize their necessity, nor their usefulness. The faults for which discipline is instituted, they will usually consider as commendable actions, as matters of indifference, or at the worst as mere peccadillos, about which no man ought to feel any serious concern. Remonstrances against them they will regard as flowing from personal pique, pride, or a spirit of meddling; and every subsequent measure of discipline, as springing out of bigotry, persecution, or revenge. An ecclesiastical process will be viewed by them as a mere prosecution; and those concerned in it against them, as mere litigants, influenced only by selfish passions, and not by a sense of duty.

In the administration of discipline, unless stimulated by such passions, they will either not unite at all, or unite with indifference and reluctance. They will be too prudent to provoke their neighbours, and too worldly to trouble themselves about the peace or purity of the church. It may, I believe, be truly said, that Christian discipline never was, and never will be, for any length of time maintained, where the majority of those intrusted with it are, or have been, men of this character.

VI. *This truth is decisively proved by the manner in which the Christian church is spoken of in the New Testament.*

The common name for the church in the Old Testament is 'Zion.' Under this name it is spoken of as 'a holy hill;' as 'loved by God;' as 'the heritage of God;' as 'the Zion of the Holy One of Israel.' It is said, that 'Christ is her King,' that 'God will place salvation in her;' that 'he will reign in her;' that 'he commands there the blessing, even life for ever more.' In these, and a multitude of other instances, exactly the same character is given of the church under the Mosaic, which was afterward given of it under the Christian dispensation. This fact furnishes unanswerable proof, that the church was intentionally formed, and is actually regarded, in the same manner by God in every age.

The character of the church, as given in the New Testament, will be sufficiently learned from the following passages:—

To the church at Rome, St Paul writes in these terms: 'Among whom are ye also, the called of Jesus Christ. To all that are in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints. First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all; that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world,' Rom. i. 6—8.

'And I myself am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another,' Rom. xv. 14.

To the Corinthians he writes, 'Unto the church of God, which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints. I thank my God always on your behalf for the grace of God, which is given you by Christ Jesus,' 1 Cor. i. 2, 4.

To the Galatians he writes, 'Now we, brethren as Isaac was, are the children of the promise,' Gal. iv. 28.

To the Ephesians he writes, 'Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints who are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus,' Eph. i. 1.

To the Philippians he writes, 'I thank my God for your fellowship in the gospel, from the first day until now: being confident of this very thing, that he who hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ,' Phil. i. 3, 5, 6.

To the Colossians he writes, 'Paul, an apostle, to the saints and faithful brethren in Christ, who are at Colosse: we give thanks to God, since we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all the saints, for the hope, which is laid up for you in heaven,' Col. i. 1—5.

To the Thessalonians he writes, 'We give thanks to

God alway for you all, remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope, in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God, even our Father; knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God,' 1 Thess. i. 4.

To the Hebrews he writes, 'Brethren, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation,' Heb. vi. 9.

St James, speaking of himself, and of the churches to whom he wrote, says, 'Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures,' James i. 18.

St Peter writes to the churches in Pontus, &c., 'Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ,' 1 Pet. i. 2.

St John says, 'I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you. I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one,' 1 John ii. 12, 13.

St Jude, addressing his epistle to the churches generally, writes, 'To them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called,' Jude 1.

With this language everything found in the New Testament perfectly harmonizes. One character, and one only, is given in it of the church; and that is the character of Christians. There is no mixture of any other character. Even when the faults of its members are mentioned, they are mentioned solely as the backslidings of Christians, and never as the sins of unbelieving and impenitent men. How then can we entertain a rational doubt, that God, when he instituted his church, intended it to be an assembly of believers!

SERMON CL.

THE MEANS OF GRACE.—EXTRAORDINARY MEANS OF GRACE.—OFFICERS OF THE CHURCH.—MINISTERS OF THE GOSPEL.—WHO ARE MINISTERS.

The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed. Feed the flock of God, which is among you; taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind: neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.—1 Pet. v. 1—3.

In the preceding Discourse concerning the constitution of the Christian church, I observed, that 'the church is composed of its ordinary members, and its officers.' The character of its ordinary members I investigated at that time. I shall now consider, the character of its officers.

Before I commence the direct examination of this subject, I shall make a few preliminary observations.

1. The Scriptures have actually constituted certain officers in the church.

Whatever differences of opinion exist concerning the kinds of officers in the church designated by the Scriptures, it is agreed by most, if not all Christians, that such officers, of some kind or other, are established by the sacred volume. We there read of ministers, pastors, teachers, bishops, &c. By these names, it is generally acknowledged, officers of one or more classes were denoted, who were intended always to be found in the Christian church. Certain powers also they were intended to possess, and certain duties to perform.

2. Whatever the Scriptures have said of these men is of divine authority and obligation; but nothing else is of such authority, nor at all obligatory on the consciences of mankind.

Whatever the Scriptures have instituted, required, or directed, is instituted, required, and directed by God; and is invested with his authority. All else, by whomsoever said, or in what age soever, is said by man. But man has no authority over the conscience, and can never bind his fellow man in any religious concern whatever. If, then, we find in the present, or any past age, anything said on the subject, whether by divines or others, however learned and esteemed they may have been, which at the same time is not said in the Scriptures, it is totally destitute of any authority or obligation with respect to us. It may, or may not, be said wisely. It may be good or bad advice or opinion; but it cannot in any degree have the nature of law, nor be at all obligatory on their fellow men.

The fathers of the church, for example, were in many instances good, and in some, wise men. They are often valuable witnesses to facts. On a variety of occasions they help us to the true meaning of words, phrases, and passages in the Scriptures. They often edify us also by their piety. But their opinion, or judgment, or injunctions, are totally destitute of authority, and stand upon exactly the same level with those of men, who now sustain a similar character. If we could rely on the authenticity of the smaller Epistles of St Ignatius; or had we the autographs in our possession, all the injunctions and declarations contained in them, exclusively of those derived from the Scriptures, would be mere advice, or information.

3. Whatever church officers the Scriptures have established as standing officers, are appointed by God himself. The church, therefore, is bound to receive them

as having been thus appointed; and to take effectual care that they always exist.

This will not be denied by any man, who admits the divine revelation of the Scriptures.

4. No other officers besides those thus appointed, have any authority to plead for their existence in office. All others are of mere human institution; convenient and useful, perhaps; but never to be regarded as possessing any authority, except what arises from the personal consent, or engagement, of those who receive them: and this can never be obligatory on the consciences of others.

It is to no purpose here to allege, that they have been introduced and established by the deliberate determination of wise and good men, or of the whole church. It is to no purpose to allege that they have existed for any length of time, however great; nor that they have existed in various churches, however distinguished for learning and piety. It is to no purpose to allege, that these churches have believed them to be divinely instituted. This belief, respectable as those are who have entertained it, can claim no more authority, and involves no more obligation, than any other opinion concerning any other subject.

5. If the Scriptures have constituted officers in the church, and have partially and imperfectly designated their classes, numbers, offices, and duties; then this imperfect exhibition of the subject, and this alone, is of divine authority and obligation.

It has been often supposed, that God has of design left the subject of ecclesiastical government partially exhibited in the Scriptures. Whatever else was necessary to complete the system, he is farther supposed to have left to be supplied by the prudence of Christians, as the various circumstances of the church, in various ages and countries, might require. If this supposition be admitted, then whatever is contained in this imperfect institution of ecclesiastical government in the Scriptures is authoritative and obligatory; and whatever is supplied by human wisdom to complete the system, is merely advisory and prudential.

The full admission of these principles would, as it seems to me, prepare the way for a final removal of most disputes concerning this subject.

These things being premised, as indispensable to a just decision concerning this subject, I observe, that the system of ecclesiastical government mentioned in the Scriptures is disclosed by them either completely, or partially. If they have completely disclosed this system, then we shall find it all in the sacred volume, and cannot need to search for it elsewhere. If they have disclosed it partially, then a partial disclosure was sufficient; and this part is all that possesses, or can possess, any authority to bind the consciences of men. Whatever additions are made to it, and however wisely or necessarily they are made by men, they cannot pretend to the least authority or obligation. It is in vain to say, that in this case the church would be left at loose ends, and unprotected against disorder and schism. The answer to this objection is obvious and complete. The church is left as Infinite Wisdom chose to leave it. Should we grant, contrary to truth and decency, that the situation in which it is left is not the best; still the evil is without remedy; for we cannot add to the words of God.

Let us now inquire what ecclesiastical officers are mentioned in the Scriptures, as instituted by God.

The largest and most particular account given of this subject in the Scriptures, is in Eph. iv. 11; 'And he gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers.' Here we find at least four sorts of officers in the church; four classes of men, who are empowered each to do some things in the church, which they, and they only, had a right to do.

The office of apostles is acknowledged on all hands long since to have terminated.

Of prophets, it is only necessary to observe, that their office must terminate, of course, when inspiration terminates.

Evangelists, the third class here mentioned, are universally acknowledged to have been extraordinary officers, and to have ceased in a very early period of the church; unless the word be supposed to denote merely a minister without a cure.

There remain then only 'pastors and teachers.' From the phraseology here used, it appears to me evident, that they were not two distinct orders of men, but one, destined to feed and teach the church.

The language is not, as in the preceding clauses, 'some pastors,' and 'some teachers,' but 'some pastors and teachers,' that is, some, who were both pastors and teachers. To 'teach' the church is to feed it with the bread of life.

Some Christian churches have supposed, that teachers were men who, holding the pastoral office, were particularly to be employed in teaching candidates for the ministry whatever was necessary to qualify them for this office. Others have believed that they were destined to the employment of teaching and defending evangelical truth generally, without taking upon themselves the care of particular churches. As all these, so far as I know, consider both kinds of officers as of the same rank, and as invested with exactly the same powers, it will be unnecessary at the present time to examine this opinion.

We are come then to one class of permanent ecclesiastical officers, mentioned in this text; viz. that which is known by the word 'pastors.'

The apostle is here recounting those officers which Christ gave to the church, when he ascended to heaven; and it must, I think, be admitted, that he mentions all those which Christ gave to the church directly, or in his own person. All other ecclesiastical officers constituted in the Scriptures, were therefore constituted afterward by the apostles. Of these I know of but one class mentioned in the Scriptures, viz., deacons. In Acts vi. seven men are said to have been chosen to this office, and set apart by prayer, and the laying on of hands.

The only debate concerning this subject respects the class, or classes of officers, denoted by the word 'pastors.' In my own opinion, this word includes a single class only, spoken of elsewhere in the Scriptures under the names elders, bishops, ministers, teachers, and some others. This opinion I shall endeavour to support by the following arguments, derived from the word of God. Of these I allege,

1. The text.

The text is addressed directly to the pastors of the Christian church, under the name elders; derived, as is that of pastor also, from the Old Testament. In the customary language of the Jews, the word elders de-

noted the rulers and counsellors of that nation; as some corresponding word has often denoted, either generally or particularly, the rulers and counsellors of other nations. Thus among the Romans senator, and among ourselves senator, denoted an officer similar to the Jewish elder. Human wisdom is chiefly the result of experience; and experience is the result of years. Nations therefore, peculiarly when unenlightened by science, have committed the direction of public affairs and public counsels almost exclusively to the aged. The name, in this appropriate sense, was naturally transferred to those who were to counsel and direct the church; especially by the apostles, as being Jews, and writing originally for their own countrymen. These elders are exhorted to 'feed,' that is, to teach, edify, and rule the flock of God. That the Greek word, ποιμαινω, a derivative of which is here translated 'feed,' signifies to *rule*, in the most extensive manner, can be doubted by no man at all conversant with the Greek language, either in the Classics, or the New Testament. They are also directed to 'take the oversight of it,' or in more exact language, 'to oversee it' (they had already taken the oversight of it) 'willingly;' not of constraint, nor for the sake of gain. The Greek word, rendered 'taking the oversight,' is επισκοπουντες, exactly rendered 'overseeing,' or exercising the office of an overseer, or bishop.

Elders, therefore, were to exercise the office of a bishop, or overseer; and of course were invested with that office. To this the only reply is, that elder is a generic term, including both bishops and ordinary elders, or ministers. This will be considered farther on. At present, I observe, that these directions are given to elders absolutely, and as elders merely; and to all elders therefore, without distinction. I know not by what warrant we can suppose, that St Peter, writing with the Spirit of inspiration, has written so loosely, as to express that in the most absolute manner, which was intended in a very limited sense; so limited, as to exclude nineteen-twentieths of all those who are apparently included in his direction: while, at the same time, he has given no notice, either before or after, of this design. What in such a case must be the construction of this passage by the elders, to whom it was written; and what their subsequent conduct, in obedience to it? If it be supposed by us, who have the whole Bible before us, that this strange construction ought to be given to it, would it be possible for these elders, who had no other writing of this apostle, and few of them, probably, any other writings of the New Testament, to understand that what is here obviously made the duty of every elder, was really the duty of one only, out of many?

2. I allege Acts xx. 17, 28: 'And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church.' A part of the directions which he gave to these elders is recited thus; 'Take heed, therefore, to yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.'

On these two verses, thus connected, I remark,

(1.) That in Ephesus there were several elders of the church.

(2.) That all these elders were bishops.

The word, rendered in the English translation, *overseers*, is in the original επισκοπους, the only word, in the New Testament, which is rendered bishop. The word bishop is synonymous with overseer.

(3.) That the Holy Ghost constituted, or made, these several elders, bishops. The original word is εθετο, constituted.

(4.) That in Ephesus all the elders of the church were bishops. These were plainly all the elders of that church; as is evident from the phraseology. The words are, 'And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church.'

(5.) That, therefore, there was no one bishop, of superior authority; or holding an office or character which distinguished him from other bishops in that city.

(6.) That Timothy could not be, although he is extensively supposed to have been, the sole bishop, or diocesan, of the church in that city; because other men were bishops in that church.

The elders, to whom St Peter wrote in the text, were all who dwelt in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia Proper, and Bithynia; provinces, constituting more than two-thirds of that great country, called the Lesser Asia; at that time full of churches and Christians. All the elders of all these churches he exhorts to exercise the office of a bishop in the church.

All the elders in Ephesus, the chief city in the same country, St Paul declares to have been 'constituted bishops by the Holy Ghost.' Both apostles speak the same language to the same persons; language, which has obviously but one meaning.

These passages in the most explicit manner teach us, that elders, universally, and bishops, are the same persons; destined to exactly the same purposes, and invested with exactly the same powers.

3. I allege Phil. i. 'Paul and Timotheus, servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus, who are in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons.'

Concerning this passage, I observe,

(1.) That there is no mention made of elders in this church, by name.

'The saints, with the bishops and deacons,' are expressly mentioned. If there were elders in this church who were distinct from the bishops, the omission of them is inexplicable. If elders be allowed to have been officers, inferior to bishops, they were unquestionably superior to deacons; and it is incredible, that this letter should not have been addressed to them also, when it was addressed to 'the deacons.' The important interest and office which they held in this church, rendered it highly proper that the contents of the letter should be addressed personally to them; more so, certainly, than that it should be addressed to the deacons. Had it been addressed to bishops, elders, and deacons, it would have been thought, by an advocate for prelatical episcopacy, absolutely decisive in favour of three orders of ecclesiastical officers. As it now stands, and as it is uncontradicted by any other passage of Scripture, I think it is equally decisive that there were but two.

(2.) It is certain, that in the Philippian church there were several bishops; and therefore, whatever was the case with other churches in this respect, there was not at Philippi a single bishop, presiding over a number of subordinate ministers. But there is no reason to conclude, that the Philippian church was, in this respect, differently constituted from other churches.

4. I allege the fact, that no mention is made of

bishops, by way of address (except the text just quoted from Philippians, i. 1), or direction, or salutation.

The word επισκοπος (bishop or overseer) occurs in the New Testament five times. Once it is applied to Christ; viz. 1 Pet. ii. 25; and four times denotes officers in the church. The word επισκοπη is once used to denote the office of a bishop; viz. 1 Tim. iii. 1; in two instances to denote visitation; Luke xix. 44, and 1 Pet. ii. 12; and once is quoted from Psal. cix. 8, to denote, by way of accommodation, the employment of Judas as an apostle. Επισκοπεω, to oversee, or exercise the office of a bishop, is used once, with that meaning, namely, in the text, and once, Heb. xii. 15, where it is translated, with exact propriety, 'looking diligently.'

In all the addresses of their several letters by the apostles to the several churches, there is not, except in that just mentioned, a single allusion to bishops, as a peculiar order of men. In the numerous salutations, with which the epistles are concluded, and in the several directions given to the churches, there is not the least mention made, nor the least hint given concerning this class of officers.

Had such a class existed, to whom the government of churches and subordinate ministers was chiefly or wholly committed, is it credible, that no mention should be made of them, in the numerous directions given for the government of the church? There are several proper cases of discipline mentioned in the Epistle to the Corinthians; particularly, the case of the man who had his father's wife. St Paul directs the whole church of Corinth, 'when gathered together in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and his Spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, to deliver this person to Satan, for the destruction of the flesh;' 1 Cor. vi. 1, 4, 5; that is, to excommunicate him. The church did excommunicate him. Of this fact St Paul gives us an account, 2 Cor. ii. 5, 6, where he says, 'Sufficient to such a man is this punishment, which was inflicted of many;' υπο των πλειονων, 'by the majority, or the chief part of the members.' Had there been a bishop, intrusted with the government of the church at Corinth (and if not at Corinth, where could we expect to find such bishops?) is it credible, that this important act of church government should not have been assigned to him; and afterward recited as having been executed by him, or at least under his authority? Is it credible, that in all the mention which is made of government in the church, there should nowhere be any mention made of bishops, as particularly concerned in this subject? What is said in the epistles to Timothy and Titus, and may be thought inconsistent with this remark, I shall consider hereafter.

In all the salutations also, directed universally to all the saints, and to many humble individuals by name, there is no mention made of bishops. Yet several of the epistles are addressed to churches, in cities of great eminence where bishops must, if anywhere, have resided. The passage in Heb. xiii. 24, 'Salute them who have the rule over you,' I shall examine in another place.

5. I allege also the commission originally given to ministers of the gospel.

This is found at length in Matt. xxviii. 19, 20: 'Go ye, disciple all nations; baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. And, lo! I am with you always, unto the end of the world. Amen.'

This commission is plainly given to all ministers, because it is given without discrimination, and because it is given to them unto the end of the world. It is their only commission, and conveys the only authority under which they act as ministers. The authority which it conveys is also the same to all. Unless then this commission is qualified elsewhere, there can be no distinction among ministers. Those to whom precisely the same authority is given by the same commission, it is hardly necessary to observe, sustain exactly the same office.

6. I allege, as proof of the same doctrine, the fact, that the same duties are assigned to all ministers of the gospel.

The duties assigned to ministers of the gospel are, public and private prayer in the church; preaching the gospel; administering baptism, and the Lord's Supper; ruling; and ordaining other ministers. All these are assigned to elders universally, in as plain language as any which is used about these subjects. With regard to the three first of these duties, this will not be questioned. The whole debate respects the two last. I shall, therefore, consider these particularly.

Concerning ruling the church, we have the following passages:

'A bishop must be one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity. For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God,' 1 Tim. iii. 2, 4, 5.

'Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honour; especially they who labour in the word and doctrine,' 1 Tim. v. 17.

In the first of these passages, a bishop is required to rule well. In the second it is required, that the elders who rule well should be accounted worthy of double honour. So far as these two passages are concerned, it will not be questioned, that ruling is assigned as explicitly to elders, as to bishops; nor that the elder is equally entitled with the bishop to the employment of ruling. But this is the only passage in the New Testament, in which ruling is expressly assigned to a bishop; unless the word, rendered bishop, should be supposed to contain such an assignment.

The character of Timothy and Titus, as bishops, will be hereafter considered.

In Rom. xii. 8, it is said, 'He that ruleth,' *is* required to do this duty 'with diligence.' This passage plainly lies out of the debate.

In Heb. xiii. 7, the apostle says, 'Remember them who have the rule over you, who have spoken to you the word of life.'—'Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves; for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account,' verse 17.—'Salute all them that have the rule over you, and all the saints. They of Italy salute you.'

Here we find the rule over the church, or churches, to whom this epistle was directed, committed to many hands; '*Them* that have the rule over you;' and '*all them* that have the rule over you.' If this epistle was sent to a single church, or to the churches of a single city (Jerusalem for instance); then in that church, or in the churches of that city, there were several persons who had the rule over these churches. That it was thus

sent, is both reasonable, in the nature of the case, because otherwise there would be nobody to receive, to keep, or to testify to, a part of the canon of Scripture; and because, in the last quoted verse, they of Italy are said to salute the persons to whom it was written. Of course, these rulers cannot have been bishops of extensive dioceses: but ordinary ministers of the church.

In accordance with this opinion, the most judicious divines have supposed this epistle to have been directed to the Hebrews in Palestine, and particularly those in Jerusalem.

The rulers spoken of in the 7th verse have been supposed to be dead at the time when the epistle was written; the latter end of the year 63. St James the Less, often called the Bishop of Jerusalem, died probably about one year before this time. He was the only person who with any pretence can be supposed to have ruled them as a bishop. Plainly, James, the brother of John, and Stephen, the proto-martyr, were not, as Theodoret supposes, at all concerned in ruling this church. If the other James had been their bishop, it is not easy to conceive how, in such a passage, there should be no hint concerning his ruling over them; and how St Paul, if their government had not been committed to a considerable number of persons, should have written as he has done in this verse.

In the two last of these verses, the rulers mentioned were still living; and, from the language used, existed in considerable numbers. At the same time, no bishop is mentioned, or alluded to, in any manner of distinction whatever. Ecclesiastical government, therefore, was not, at the time when this epistle was written, in the hands of a diocesan bishop at Jerusalem. To say the least, such a fact receives no countenance from the Epistle to the Hebrews. These are the only passages in which ruling, and the character of rulers in the church, are directly mentioned in the Scriptures. I presume it is plain from these passages, that ruling is at least as directly and as extensively ascribed to elders, as to bishops; and that, so far as these texts are concerned, it belongs to the former as extensively as to the latter.

But preaching is everywhere in the Scriptures exhibited as an employment superior to that of ruling. In the passage quoted from 1 Tim. v. 17, this truth is decisively exhibited: 'Let the elders who rule well, be accounted worthy of double honour (that is, of high honour); especially they who labour in the word and doctrine.' Here St Paul directs that preaching elders should be accounted worthy of more honour than ruling elders. As the rulers are here supposed to 'rule well' (that is, to do their duty faithfully,) it is clear, that the superior honour given to those who preach, is given only on account of the superiority of their employment.

Preaching was the first business on which the apostles, and afterward the seventy, were sent. It was, also, the first active business of Christ himself; as he has told us in Luke iv. 18, quoted from Isaiah lxi. 1: 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me; because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor.'

Of the apostles it is said, Mark iii. 14, 'And he ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach.' When they went out on their first mission, Christ said to them, 'Go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel; and as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand,' Matt. x. 6, 7.

To the seventy he said, 'Into whatsoever city ye enter, heal the sick that are therein; and say unto them, The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you,' Luke x. 8, 9.

'Christ,' saith St Paul, 'sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel.'

Again: 'I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation,' Rom. i. 16.

Again: 'When it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen,' Gal. i. 15.

According to this scheme, the Scriptures are full of commands, exhortations, discussions, descriptions, and other exhibitions, concerning preaching the gospel, as the great duty of ministers. In all these it is presented as the most important business of a minister; compared with which, every other is of a very subordinate nature. Ruling, on the contrary, is mentioned but six times in the New Testament; and there without a hint of its possessing any peculiar consequence. If elders, therefore, had been distinguished from bishops by inferiority of power, as rulers, they would still hold a higher and more important employment, as decided by the Scriptures. If there are different classes of ministers, the preacher is certainly made in the New Testament superior to the ruler. Yet ruling is the peculiar employment professedly assigned to the supposed higher class of ministers. Can this scheme consist with what we have just now heard from the Scriptures?

The subject of ordaining ministers is mentioned nine times: four in the phraseology of 'laying on hands;' and five in other, varying terms.

'And he' (that is, Christ) 'ordained twelve, that they should be with him,' Mark iii. 14. The Greek word here is εποιησε, *constituted*. 'Wherefore of these men,' says St Peter, 'must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection,' Acts i. 21, 22. The Greek word is here γενεσθαι, *become*.

'And when they' (the apostles) 'had ordained them elders in every church,' Acts xiv. 23. Here the Greek word is, χειροτονησαντες, originally signifying to stretch out the hand; then to elect with uplifted hands; and afterward to appoint, to constitute to an office. 'Whereunto,' says St Paul, 'I am ordained a preacher, and an apostle,' 1 Tim. ii. 7. The Greek word here is ετεθην, I was *appointed*.

'For this cause left I thee in Crete; that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city.' Here the Greek word is καταστησης, *constitute*. It is doubtful whether ordaining, in the ecclesiastical sense, is intended in either of these passages, except the third; Acts xiv. 23: and even this will admit of serious debate.

In the last, to wit, Tit. i. 5, the power of ordaining has been supposed to be attributed to a bishop. The justice of this supposition must be determined by answers to two questions. The first is, Whether καταστησης signifies *ordination* in the appropriate sense; or *to constitute elders, already ordained, ministers of particular churches?* or, in other words, to appoint them their particular places of administration.

The second is, Whether Titus was a bishop in the prelatical sense? This subject will be examined in its proper place.

The four remaining instances are mentioned in the appropriate language of 'laying on hands;' επιτιθημι χειρας, phraseology which usually denotes ecclesiastical ordination in the proper sense. They are the following: 'Whom,' that is, the seven deacons first chosen, 'they set before the apostles; and when they had prayed, they laid hands on them,' Acts vi. 6. 'And when they,' that is, the apostles, 'had fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them,' viz., Paul and Barnabas, 'they sent them away,' Acts xiii. 3.

'Lay hands suddenly on no man,' 1 Tim. i. 22.

'Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, and the laying on of the hands of the presbytery,' or body of elders.

In all these instances, ordination, in the appropriate sense, is undoubtedly intended. As the apostles laid hands on those to whom they communicated the miraculous gift of the Holy Ghost, the same phraseology is used twice with reference to this subject, Acts viii. 17, 19, both but one instance; and 1 Tim. i. 6. It is also used to denote the laying on of the hands of him who offered a sin-offering, Heb. vi. 2.

Of the four instances in which this phraseology denotes ecclesiastical ordination, it is, in two, attributed to the apostles generally. In the third, Timothy is commanded to 'lay hands suddenly on no man.' That is, not hastily to ordain, or be concerned in ordaining, any man, lest he should prove an unsuitable person for the ministry. In the fourth, the ordination of Timothy is attributed to the whole body of presbyters or elders, who united in his ordination. Of these instances, the only ones of this nature in the Bible, it is perfectly plain, that there is but one in which ordination can possibly be ascribed in any construction to persons who were bishops in the modern sense: viz., the passage in which Timothy is commanded to lay hands suddenly on no man. Here the ascription depends wholly on the fact, that Timothy was such a bishop, and bishop of Ephesus; a fact which, it is presumed, cannot be established. Leaving this, however, for the present, I observe, that, were it to be granted, still, as Timothy's own ordination is directly ascribed to the presbytery only, the Scriptures attribute ordination at least as evidently, and as extensively, to presbyters as to bishops.

Of this power, also, as well as that of ruling, it is to be observed, when compared with preaching, very little stress is laid on it in the Scriptures. It is mentioned but nine times, even if we adopt the utmost latitude of construction; and in all these, except two, is mentioned incidentally. In one of these two, St Paul commands Timothy to lay hands suddenly on no man, 1 Tim. vi. 16. In the other, he mentions that he had left Titus in Crete, to ordain elders in every city. Preaching the gospel, on the contrary, is, throughout the New Testament, and often in the Old, exhibited as the great duty of a Christian minister; as his chief, most useful, and most honourable destination. From this state of the subject, the conclusion is therefore warrantably drawn, that, in the view of the Scriptures, ordaining is an employment wholly inferior in its nature and importance. Of course, the powers claimed by the bishop as peculiar to his office, are inferior to those confessedly attributed to the elder, and can, in no scriptural sense, become means of raising the former above the latter.

SERMON CLI.

THE MEANS OF GRACE.—EXTRAORDINARY MEANS OF GRACE.—OFFICERS OF THE CHURCH.—MINISTERS OF THE GOSPEL.—WHO ARE MINISTERS.

The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed. Feed the flock of God, which is among you; taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind: neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.—1 Peter v. 1—3.

In the preceding Discourse I mentioned it, as being in my own opinion the doctrine of the Scriptures, that there are but two kinds of permanent officers in the church of Christ.

In support of this doctrine I alleged the following things:

(1.) The text.

(2.) Acts xx. 17, 28.

(3.) Philippians i. 1.

(4.) The fact, that, except in this passage, no mention is made of bishops by way of address, direction, or salutation.

(5.) The commission originally given to ministers of the gospel.

(6.) The fact, that the same duties are assigned to all such ministers.

I shall now proceed to support the same doctrine by exhibiting at some length the manner in which ministers are spoken of in the gospel. This very general head, which I could not conveniently make less general, I shall illustrate from the following sources:—

1. The address of Christ to his apostles, Mark x 42, 45, with the parallel passage:

'Ye know, that they who are accounted to rule over the Gentiles, exercise lordship over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them; but it shall not be so among you. For whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister; and whosoever will

be the chiefest, shall be servant of all. For the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister.'

The apostles, James and John, as we are informed in the context, had solicited Christ, that they might be exalted to peculiar distinction and authority in his kingdom. The other apostles were offended at this scheme of ambition on the part of their companions, as being themselves desirous of the same elevation. To repress every such feeling in them all, Christ utters the words which have been quoted. These words certainly discouraged all wishes for peculiar authority in the minds of the apostles, as ministers of Christ; and informed them, that the proper destination of the ambitious among them was the place of a servant, or minister, to the rest. In other words, Christ required them to be, and to feel themselves to be, equals; and forbade them to assume any authority over each other. The conduct which Christ required of them must, it would seem, be the proper conduct of all succeeding ministers. An absolute equality is plainly here commanded, so far as the apostles were concerned. It ought to be shown, that the case is not directly and entirely applicable to their followers in the sacred office. Let us suppose that Christ had given the converse directions. Let us suppose that he had directed James and Peter to be rulers over their brethren. Would not this fact have been pleaded, as decisive authority for the same distinction among succeeding ministers? The mere shadow of such a distinction in favour of Peter, easily shown to have no substance, has actually been relied on by the church of Rome, as a solid foundation of the high pre-eminence assumed by the bishop of that city over all other ministers of the gospel.

Correspondent with this address, and pointing to the same object, is the instruction given by Christ in Matt. xxiii. 6—12; while observing the conduct of the Scribes and Pharisees. Concerning these men, our Saviour observes, 'They love greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi. But (he adds) be ye not called Rabbi; for one is your Master, even Christ. And call no man father upon the earth; for one is your Father, who is in heaven. Neither be ye called masters; for one is your Master, even Christ. But he that is greatest among you, shall be your servant: and whosoever shall exalt himself, shall be abased; and whosoever shall humble himself, shall be exalted.'

The Scribes and Pharisees loved and sought external distinctions, uppermost rooms, chief seats in the synagogues, greetings in the markets, and titles of honour. Against this spirit, and its consequences, Christ here warns his apostles. As their only final security against the disposition, he forbids the distinctions and titles, to the acquisition of which its efforts were peculiarly directed. Succeeding ministers are certainly no less interested in being secured against this temptation, danger, and sin, than the apostles were; and what were the means of their safety must be equally necessary and equally useful to their followers. Had the assumption of these titles and distinctions been enjoined upon the apostles; the injunction would have been pleaded by succeeding ministers, as an ample warrant to themselves for assuming the same titles, and aiming at the same distinctions. To the apostles they were prohibited. Why, according to the same mode of inference, they are not prohibited to succeeding ministers, I confess myself unable to explain.

2. The fact that, wherever the officers of the church are mentioned together, no more than two classes are ever mentioned.

In the former Discourse I made several observations concerning the address of the Epistle to the Philippians, which, as specified in chap. i. 1, is to all the 'saints that are in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons.' It will be unnecessary to add anything here to what was then observed concerning this passage.

In 1 Tim. iii. St Paul instructs him at large in the qualifications of ecclesiastical officers; and discusses this subject in form, and more extensively than we find done in any other part of the Scriptures. But even here we find no other officers mentioned, beside the επισκοπος; *bishop*, or *overseer;* and the διακονος, *deacon*. Is it not strange, if there had been an intermediate officer, distinguished both from the bishop and the deacon, and known by the title of elder, that there should be here no mention of such an officer? The character and duties of an elder are on all hands acknowledged to be more important than those of a deacon. Yet these are particularly pointed out, while of those not a hint is given. It is farther to be remarked, that the office and duties of an elder, as distinguished from a bishop, are nowhere exhibited to us in the New Testament. The text certainly is not such an exhibition. The elders here mentioned were plainly all such as of right, and by divine authority, exercised the office of a bishop. For this silence on a subject confessedly of serious importance to the church, it is believed no reason can be given.

When certain men came down from Judea to Antioch, and distressed the church in that city by teaching, that 'the Gentiles ought to be circumcised,' in order to their salvation; Paul and Barnabas, with certain others, 'were sent up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question. And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the church, and of the apostles and elders. And they declared all things which God had done with them. And the apostles and elders came together, for to consider of this matter.' After the deliberation was ended, we are told, that 'it pleased the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch, with Paul and Barnabas. They wrote letters by them after this manner: the apostles, elders, and brethren, send greeting unto the brethren who are of the Gentiles, in Antioch, and Syria, and Cilicia.' See Acts xv. particularly verses 3, 4, 6, 22, 23.

Concerning this interesting recital I observe,

(1.) That the church of Antioch sent their messengers to Jerusalem, to obtain a decision concerning a question incomparably more important than any other which agitated the Christian world, during the first century.

(2.) Under the immediate instruction of Paul and Barnabas, it is impossible that this church should not have known the proper tribunal to which their messengers were to be sent, for the purpose of obtaining this decision.

(3.) They actually sent them to the apostles and elders at Jerusalem.

(4.) When these messengers were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the whole church, and of the apostles, and elders.

(5.) All the observations made on this occasion were addressed to the body just specified. The messengers propounded their communications to this body. Peter and James began their speeches on this occasion with, 'Men and brethren.'

(6.) This body sent chosen men of their own company, authoritatively, with Paul and Barnabas; viz. 'Judas and Silas, chief men among the brethren.'

(7.) The letters carried by these messengers to Antioch were written in the name of this body, after this manner: 'The apostles, and elders, and brethren, send greeting unto the brethren and disciples who are in Antioch,' &c.

(8.) This body decided the question submitted to them; and the Holy Ghost approved of their decision. Their language is; 'Forasmuch as we have heard, that certain, who went out from us, have troubled you with words,' &c.; 'saying, Ye must be circumcised, and keep the law; to whom we gave no such command. It seemed good unto us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men unto you. We have sent therefore Judas and Silas,' &c. 'For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things; that ye abstain from meats offered to idols,' &c. The slightest attention will convince any man that the authoritative determination of the great question concerning circumcision was accomplished, with the approbation of the Holy Ghost, by the apostles, elders, and brethren:—not by the apostles;—not by the elders;—but by both;—not by the brethren;—but by the united voice of the whole body. This, the language already recited irresistibly declares.

(9.) There was no bishop in this assembly; that is, in the prelatical sense. James, whatever was the fact afterward, was not now such a bishop. The letter does not go in his name, nor with any authority whatever attributed to him, except as an apostle, and as a member of that deliberative body; and in neither character any farther, than that he had one voice in the decision of the assembly. As no such bishop or bishops are mentioned in any part of the transaction, it is impossible that any person possessed of modern episcopal authority should have been present at this meeting.

(10.) This church had at this time existed fifteen or sixteen years; and for about twelve was the only Christian church in the world. One would suppose it must have been established in the proper Christian order. There were elders in it: and, as the number of Christian Jews here amounted to many thousands, it is highly probable that these elders were numerous. The church was also immediately under the eye of the apostles. If prelatical bishops were a part of the Christian economy, I am unable to conjecture why a bishop was not established before this time in Jerusalem. There were also no such bishops in the church at Antioch; nor in those of Syria and Cilicia. The brethren of the church at Antioch sent the messengers. The letter was addressed to the brethren of the church at Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia. Thus I think it clear, that there was not a single such bishop in the Christian church at this period.

3. Bishops are very little spoken of in the Scriptures.

There are but seven passages in the Scriptures where bishops are mentioned: the text; Acts xx. 28; Phil. i. 1; 1 Tim. iii. 1, 2; Tit. i. 7; 1 Pet. ii. 25. All these have been repeatedly mentioned, except the last, which is thus written: 'For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls:' that is, to Christ.

In no one of these passages is there the least mention of any distinction between the bishop and the elder, in character, power, authority, duty, or office. On the contrary, the fact, that there were several bishops in Philippi and Ephesus, is a complete proof that there was no prelatical bishop in either of those cities. They plainly were both under the government of a number of co-ordinate ministers, holding the same office. There is no reason to believe that other churches were constituted in a different manner.

4. I illustrate the same truth from the manner in which ministers are spoken of in Tit. i. 5—7. 'For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee. If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children, not accused of riot, or unruly. For a bishop must be blameless as the steward of God.' The reason here given by St Paul, why Titus should ordain (or constitute) elders in every city, who should be blameless, is, that 'a bishop must be blameless.'

If a bishop was the same person with an elder, the application and pertinence of this reason will be obvious; but if they were different persons, it seems difficult to conjecture why it should have been assigned. The word, elder, appears to me to be the proper and peculiar title of the officer; and the word, bishop, to be merely descriptive of one, and that a subordinate one, of his employments: viz., overseeing the affairs of the church: preaching being evidently the supreme employment of a Christian minister. This title, as was formerly observed, was derived from the Jewish economy; and was therefore naturally, and in a sense necessarily, adopted by Jews. Accordingly, it is applied no less than nineteen times in the New Testament to ministers of the church, and most clearly as their usual and appropriate title: In this view of the subject the passage may be paraphrased in the following manner: 'I left thee in Crete, to ordain, or constitute, elders of the church in every city. These officers must be blameless: for men, whose duty and business it is to oversee others, must themselves be blameless, as examples.'

But if bishop and elder denote different officers, the passage must be paraphrased in this manner: 'I left thee in Crete, to constitute elders in every city. These officers must be blameless: for a bishop, a man, an officer, to whom is committed the superintendence of elders, ought to be blameless.'

I think this argument cannot be attributed to St Paul.

Should it be said, that bishops are themselves elders, as well as bishops; and that the apostle has referred to this fact in the reason which is here given: I answer, that this supposition does not remove the difficulty. The reason given by the apostle does not depend at all for its force and pertinence on either the title or the office, whether supposed to be mentioned, or alluded to. Its whole force is derived from the employment of the elder; and lies in this—that a man who has the oversight of others, ought himself to be blameless, because he ought to be an example to those whom he oversees; and, I presume also, because he ought not to

give occasion to any for blaming the ministry of the gospel; just as St Paul directs the Corinthian elders to give no offence in anything, that the ministry might not be blamed. Had επισκοπος, in the text under consideration, been rendered as in Acts xx. 28, and as I think it ought plainly to have been rendered here, *overseer*, the soundness of the apostle's reason would have appeared so clearly, as to have prevented most of the debates which the text has occasioned.

With these, which appear to me the only defensible views of this text, I consider it as furnishing immovable evidence, that a bishop and an elder are the same officer.

I have now mentioned every passage in the Scriptures which I remember, where bishops are even glanced at, or the existence of such an order of ministers, as distinguished from elders, is directly countenanced, even in the opinion of its advocates. If the distinction between bishops and elders can be found in the language of Scripture, it is found here. But here no distinction of this nature can be found.

Accordingly, a multitude of Episcopalians, both bishops and others, readily acknowledge that this distinction is not capable of proof from the Scriptures. The following specimens of this acknowledgment will suffice for the present purpose: In a celebrated work, called 'The Institution of a Christian Man,' approved expressly by archbishop Cranmer, bishops Jewell, Willet, and Stillingfleet, and the main body of the English clergy, together with the king and parliament, is this declaration: 'In the New Testament there is no mention of any other degrees, but of deacons or ministers, and of presbyters or bishops.'

The celebrated Hooker, in his Ecclesiastical Polity, says, 'The necessity of polity and regimen in all churches may be believed, without holding any one certain form to be necessary in them all. And the general principles are such as do not particularly describe any one; but sundry forms of discipline may be equally consistent with the general axioms of Scripture.' To this declaration agree bishop Stillingfleet, Dr Edwards, and others. Dr Reynolds, professor of Divinity in Oxford, declares, that 'all who had laboured for five hundred years before his time taught, that all pastors, whether entitled bishops, or priests, have equal power and authority by God's word;' and this he declares to be the common judgment of the reformed churches of Switzerland, Savoy, France, Germany, Hungary, Poland, the Netherlands, Scotland, and England. Dr Holland, King's Professor of Divinity at Oxford, says, that 'to affirm the office of bishop to be different from that of presbyter, and superior to it, is most false; contrary to Scripture, to the fathers, to the doctrines of the Church of England, yea, to the very schoolmen themselves.'

Bishop Burnet says, 'I acknowledge bishop and presbyter to be one and the same office.'

An act of parliament, passed in the reign of Henry VIII., has the following words: 'Archbishops, bishops, archdeacons, and all other ecclesiastical officers, have no manner of Jurisdiction ecclesiastical, but by, under, and from, his royal majesty.' Accordingly, bishop Burnet says, 'The king gave bishops their power to ordain or deprive ministers; to exercise ecclesiastical jurisdiction; and perform all other parts of the episcopal function.'

To these testimonies, which might be easily swelled to a volume, I shall add only two of modern times.

Archdeacon Paley says, 'It cannot be proved that any form of church government was laid down in the Christian Scriptures, with a view of fixing a constitution for succeeding ages.'

The editors of the Christian Observer, in their number for March, 1804, say, that 'Episcopalians found not the merits of their cause upon any express injunction or delineation of ecclesiastical government in the Scriptures, for there is none.'

Thus I think it may be fairly concluded, that the Scriptures have established but two classes of officers in the Christian church; viz., pastors and deacons.

Having thus examined the scriptural account of this subject, I shall conclude the discourse with a brief investigation of the testimony given concerning it by the fathers of the church. As I suppose this testimony to be the chief ground of reliance on the part of those who contend for diocesan bishops, it will be of some importance to examine it on the present occasion.

Concerning this subject I make the following observations:

1. No testimony from the fathers can give divine authority to any institution whatever.

The fathers are merely human witnesses, and are to be regarded with no more confidence than other human witnesses, of equal credibility. 'All things necessary to life and godliness, are given to us in the Scriptures.' The testimony of the fathers can, therefore, add nothing to what is contained in them—can set aside nothing—can change nothing.

2. The testimony of the fathers is far from deserving the credit which is sometimes given to it. For,

(1.) Those who have testified concerning this subject, have given erroneous testimony concerning other things.

Irenæus testifies that Linus was made bishop of Rome by Paul and Peter; and after him, Anacletus: and after him, Clement.

Tertullian testifies, that Clement was the first bishop of Rome after Peter.

Eusebius declares that Linus was the first bishop of Rome after the martyrdom of Paul and Peter. Again: that Peter was the first bishop of Antioch. Again: that Euodius was the first bishop of Antioch.

Jerome declares, that Peter sat at Rome twenty-five years, until the last year of Nero. And again, that Ignatius was the third bishop of Antioch after the apostle Peter.

Damascus, bishop of Rome, asserts, that Peter came to Rome in the beginning of Nero's reign; and sat there twenty-five years. Nero reigned but fourteen years; and, according to the united testimony of antiquity, put Peter to death.

Origen says, that he had read in the works of a martyr, that Ignatius was the second bishop of Antioch after Peter.

Epiphanius declares, that both Paul and Peter were bishops of Rome.

These instances prove, that the fathers, however sincere, and however satisfactory their testimony concerning facts which passed under their own eyes, yet received traditionary accounts loosely; and both believed and recorded much of what took place before their time without truth or evidence.

(2.) The works of several of the fathers have been interpolated, corrupted, and partially lost.

Concerning the Epistles of Ignatius, which are peculiarly appealed to in this controversy, Mosheim observes, that he esteems 'the authenticity of the Epistle to Polycarp to be extremely dubious;' and declares, 'the question concerning all his epistles to labour under much obscurity, and to be embarrassed with many difficulties.' Where there is so much uncertainty, a safe reliance cannot be placed for the decision of any point, not otherwise supported.

(3.) The testimony of the fathers does not prove the distinction contended for.

Even the testimony of Ignatius, were it admitted without a doubt, is alleged in vain for this purpose. The bishop, of whom he speaks, is the pastor of a single church; the preacher, as well as ruler, of that church; a man who performed all the duties of an ordinary minister. He exhorts Polycarp to preach; to see that the widows are not neglected; to know all his parishioners, even the men and maid servants; and to inspect at least every marriage. In his Epistle to the church of Magnesia, he speaks also of their bishops, in the plural number.

Clement of Rome says, 'The apostles knowing, by Jesus Christ, that contentions would arise about the name, or on the account, of the episcopate, or oversight of the church, constituted bishops and deacons:' the very language of St Paul in his Epistle to the Philippians. He also uses the names presbyter and bishop, to denote the same officer.

Jerome says, that 'a presbyter is the same as a bishop; and that, originally, the churches were governed by the joint council of the presbyters.'

Again: 'Let the bishops know, that they are greater than presbyters, rather by custom, than by the real appointment of the Lord.'

And again: 'Among the ancients, presbyters and bishops were the same.'

Polycarp, in his Epistle to the Philippians, says, 'Wherefore, you must be subject to the presbyters and deacons.'

And again: 'Let the presbyters be full of piety, merciful to all, bringing back them that wander,' &c. In the view of Polycarp, therefore, the presbyters at Philippi did, and were bound to, govern that church.

Tertullian, reciting the ordinances of public worship, and the government of the church, says, 'In all these things, certain approved elders preside.'

Irenæus, addressing the heretics of that age, says, 'We challenge them to show that tradition, which was transmitted from the apostles by a succession of presbyters.' And again: 'It behoves us to hearken to those who are presbyters in the church: who, as we have shown, have their succession from the apostles; who, together with the succession of the episcopate, have received the certain gifts of the truth.'

Bishop Stillingfleet, remarking upon this passage, says, 'What strange confusion must this raise in any one's mind, who seeks for a succession of episcopal power over presbyters from the apostles, by the testimony of Irenæus, when he so plainly attributes both the succession to the presbyters and the episcopacy too, of which he speaks.'

Firmilian, bishop of Cæsarea, says, 'that in elders is vested the power of baptizing, imposition of hands, and ordinations.'

Hilary says, 'The presbyters were, at first, called bishops.'

Theodoret says, 'Of old they called the same men both bishops and presbyters.'

Finally: Jerome says, that 'the presbyters of Alexandria 'ordained their bishop for more than two hundred years, from the first planting of that church.'

To these testimonies I shall subjoin a single modern one, that of Mosheim; who says, that 'in the first century the rulers of the church were called either presbyters or bishops, which two titles are in the New Testament undoubtedly applied to the same order of men.'

From these testimonies it is, if I mistake not, clear, that the principal doctrine maintained in this and the preceding Discourse, is the doctrine of the Scriptures concerning the subject in debate.

Another argument alleged in favour of the distinction against which I contend, is derived from the character and commission of Timothy and Titus, as exhibited in the Epistles addressed to them by St Paul.

It is said, that 'Timothy was bishop of Ephesus, and Titus of Crete; and that, as such, Paul directed them to ordain elders, or presbyters, in the churches at Ephesus, and in Crete.'

To this assertion, I answer, in the first place, it cannot be proved, that Timothy was bishop of Ephesus, or Titus bishop of Crete, in any sense, much less in the diocesan sense.

The Scriptures say this in no place, and in no manner whatever. Dr Whitby, who was a zealous advocate for episcopacy, declares, that he 'can find nothing in any writer of the first three centuries concerning the episcopate of Timothy and Titus, nor any intimation that they bore that name.' Indeed he gives up this whole argument in form.

(2.) It is certain, that Timothy was an evangelist; and, therefore, not a diocesan bishop, until after the second Epistle was written; because Paul directs him to 'do the work of an evangelist,' in the fourth chapter of that Epistle;* and directs him to come to him at Rome.† An evangelist, as you know, was an itinerant minister, and could not be a diocesan bishop, whose business it is to rule, and therefore to abide in his own diocese.

Besides, there were other bishops in Ephesus, when the first Epistle to Timothy was written; *viz.* those whom Paul sent for to Miletus.

The truth unquestionably is, that Paul left him at Ephesus with extraordinary authority, as an inspired and eminent preacher, to charge some to 'teach no other doctrine than that which he had been taught; nor to give heed to fables, and endless genealogies.' When this business, and other things naturally connected with it, were finished, he returned to St Paul again. What is true of Timothy is equally true of Titus. He also resided in Crete but a short time, before he returned to Paul at Nicopolis; and was not, so far as appears, ever settled in Crete at all; certainly not at the time specified in the epistle. And, except from the epistle, there is nothing known about the subject.

(3.) Were we to admit, that Timothy and Titus were bishops, and settled at Ephesus and Crete, it cannot be

* 2 Tim. iv. 5. † 2 Tim. iv. 9.

shown, that they had any other authority than that which all ministers possess, except, what was derived from this commission of St Paul, their superior wisdom and piety, and their inspiration. Until this can be shown, the debate concerning this subject can answer no purpose, in the present case. But it cannot be shown.

Another argument for episcopacy is derived from the second and third chapters of the Apocalypse. Here the seven epistles of Christ to the seven churches of Asia are directed, each to 'the angel of the church,' specified in the epistle. Now it is said, that 'the angel' denotes one minister superior to the rest in authority. Among these epistles, the first is directed to 'the angel of the church at Ephesus.' Hence it is argued, that there was one minister in the church at Ephesus, and, therefore, in the other churches, who was superior to the rest, or, in appropriate language, a bishop. To this I answer,

(1.) That, granting everything which can with any pretence be pleaded, the foundation of this argument is too unsolid, and uncertain, to support any conclusion.

(2.) The word *angel*, is often used in the Apocalypse to denote *many*. In these epistles it seems evidently to be thus used; because in the four first of them the singular pronoun *thou*, is changed into the plural *you*; while the same person is still addressed. Thus Christ says to the angel of the church in Thyatira, 'But unto you I say (Υμιν δε λεγω); and unto the rest in Thyatira.' This being allowed, and it certainly cannot be denied, the argument falls to the ground.

(3.) Should it be acknowledged, that there was but one minister in each of these churches at the close of the first century (the time specified), it will be nothing to the present purpose.

It is certain, that there were several bishops in Ephesus at the time when Paul had this church immediately under his direction. These were all constituted bishops by the Holy Ghost. This, therefore, was certainly an establishment of God. If, then, the church at Ephesus, either voluntarily, or from some species of necessity, had changed this institution, it had changed a divine institution: a fact which cannot possibly affect the present question.

(4.) The senior minister in each of these churches may have been the person addressed in these letters.

It has also been pleaded in behalf of episcopacy, that 'there has been an uninterrupted succession of bishops from the apostles to the present time; and that, as the apostles received their power from Christ, so the first bishops received theirs from the apostles; and so every succession of bishops received theirs from those who preceded them. In this manner (it is alleged) the powers, as well as the officers, have their only proper, legitimate existence, at the present time.'

If this argument were now first to be alleged, the author of it would be considered as sporting with his antagonist: for,

(1.) This succession is only supposed, and cannot be proved.

(2.) Irenæus declares, that the succession, and together with it the episcopate also, had, down to his day (the latter part of the second century), descended through a series of presbyters, not of bishops. According to the testimony of this father, the best witness concerning the point in question, the powers now existing in ministers of the church, are merely presbyterian, not episcopal.

(3.) Both bishops and presbyters must now trace the succession, if traced at all, through the church of Rome. There were in this church, at one time, four pontiffs, who all denounced each other as usurpers.

It would be a difficult point to determine through which of these men the powers in question descended to us. That any powers, of a divine nature, passed through such impure hands, will be slowly admitted by a man of piety.

(4.) All that can be pleaded on this subject, can be pleaded by presbyters, equally with bishops.

There is yet another argument, which has been often alleged in favour of episcopacy: it is this; that 'the Jewish church contained a high priest, ordinary priests, and Levites; and was a type of the Christian church. The Christian church, therefore (it is concluded), ought to have three orders of officers; viz. bishops, priests, deacons.' As the New Testament does not give us a single hint of this nature, it certainly must be trifling to waste the time of my audience in refuting a mere conjecture. I shall only observe, therefore, that the Christian church, without the aid of bishops, is possessed of the three orders contended for. Christ is the great high priest of our profession; his ministers correspond to the ordinary priests; and the deacons to the Levites.

From all these considerations it is clearly decided to my apprehension, that diocesan bishops, are not of scriptural, but of human origin, introduced either casually, or from considerations of a prudential nature only. Christ has established pastors in his church; the church itself has constituted its bishops; and this to a great extent, has been acknowledged by the bishops themselves.

Such, clearly, appears to me to be the truth concerning this so much debated question. Still I have no disposition to contend with those Christians who are attached to episcopacy, and who think they find any peculiar advantages in that form of ecclesiastical administration. Nor can I willingly adopt the severe aspersions sometimes thrown upon it by individual Presbyterians. I cannot but remember, and remember with emotions of gratitude and respect, the very great and beneficial exertions, made by the English church in the cause of Christianity, and made in many instances by the dignitaries of that church. Butler, Berkeley, Jewel, Beveridge, Bedell, and Wilson, were bishops. Cranmer, Leighton, and Usher, were archbishops. Cranmer, Latimer, and Ridley, were martyrs.

In that church also real religion has at times flourished to a great and very desirable extent. Like other churches, it has had its bright and dark days; but it has undoubtedly sent multitudes of its members to heaven; and at the present time is fast rising in the gradations of piety.

While, therefore, I claim the common right of judging for myself concerning the subject of this Discourse, I freely yield the same right to others. Nor can I take any satisfaction in thinking hardly of them, because they do not adopt my opinions, although, as I think, founded on the Scriptures, concerning ecclesiastical government.

SERMON CLII.

THE MEANS OF GRACE.—EXTRAORDINARY MEANS OF GRACE.—THE END, NATURE, AND SUBJECTS OF PREACHING.

Go ye, therefore, teach all nations.—Matt. xxviii. 19.

In the two last Discourses I attempted to show, that there are but two classes of permanent officers in the Christian church, designated in the Scriptures. One of these classes, I observed, is spoken of under the names, elders, pastors, bishops, teachers, &c.; and the other under that of deacons. To the former belongs that which is appropriately called the ministry of the gospel.

The next subject of consideration is, obviously, the duties of this class of officers. These I have heretofore mentioned as being, especially, public and private prayer in the church, preaching the gospel, administering baptism and the Lord's Supper, ruling, and ordaining other ministers. These are, however, far from being the only duties of ministers. There are many others which belong to them as ministers; and many more, as men.

As ministers, they are bound, peculiarly, to be examples to 'believers in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity:' 1 Tim. iv. 12: 'to visit, comfort, instruct, and pray with, the sick and distressed;' James v. 14, &c.: 'to study, or meditate, diligently on the things of the gospel, and give themselves wholly to them, that their profiting may appear to all;' 1 Tim. iv. 15: 'to take heed unto themselves, and unto their doctrine; and to continue in these things, that in so doing they may both save themselves, and those that hear them;' verse 16: 'to be apt to teach; to be given to hospitality; to rule well their own houses; to exhibit such good behaviour, as to be well reported of them that are without;' 1 Tim. iii. 2, 4, 7: and to 'contend earnestly for the faith, once delivered to the saints, as being set for the defence of the gospel;' Jude 3; Phil. i. 17. All these, and all other, ministerial duties may be found most forcibly enjoined in the Scriptures, especially in the epistles of St Paul to Timothy and Titus.

As a man, a minister is bound to be an eminent example of all the Christian virtues.

Among the official duties of a minister, preaching is undoubtedly of far higher importance than any other. This, therefore, merits a particular discussion in a System of Theology.

Such a discussion I shall now attempt, under the following heads:

I. *The end,*
II. *The nature,*
III. *The subjects,*
IV. *The manner, of preaching.*

I. *I shall briefly examine the end of preaching.*

The end of preaching is, to persuade men to become virtuous; or, in other words, to persuade them with the heart to believe and obey the gospel. Cordial obedience to the gospel is virtue, in every possible form, and in every instance, on the part of those who are acquainted with the gospel. The end is always of more importance than the means; since it is the only purpose for which the means exist. The end, therefore, ought ever to direct the nature and employment of the means. The means must be such, and whenever they are chosen by wisdom and goodness, will invariably be such, as are suited to the promotion of the end. Whenever they are diverted from this direction, they become useless; and are therefore the mere result and evidence of folly.

The end of preaching is the noblest of all ends; the production of immortal holiness and happiness in the souls of men. In this, God has taught us, that he is more especially glorified, and more peculiarly pleased, than with any thing else which takes place in the present world. For this end he gave the gospel, and instituted the ministry. For this end he sent his Son to live, and die, and rise again; and his Spirit to renew, and sanctify the heart, to support and conduct the soul in the way to heaven.

II. *The nature of preaching may be thus summarily defined: that it is the chief mean of accomplishing this glorious end.*

As a mean to this end, and in this view only, is preaching an object of peculiar importance. Its true and essential nature is, that it is the chief instrument of salvation. To this consideration should every direction concerning it be pointed, and every mode of examining it be confined.

That preaching is thus distinguished above all other ministerial duties I shall now attempt to prove.

1. The gospel is the great instrument of salvation.

'The law of the Lord,' by which, in Rom. ix. 18, St Paul teaches us, the gospel is especially to be understood, 'is perfect,' says the psalmist, 'converting the soul. The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart. The fear of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes,' Psal. xix. 'Quicken thou me,' that is, make me spiritually alive, says the same divine writer, 'according to thy word. This is my comfort in my affliction; for thy word hath quickened me:' that is, made me spiritually alive. 'The entrance of thy word giveth light: it giveth understanding to the simple.' Here light and understanding denote holiness, Psal. cxix. 25, 50, 130. 'Is not my word like as a fire, saith the Lord, and like a hammer, that breaketh the rock in pieces?' Jer. xxiii. 29. In describing the effects of the new covenant, or the gospel, on the Israelites in the latter days, as effectuating their conversion and salvation, God says, 'I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts.' This phraseology, I need not observe, is descriptive of their sanctification: Jer. xxxi. 33.

'Blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it,' says our Saviour, Luke xi. 28.

In Acts ii. 14; viii. 14; xi. 1, and various other places, 'receiving the word of God,' is mentioned as equivalent to becoming the subjects of holiness. 'For I am not ashamed,' says St Paul, 'of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth.' No declaration can be more ample, comprehensive, or complete than this. The gospel is not only 'the power of God unto salvation,' but is this power 'to every one that believeth,' Rom. i. 16. 'So, then, faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God,' Rom. x. 14. 'In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation,' Eph. i. 13. 'The word of God,' says St Paul, 'is quick' (or living) 'and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of the soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow; and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart,' Heb. iv. 12. 'Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth,' James i. 18. 'Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.' 1 Pet. i. 23.

I have quoted this numerous train of passages from so many different books in the Scriptures, to show that this is their universal language.

The doctrine, as you have seen, is expressed in many forms, and in the most decisive manner. It would be easy to swell this list of quotations to an enormous size: but I shall only add to it the following words of Christ: 'The truth shall make you free,' John viii. 32; and, 'Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth,' John xvii. 17. This is a part of the intercessory prayer of Christ, and has certainly been fulfilled.

2. The great mean by which the gospel becomes instrumental to salvation, is preaching.

Of this truth the proof is complete in the words of St Paul, Rom. xi. 13, 14, 17, 'For whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord, shall be saved. How, then, shall they call on him, in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him, of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear, without a preacher? So, then, faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.' In these words, the invocation of Christ is exhibited as the ground of salvation; faith, of that invocation; hearing, of that faith; and a preacher as the indispensable mean of that hearing. From this position it is certain that preaching is the great mean of salvation; that is, the gospel preached by its ministers. It ought to be remembered, that these things are not said of any thing else, particularly of any other ministerial duty. Neither ruling, ordaining, or administering the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's supper, can claim any such efficacy from any scriptural declarations. On these two last subjects, however, I shall dwell more particularly hereafter.

3. The manner in which preaching is generally spoken of exhibits its superiority to other ministerial duties.

Christ mentions preaching as his own great commission from the Father: 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor,' Isa. lxi. 1; Luke viii. 14. And accordingly he alleges the fact, that the poor had the gospel preached to them, as a proof that he was the Messiah, Matt. xi. 5.

The text shows, that it was the great commission given by Christ to the apostles, and other ministers, immediately before his ascension. 'Go ye, teach all nations' (or make disciples of them by teaching), 'baptizing them,' &c.; 'teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.' Here they were to make disciples of mankind first; and then to baptize them, and thus to seal their discipleship.

St Paul mentions it as the great commission of Christ to him. 'Rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister, and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee — the Gentiles, unto whom I now send thee; to open their eyes,' Acts xxvi. 16, 17. In the following verse he informs us that Christ, referring to the same subject, said to Ananias, 'Go thy way; for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name to the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel.' Again, Rom. i. 1, 'Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God;' that is, to the preaching of the gospel.

Again: 'But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son unto me, that I might preach him among the heathen.'

Preaching is also commanded by St Paul to the elders of Ephesus; and by St Peter to those of the countries mentioned in his first Epistle, universally, as their chief duty.

Its importance is in the strongest language placed above baptism by St Paul, 1 Cor. i. 14—17. 'I thank God, that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius; lest any should say, that I baptized in my own name. And I baptized, also, the household of Stephanas. Besides, I know not whether I baptized any other; for Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel.'

It is decisively preferred to ruling, in 1 Tim. v. 17, 'Let the elders, who rule well, be accounted worthy of double honour; especially those who labour in the word and doctrine.'

It is also generally preferred to every other ministerial duty, by the vast attention paid to it in the Scriptures; being mentioned in about one hundred and forty instances, in express language, almost all of them in the New Testament; by the variety of modes in which it is forcibly described, enjoined, and honoured; by the comparatively small attention given in the Scriptures to the other ministerial duties, which are little spoken of, and rarely enjoined; and by the supreme efficacy which it is exhibited as possessing in promoting salvation.

4. All the other means of grace have neither efficacy nor value, except as they display or impress divine truth.

The agency of preaching is in this work altogether supreme; and that of other evangelical administrations merely subsidiary; this, without them, would be powerful and effectual. They, without this, would hardly have influence or meaning. Baptism, and the Lord's supper, for example, are founded on divine truth, and are manifestations of that truth, which possess great power, and most useful efficacy. But to their efficacy

or their use, the knowledge of the truth preached is indispensable. Still more so are ruling and ordaining of no use, except as they are subsidiary to preaching. Even prayer itself, the prime duty of worship to man, as a solitary creature, would have neither meaning nor use, antecedently to the knowledge of the truth which is communicated by preaching.

Reading the Scriptures is undoubtedly of more importance to mankind than anything else, beside preaching. The reason is obvious. The truth of God is more extensively learned in this manner, than it can be by all the other ministerial offices; and this truth makes men wise to salvation.

5. The experience of all Christian ages has furnished ample proof of this position.

By the preaching of this gospel were all the first converts made by Christ and his apostles; and by the same preaching have all succeeding converts been made in every age and country. 'I have begotten you,' says St Paul to the Corinthians, 'through the gospel.' 'Who were born,' says St Peter, 'not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God.' 'Of his own will,' says St James, 'begat he us with the word of truth.' Religion has in this respect been so nearly co-extensive with preaching, that where preaching has not been, there has, with scarcely a solitary exception, been no religion; and wherever preaching has existed for any length of time, religion has almost invariably existed also.

But it has been, and may be again, observed, that, 'All these things were true in ancient times, when Bibles were in few hands, and few persons were able to read. In such times men were in a sense entirely dependent upon preaching for their knowledge of the gospel. But now most persons can read, and can easily obtain Bibles. Preaching, therefore, is now of less importance, and less necessary to salvation; because mankind can now come to the knowledge of the truth without this aid.'

That the gospel, if read, believed, and obeyed, will make men wise unto salvation, can never be seriously questioned. I will go farther. The reading of the Scriptures is, in my apprehension, after preaching, the chief mean of salvation. This truth, however, is objected in the present case with very little pertinence or success. For,

(1.) A great part of mankind are even now unable to read. A considerable number of such persons can be found even in the most enlightened countries; and in the Christian world at large not a small majority are in this unhappy situation. To all these, preaching is, beyond debate, equally necessary, as to those who lived in the first ages of the church.

(2.) Of those who can read, multitudes read the Scriptures, either not at all, or very little. To these, also, preaching is absolutely necessary.

(3.) Of those who actually read the Scriptures, multitudes are very imperfectly able to understand most of what they read. The necessity of preaching is very great to these also.

(4.) To those who both read and, in a good degree, understand the Scriptures, preaching is far more interesting and impressive than reading. The day especially devoted to preaching is the most solemn of all days; the place, of all places; the occasion, of all occasions. This solemnity is so associated with the preaching of the gospel, that the mind naturally considers this ordinance as furnished with all the importance of these affecting things. Besides, the fact, that so many persons are assembled together to worship God, involved in the same guilt and danger, subjects of the same necessities, and obligated to the same duties, awakens in them a powerful sympathy, and gives to preaching a singular importance. We feel, because others around us feel; and instinctively reciprocate the views and emotions which rise in their minds.

(5.) God has promised his blessing peculiarly to the preaching of the gospel.

A blessing is never connected with any human effort by any law of nature; and cannot be expected from the mere external performance of any duty whatever. It is given, when given at all, as an answer to prayer, and is annexed only to obedience. But we are not warranted to pray for a blessing upon any conduct which is not in obedience to a divine institution. In the present case, God has expressly taught us the nature of his institution. 'Faith,' says St Paul 'cometh by hearing,' and hearing by the word of God. How shall they believe in him, of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?" To depart from the duty so plainly enjoined in this passage, is to set God at nought, and squander, with the most wanton profusion, eternal life. Instead of obtaining a blessing, therefore, on the neglect or violation of this duty, we ought to expect those terrible evils, denounced, Heb. x. 25—31, against those who 'forsake the assembling of themselves together.' No denunciations ought more to alarm us: for they involve judicial blindness here, and eminent perdition hereafter.

(6.) Accordingly, preaching is now, and ever has been, the great means of promoting salvation.

I have already observed, that where preaching does not exist, religion is almost never found. I now observe, farther, that where persons are not present at the preaching of the gospel, they scarcely ever become religious. Such, also, is the fact where, although present, they are inattentive and regardless. For proof of these things, look at yourselves, and those around you. On the contrary, religion regularly revives and flourishes wherever the preaching of the gospel is numerously and solemnly attended.

'The pulpit,' says the great Christian poet,

> 'Must stand acknowledged, while the world shall stand,
> The most important and effectual guard,
> Support, and ornament of virtue's cause.'

From the infancy of the church, to the present hour, preaching has more aroused and engaged the attention of mankind, than everything else which was not miraculous. If you are at a loss concerning this truth, you will easily satisfy yourselves, by searching the history of practical and experimental religion. Far more knowledge, and far deeper impressions of religious subjects have been gained by mankind from this source, than from all other human labours whatever. Nor was any other method ever devised in the present world, so cheap, so convenient, or so effectual, for the purpose of diffusing instruction or reformation.

III. *I shall now consider the subject of preaching.*

All these are included under one general head; viz., the gospel. On this great truth I found the following observations:—

1. As the gospel includes all the subjects of preach-

ing, the preacher is bound to exhibit nothing as a part of the Christian system, but what is contained in the gospel.

The gospel contains whatever it expresses, and whatever it implies; but it contains nothing more. Nothing more, then, can be lawfully inculcated by the preacher, as a part of the gospel.

In examining the express declarations of Scripture, he is bound to give them that sense which the words obviously convey, the current of the context demands, and the circumstances in which they were uttered, point out. Beyond this he cannot go, without 'adding to the words of God,' and exposing himself to be 'reproved by him, and found a liar.' This sense he cannot change at all, for one which he conceives will better suit and support any part or the whole of a pre-conceived system; a doctrine of his own philosophy, or a tenet of the church, sect, or party to which he belongs.

Neither can he lawfully conceal, or slur over any thing which, in his view, the words really contain. Falsehood, is as easily propagated by the concealment of truth, as by the utterance of deceit.

With respect to implications, supposed to be contained in scriptural expressions, the preacher is bound to see that they are certainly contained. This, usually, may be clearly seen, wherever the inference is immediate; or when the chain of reasoning which conducts to it is short, and the links are few and obvious. But wherever the inference is doubtful, or the reasoning through which it is derived, long and obscure (two qualities which, with respect to this subject, are very generally associated), the preacher is forbidden to make use of it as a part of the word of God, or to exhibit it as being in any sense contained in the Scriptures.

Of inferences from scriptural declarations, I observe, universally, that there is usually some, and often great danger attending them. A man employed in supporting a darling point will, when hardly pushed, very naturally feel that, as he undoubtedly must be right in his own system, so the Scriptures must somewhere declare that which he at the time wishes to teach. With these views, he will naturally hunt for the passages which come nearest to the doctrine in question; and will as naturally believe that the meaning which he wishes to assign to them, is their true meaning. Hence he will attribute to them the implication which he wishes to find. The whole of this process is wrong from the beginning. Every man, particularly every minister, is bound to take up the Bible with a desire and an intention not to find it supporting his own doctrines, but to learn merely what it actually declares; and to conform both his opinions and wishes to its declarations. In this way he may humbly hope to discover the truth; in the other he may be almost assured that he will be left in error.

It is a hard thing for man to believe the Scriptures, and not an easy one for a preacher. Generally he may believe the great doctrines contained in them, and perhaps with no great difficulty. But when particular passages appear to thwart his own opinions, he will ever be in danger of bending them into a conformity to those opinions. His whole soul, on the contrary, ought to be yielded to the dictates of the Scriptures, and humbly to receive whatever God hath spoken. However easy this may seem, it will, unless I am deceived, be found a matter of no small difficulty, even by a man solemnly resolved to carry the design into practice.

Inferences, distantly drawn, are always to be suspected. Our reasonings, whenever they are complicated, are, even in mathematical cases, exposed to error. A long process in arithmetic, or algebra, or geometry, frequently needs to be reviewed over and over, in order to leave us entirely satisfied that our reasonings are sound. Yet here we have certain standards of truth; such as words in most cases cannot become. How much more doubtful are those processes in which certainty is at the best rarely attainable. But all the uncertainty which attends the reasonings employed to sustain inferences distantly drawn, attends, of course, the inferences themselves. On such inferences, therefore, reliance cannot safely be placed.

On these grounds I protest wholly against a mode of forming sermons which is said to have gained some reputation in this country: viz. discoursing on the doctrines, or precepts, of the text in the morning, and in the afternoon constituting another discourse of inferences, professedly derived from them.

It is unsafe for any man customarily to derive two discourses from a single text. At times it may be done with advantage; but it cannot be customarily done even by men of the first talents, unless they would sacrifice the profit of their hearers. Much more will it transcend the power of the great body of preachers. Should they utter nothing but truth, a thing scarcely to be hoped; they will not fail either to be weak, and on this account unprofitable, or to make their discourses disgusting by numerous and very tedious repetitions.

This, however, is not the worst effect of the practice. If, contrary to all probability, they should be entirely successful, and speak nothing but truth and good sense; their sermons in the afternoon would always be liable to this radical evil; that the truth which they contain, being merely a collection of inferences, and not expressly declared in the Scriptures, nor clearly understood by the hearers, would be questioned, doubted, and soon denied. The character of the preacher, in the mean time, would dwindle from that of an evangelical minister, into that of a merely ingenious man. His sermons, also, instead of convincing and reforming his hearers, would only amuse and entertain them. Even near and obvious inferences have less weight than direct scriptural declarations; while distant ones have scarcely any weight at all.

But why should sermons be written in this manner? Certainly the Scriptures are sufficiently copious, and sufficiently various, to furnish the preacher with all necessary materials, without forcing him to form them of his own deductions. Why should the plain declarations of God be exchanged for the doubtful inferences of man? Is it because God has not directly disclosed the proper subjects of preaching? This will not be said. I trust it will not be believed. I confess myself, therefore, at a loss for the reason, unless it is to be found in the restless desire of exhibiting something which is new.

2. As the gospel is to be preached, so it is ALL to be preached.

In the strict sense, I acknowledge, this is not practicable. The Bible is a world; and is enriched with a variety and abundance suited to a world. The life of an antediluvian preacher would furnish an opportunity of exhausting but a little part of its stores. But the capital doctrines and precepts may all be insisted on by every preacher during a ministry of no uncommon

length. It is here intended, that all these should be brought into the desk freely, fully, without partiality, without reluctance. It is also intended, that no doctrine, and no precept, and no fact, shall be omitted by the preacher on account of any disrelish with which it may be regarded by his mind, or, as he may apprehend, by the minds of his hearers. 'All Scripture,' says St Paul to Timothy, 'is given by inspiration of God; and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished to every good work.'—'I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing, and his kingdom, preach the word: be instant in season; out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and doctrine.' Here St Paul charges Timothy, 'before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, to preach the word;' that is, the whole word; as will be evident from the connexion between this charge and the reasons, on which it is founded, given in the verses immediately preceding. These reasons are of the highest possible import. 'All Scripture,' says St Paul, 'is given by inspiration of God.' All is, therefore, exactly true, supremely wise, and absolutely right; and is invested with divine authority, requiring the minister to preach it, and the congregation to hear. 'All Scripture,' he adds, 'is' also 'profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness.' The end of all is, 'that the man of God may become perfect, and thoroughly furnished to every good work.' With these reasons before him, who can doubt, that all Scripture is to be preached?

There have been, there probably still are, many preachers, by whom this plain rule of duty has been not a little disregarded; that is, if their practice may be allowed to interpret their sentiments.

Some preachers insist only, or almost only, on those which are called the moral duties of mankind; viz. those duties, which immediately respect ourselves, and our fellow men, such as justice, temperance, truth, kindness, candour, alms-giving, and others of the like nature.

Others discuss only, or chiefly, the duties of piety; or those which immediately respect God.

Some preachers deliver little or nothing from the desk, except that which is fitted to alarm and terrify their hearers.

Others dwell continually and only upon those parts of the gospel which are calculated to soothe and comfort.

Some shun everything which is unpopular, and utter only 'smooth things;' such as they expect to be relished by their hearers; and satisfy themselves with the belief, that their congregations will receive nothing else, and that therefore nothing else will be useful to them. Yet St Paul declared to the elders of Ephesus, that he had 'not shunned to declare to them all the counsel of God:' and God said to Ezekiel, 'Go, and speak unto the children of thy people; and tell them, Thus saith the Lord God; whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear.'

Others appear pleased to excite, and form their discourses in such a manner as to excite, a hostility to truth, even beyond that which is natural to man. Yet it is recorded of him who is styled in the Scriptures 'the Preacher,' that he 'sought to find out acceptable words.'

Some preachers who dwell upon the law, exhibit it not only as the rule of our duty, but as the ground of our justification.

Others leave the law chiefly or wholly out of their discourses, even as a rule of obedience.

To all these, and other similar modes of preaching, equally contrary to reason and revelation, I oppose, both as a refutation and a censure, the charge of St Paul to Timothy, cited above, and the solemn reasons by which it is enforced. Man cannot call in question the importance or the usefulness, any more than the truth, of the word of God. Whatever he has been pleased to reveal is useful to mankind, and is to be received by them with reverential and grateful acknowledgments. It is to be believed, it is to be obeyed, it is to be employed to accomplish the very ends for which it was revealed.

'All Scripture,' says St Paul, 'is profitable.' Let me subjoin, that we cannot tell with any certainty what particular doctrine, precept, or fact, will be most profitable, that is, on a given occasion. Often, very often, ministers have found those discourses most useful to their hearers, from which they had scarcely cherished any hopes.

3. A preacher is bound to give to each subject that degree of place and importance which is given to it by the Scriptures.

This rule, I am aware, can only be followed generally. In a case, so imperfectly definite, exactness of conformity is evidently unattainable, and, happily for us, unnecessary. But a general conformity to it is sufficiently easy, and obviously our duty.

On some subjects the Scriptures dwell abundantly; exhibiting them always as primary parts of the system of truth and duty which they contain. Others they plainly present to us as comparatively of little importance. 'Judgment, mercy, and faith,' are 'weightier matters of the law:' while, compared with these, 'tithing mint, anise, and cummin,' is of little consequence. When it is said, 'Except ye repent, ye shall all perish.'—'Without faith it is impossible to please God.'—'Without holiness no man shall see the Lord:'—it is impossible for us not to perceive that faith, repentance, and holiness, are of supreme importance to man. But the observance, or non-observance, of one day above another (I refer not here to the sabbath), modes of worship, and many other things of a similar nature, are plainly of very inferior consequence. The manner in which these subjects are respectively exhibited in the Scriptures, furnishes ample proof that these observations are just.

The Scriptures themselves are a perfect pattern of the time, care, and pains which the preacher is to bestow on the respective subjects of his discourses, in all ordinary circumstances. That on which they lay the greatest stress is most to engross his attention, and his sermons. That on which they lay the least stress, is least to be dwelt upon by him.

I say this is to be done in ordinary circumstances. But there are peculiar occasions, frequently occurring, which demand his peculiar attention. His hearers may be especially addicted to some particular sins, or in especial danger from particular errors; or may peculiarly need to be taught certain truths, or urged to certain acts of duty. These will then require his peculiar efforts; and for such efforts, in such cases, he will

find an ample warrant in the Scriptures. Timothy and Titus were expressly commanded to inculcate particular things in a peculiar degree, because they were peculiarly necessary. Ministers are directed to 'contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints;' and are said to be 'set for the defence of the gospel.' They are, therefore, required to defend those parts of it most frequently, as well as most strenuously, which are most questioned; and to oppose with the greatest vigour those errors from which their hearers are in the greatest danger. In this manner Christ preached; in this manner preached the prophets, and the apostles; steadily directing their discourses to the occasions which gave them birth. This is, indeed, the plain dictate of common sense; and, with these warrants, will be certainly as well as safely followed by every wise and faithful minister.

The Bible is written in a manner perfectly fitted to produce the best effects on the moral state of man. The preacher, who follows closely this divine example, may therefore rationally hope to produce the best moral effects on his hearers. On the contrary, he who wanders from it, ought, while he censures himself deeply for his disrespect to this perfect pattern, to believe that he shall find little consolation in the fruits of his preaching. In vain will he plead that, in his view, some other mode will be better suited to the wants of his hearers. In vain will he think himself 'wise above that which is written.' In vain will he plead the nature and influence of any doctrines, or precepts, as viewed by his own judgment. God, who knew the nature of all precepts and doctrines, has written such of them in the Scriptures, and in such a manner, as his own wisdom determined to be best for man. Unless the preacher therefore thinks himself wiser than God, he must perceive his opinion to be wholly out of place, unfounded, and unhappy.

'To the law, and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.' This sentence is equally applicable to the parts, as to the whole of this word; and precisely just with respect to their importance and influence, as well as to their truth. In both respects the scriptural exhibition is perfect. He who copies it, and he only, will do the most good in his power.

SERMON CLIII.

THE MEANS OF GRACE.—EXTRAORDINARY MEANS OF GRACE.—THE MANNER OF PREACHING.

Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations.—Matt. xxviii. 19.

From these words I proposed in the preceding Discourse to examine,

I. *The end,*

II. *The nature,*

III. *The subjects,*

IV. *The manner, of preaching.*

The three first of these heads I discussed at that time; and shall now go on to consider,

IV. *The manner, of preaching.*

It is not enough that sermons contain the truth, important and indispensable as this is. A sermon may contain evangelical truth, and that only; and yet may exhibit it in such a manner as to prevent a great part of its proper efficacy. Nor does the evil always stop here. Instances have existed in the world, and that not very unfrequently, in which preachers have uttered nothing but what was strictly evangelical, and yet have only amused, wearied, or disgusted sober, patient, and candid hearers. The manner, therefore, in which truth is preached, may possess an importance which it would be difficult to estimate.

The views which I have formed of this subject may be exhibited under the following heads:—

1. The gospel ought ever to be preached plainly; so as to be clearly and easily understood by those who hear.

St Paul, in 1 Cor. xiv. 19, says, 'I would rather speak five words with my understanding, that with my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue.' From the conclusion of this passage, and the general tenor of his reasoning in this chapter, it is evident, that to speak with the understanding, denotes to speak that which would be understood, not by himself only, but by those who heard him. This, he informs us, was of more value in his estimation than the supernatural power of speaking with tongues, however coveted, and however splendid an endowment.

With St Paul's opinion common sense exactly harmonizes. To teach is to communicate knowledge. But the teacher who is not understood, communicates nothing.

Plainness of preaching involves perspicuity and precision of language; and, indeed, purity and propriety also. Our words ought to be English, and to be used as they are customarily used. They ought also to express that, and that only, which we intend, and to express it clearly. All this, as you know, is necessary to writing and speaking well, generally. Peculiarly is it necessary when we address popular assemblies, a great part of whom are accustomed to plain language only; and supremely, when we utter the doctrines and precepts of the gospel, infinitely important as the means of eternal life.

Our phraseology ought carefully to be cleared of all ambiguities, the effect of which is only to perplex those who hear. If these are admitted into sermons through carelessness, the preacher is inexcusable: if through doubt in his mind, he is bound to say nothing concerning the subject of his doubts, unless when compelled to acknowledge them to his audience.

Technical or scientifical language is also to be excluded from popular sermons. This may sometimes serve to show the learning of the preacher; but will prevent his sermons from being useful to his audience.

A still greater trespass against plainness of speech, and much more common in the desk, is committed in what is called metaphysical preaching. The science of metaphysics, as you well know, is that which is employed about the nature of things. As this subject is peculiarly abstruse, and demands nice and difficult disquisition, all discussions which are nice and difficult are familiarly termed metaphysical. Most young preachers are fond of metaphysical subjects, and, be the subject almost what it may, of the metaphysical mode of discussion. Nor are young preachers alone in these respects.

All preaching of this nature is, however, chiefly useless, and commonly mischievous. No ordinary congregation ever understood, to any valuable purpose, metaphysical subjects; and no congregation, it is believed, was ever much edified by a metaphysical manner of discussion. Whenever distinctions become subtile and nice, they cease to be made by the common mind; and, however clear the preacher's views may be, they will never in this case become the views of his audience. After attempting for a while to follow him in his ingenious career, and finding themselves unable, they will give up the attempt in despair and disgust.

Happily, the duty of the preacher, and the interest of his congregation, do not demand this mode of preaching. Few theological subjects ordinarily require discussions of this nature: and none of them, unless on rare and peculiar occasions, require them in the desk. The obvious investigations of common sense are incomparably better fitted to popular audiences. Common sense, the most valuable faculty (if I may call it such) of man, finds all its premises either in revelation or in facts: adopts arguments only of the *a posteriori* kind; extends its reasonings through a few steps only; derives its illustrations from familiar sources; discriminates only where there is a real difference; and admits conclusions only where it can see their connexion with the premises. At theoretical philosophy it laughs. Theoretical divinity it detests. To this faculty the Scriptures are almost universally addressed. The subjects which they contain are, to a considerable extent, metaphysical; and often so abstruse as to defy human investigation. Yet they are almost always treated in the obvious manner of common sense. Even St Paul, one of the most profound of all reasoners, never appears to choose abstruse discussion, when the subject will allow of any other; and returns with apparent pleasure to a plainer mode of discourse, as soon as the nature of the case will permit. Our Saviour treats every subject in the direct manner of common sense, although he often discourses concerning things of the most profound nature.

There is another evil in the metaphysical mode of disquisition, which ought in most instances to discourage us from attempting it. It is this: the preacher himself is apt to be bewildered by the abstruse nature of his subject, and by the tenuous, subtile manner of his reasoning; and is often very far from possessing clear views of either. Men devoted to literary inquiries are frequently ambitious of metaphysical fame. Abstruse reasonings, curious speculations, especially when they are their own, and still more discoveries made in this profound science by themselves, when they are supposed to be new, are regarded by them with peculiar favouritism and fondness. Attempts of this nature are therefore made by multitudes, both philosophers and divines. But of all those which have been made, few, very few, have been successful. Almost all have at the best been only ingenious amusements; and far the greatest part have fallen short even of this character. Whatever applause or credit they have gained has usually been momentary. Of utility almost all have been totally destitute, and have accordingly soon vanished from the attention of mankind. Aquinas and Duns-Scotus, men scarcely inferior to any metaphysicians, and once more celebrated than any writer of the present day, are now known almost solely by their names. How evident is it, therefore, that men possessed only of the common talents, such as those of almost all men, and, still more, men of moderate information, were never designed by God to be useful as metaphysicians. Generally, therefore, clergymen cannot be wisely employed in often uttering discussions of this nature from the desk.

At the same time, every subject of preaching ought, so far as the purpose in view requires, to be thoroughly discussed. Subjects indeed which are plain, and doctrines which are acknowledged, demand often very little discussion. If they are exhibited with clear arrangement, and with brief and distinct evidence, nothing more will usually be necessary. At times it will be proper to mark the connexion between the subject in hand, and others intimately related to it, that their harmony may be understood. But whenever doctrines are less clear or more disputed, greater pains will always be necessary to exhibit their evidence, and evince their truth. If the preacher has formed clear and comprehensive views of them himself, he cannot be at a loss for useful modes of presenting them to others. That view of them which is most satisfactory to himself will almost always best satisfy others. Diligent study, precision of thought, and habitual clearness of arrangement, will regularly qualify him for this part of his business.

2. The gospel ought to be preached variously.

By this I intend, that both the manner and especially the subjects of preaching should be diversified.

The foundation of preaching in this manner is laid in the nature of man, and in the nature of divine truth. The love of variety is one of the elementary principles of human nature; and seems to have been implanted in the heart, that we might be always and irresistibly allured to the study and the relish of the infinitely various works of God. These are formed with unceasing variety, that they might display the boundless diversity of his wisdom and goodness. That man may understand them, it is absolutely necessary that he study them; and to the study of them, the love of their nature and appearance is indispensable. Hence this principle in the human constitution; a principle never to be forgotten by a preacher.

Divine truth, which is an account of the works and character of God, is possessed, as it necessarily must be, of a corresponding variety. All the parts of which this truth is composed are declared to be 'profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness.' The profit of the whole is made up of that which is furnished by the several parts; and, to be either communicated or gained, must be derived from them all. All, therefore, should, so far as may be, find their proper place in the successive discourse of the preacher.

Besides, a great part of the beauty, excellence, and usefulness of evangelical doctrines and precepts results from their mutual relations, seen only by comparing them with each other. Faith, justification, and holiness, for example, have an import, a beauty, a distinction, arising from their connexion with each other, which we should in vain attempt to find by a separate investigation. But unless all these, and many other doctrines are exhibited by the preacher, this connexion can never be learned by his hearers.

Of this variety of preaching, in both respects, the Scriptures are an abundant example. In them we find an immense diversity of truths, communicated in a delightful diversity of manner. Here we are furnished with profound reasonings: short, prudential, moral, and religious maxims; plain and pithy precepts; orations in form; poetry of every species, and every high degree of excellence; familiar letters; private journals; history, both general and biographical; together with most other approved modes of communication. At the same time, each writer has adopted his own peculiar manner, both in prose and poetry; and thus, while furnishing a strong presumption that the writings are genuine, has added not a little to the beauty of the sacred volume. By these various methods of communication, the understanding is addressed with the highest advantage, the imagination is powerfully allured, and the feelings of the heart are irresistibly engrossed. Hence the bible is more bought, and more read than any other book. Hence also man is summoned with peculiar success to the great business of repentance and reformation. The wisdom and goodness of God, manifested in this interesting structure of the sacred volume, can never be sufficiently admired.

By this happy method of communicating divine truth, the Scriptures are rendered also the most comprehensive of all writings. They are, indeed, pre-eminently comprehensive by their conciseness. In addition to this, they possess that character in a far higher degree by means of their perpetually diversified manner of communication. From this source the same truths are presented to us in lights unceasingly new, and with connexions surprising the mind on every successive page. Hence, by an examination and comparison of different passages, new truths, not directly declared, are unfolded with absolute clearness, and indubitable certainty. The number of these truths is incomprehensible.

This extraordinary variety of manner cannot, I acknowledge, be adopted by a preacher. Still it authorises, and in my view requires him to diversify his discourses in every mode which is warranted by correct taste, so far as it shall be in his power. Preaching is, in its nature, an address to a popular assembly, and can, therefore, admit of no other varieties of manner than those which are applicable to such an address. But even these may be considerably numerous. Such an address, from the examples of the apostles, and succeeding ministers, may be warrantably distributed under two great heads; *preaching*, in the proper sense, and *commenting*. The former of these is naturally the most interesting; the latter, perhaps, the most instructive. In the course of it many doctrines may be illustrated, and many parts of Scripture explained and enforced, which the preacher can never even introduce into sermons. Difficulties also which may perplex the common mind, may, in this manner, be removed, seeming discordances reconciled, connexions and other relations illustrated, and harmony displayed, more advantageously than in any other manner. On all these accounts it will engage as well as improve; and, as a part of every course of preaching, will render the whole course more interesting than perhaps it could be otherwise.

In both modes the preacher will increase that variety of communication which will be both useful and pleasant, by adopting, invariably, his own characteristical manner. Every man is formed to think, speak, and write in a manner peculiar to himself. This, being contrived by the Divine wisdom, is naturally fitted to be both agreeable and useful; and ought always to be retained. It may, it ought to be improved so far as our circumstances will allow; but it cannot be safely exchanged for that of any other individual; nor, without serious disadvantage, for a general mode, established by common consent. It is the tendency of all criticism to form rules so narrow as to limit the natural, proper, and pleasing excursions of the human mind. Men oftener write with vigour and success when they forget, disregard, or are ignorant of the encumbrance of these rules, than when they are timorously governed by them. I do not deny that, as they are now adopted by enlightened men, they are generally just, and will serve well for the purposes of enabling us to judge of what is already written, and to avoid blemishes and absurdities in writing. But they never can teach, and very frequently prevent, that excellence in writing, of which we are capable. To avoid this evil, and to make the most of his powers, every preacher, after possessing himself of the general manner, should, with so much conformity to it as to save himself from just censure, adopt his own manner, improved as much as may be, but never relinquished nor destroyed. This will enable him to differ usefully and pleasingly only from other preachers, and will give to his discourses most of that novelty of which sermons are now susceptible. At the same time he will always appear in it with more advantage than in any other; and will add extensively to that diversity of communication which I have urged in both these kinds of discourse. Should any person apprehend that the general mode in use must be exactly followed; I answer, that very different modes have been acceptable and useful in other ages, and other countries, and that human nature furnishes no satisfactory proof that they may not be useful again.

As to variety of subjects, the preacher can never be at a loss, and must be inexcusable, if he does not avail himself of this advantage. The Bible is a world, and all that it contains is proffered to his use. Everything which it contains is also 'profitable for instruction.'

It will be in vain for a preacher to allege, that in his view some subjects are sufficiently important to claim the whole attention both of himself and his hearers. As I remarked in the preceding discourse, the comparative importance of doctrines is settled by the Scriptures themselves. Them he is bound to follow. Should he then determine that it is proper for him to preach only on alarming themes, that sinners may be compelled to lay hold on eternal life; or should he judge that they are only to be allured by the mercy of God, the love of the Redeemer, and the benevolent offers of life made in the gospel, he judges erroneously. The proof is, God has thought otherwise. Should he choose to dwell only on the duties immediately owed to God, or on those which immediately respect men, he seriously mistakes his proper business; for God has required and inculcated both. If, in a word, he selects any favourite subject, or class of subjects, he does what the Scriptures nowhere justify, and abundantly condemn.

In the mean time, let every preacher who frequently handles one, or customarily handles a few subjects in his sermons, and, as will always be the fact, handles them substantially in one manner, remember that this monotony will soon become wearisome to his hearers, and in a great measure rob him of the power of doing them good. What he says may be true; it may be pleasing; it may be edifying: but reiteration will soon render it disgusting and useless. For this fault nothing will atone. Common sense is against him. Human nature is against him. The Scriptures are against him. In vain, therefore, will he search for an excuse.

3. The gospel ought to be preached boldly.

He who brings a message from God, ought never to be afraid of man. He ought to remember the authority, the commands, and the presence, of his Master; and his own duty and accountableness. He ought to remember that, if he deliver his message faithfully, he will be accepted; if not, he will be condemned. Nor ought he any more to forget that, in the former case, he will in all probability promote the salvation of his flock, and in the latter conduct them only to destruction.

To faithfulness, boldness is indispensable. 'The fear of man' always 'bringeth a snare.' Equally dangerous is it to 'love the praise of men.' Independence of both is absolutely necessary to integrity. No specimens of pungent, intrepid address to the consciences of men, or of undaunted reproof for their sins, are more vivid and glowing than those of our Saviour to the Jews, and especially to the pharisees. Of Paul it is very frequently recorded, that 'he spake boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus.' He also directs the Ephesians to 'pray always with all prayer, that he might speak boldly as he ought to speak.' Similar things are recorded of Barnabas and Apollos. The discourses of Paul, Peter, and Stephen, recorded in the Acts, are also illustrious specimens of this noble and upright independence of character. What preacher will hesitate to obey such authority, and to follow such examples?

With his duty will ever be combined his immediate interest. In so solemn a case as this, peace and self-approbation can never be possessed by him who does not, without reserve or palliation, without fear or flattery, declare 'the truth, as it is in Jesus.' At the same time, he will sink in the estimation of his flock. Every discerning man, nay, every man of common sense, will soon suspect both his integrity and his piety; and will regard him as a time-server, unfaithful to God, and interested only for himself. A minister labouring under these imputations will neither be trusted nor respected. Even those who love the 'smooth things' which he utters, will despise him for uttering them.

The bold, independent, honest preacher will, on the contrary, be naturally and highly esteemed by his people; even by those who smart under the censures which he directs against their sins, and tremble at the alarm which he sounds in their ears concerning their future destiny. At the same time he will enjoy the consolation of knowing that he has faithfully laboured to discharge his duty, to promote the glory of his Maker, and the salvation of his flock, and to keep himself 'clear from the blood of all men.' On a dying bed he will be able to say, and find unspeakable hope in saying, with St Paul, 'I have not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God, and have kept back nothing which was profitable to my people.'

4. The gospel ought to be preached solemnly.

All things, pertaining to divine truth, are eminently solemn. Such are its author, and its end; the manner in which it is communicated, the miracles with which it was ushered into the world, the Redeemer by whom it was disclosed, and the wonderful expense by which it came to mankind. Of the same nature are the subjects about which it is employed. Nothing ever appeared to the human mind of such import as the character and actions of God, the excellences of the Redeemer, the amazing work of redemption, the depravity and condemnation of men, the glorious exercise of mercy to our race, the renovation of the soul, the importance of life and death, of judgment and eternity, of heaven and hell.

In these things is involved our all. How then can a preacher commissioned by God to declare them to his fellow men, fail to realize their immense importance and amazing solemnity? How can he fail of declaring them with a corresponding solemnity to his flock?

> 'He that negotiates between God and man,
> As God's ambassador, the grand concerns
> Of judgment and of mercy, should beware
> Of lightness in his speech. 'Tis pitiful
> To court a grin, when you should woo a soul;
> To break a jest, when pity would inspire
> Pathetic exhortation; and t' address
> The skittish fancy with facetious tales,
> When sent with God's commission to the heart.'

If the nature of these subjects be duly considered, if their importance be duly felt, it will be impossible for the preacher to fail of exhibiting them to his hearers with the deepest solemnity. Lightness of manner is always generated by lightness of mind. He who adopts it in the desk, has forgotten that his discourse is professedly derived from the Bible, employed about God, and directed to eternity.

A trespass against this manner of preaching, not unfrequent, and highly reprehensible, is a mode sometimes termed theatrical. It may be thus described. The preacher, if we may be allowed to judge from the result, sits down to write as finished a composition, and enters the desk to speak it as gracefully as he can. His commanding object is to please, to excite admiration, and to gain applause. His proper business is forgotten. This is to awaken, convince, and save his flock. He has carved out for himself a new employment, of which the Scriptures know nothing. This is to exhibit himself to advantage. Instead, therefore, of the plain, bold,

and solemn address, with which divine truth is instinctively preached, the audience is amused with a combination of brilliant images, and pathetic effusions, intended merely to excite admiration. To increase this effect, they are presented to the audience with such efforts of utterance and gesture, as are usually exhibited on the stage. In truth, the desk is here changed for the time into a stage, and the preacher, laying aside his own character, puts on that of an actor. Like other actors, he intends merely to please those who hear him. Their souls and their salvation, his own character, duty, and final account he has forgotten. He has forgotten his Bible; he has forgotten his God.

The most solemn, the best sermons may be, they usually are marked with strong images, bold figurative language, and affecting addresses to the heart. The whole energy of the mind is poured out in them by the preacher. But in such sermons all these things are adventitious. They grow spontaneously out of the solemn and most affecting nature of the subject, the preacher's deep sense of its vast importance, and his earnest desire that his audience may feel it, as it is felt by himself. Here the subject is the only thing which is prominent. The preacher is in a great measure forgotten, both by himself and his hearers. In the mode which I have reprehended, the preacher is the only conspicuous figure; while the diminutive subject is faintly sketched, and scarcely seen in the back ground of the picture.

5. The gospel ought to be preached earnestly.

Everything which is felt by the mind to be deeply interesting either to its own welfare, or to that of its fellow men, is by the mere prompting of nature expressed with earnestness, both in writing and speaking. So universally true, and so obvious is this, that he who does not thus express himself in this manner is never supposed to be interested at all. Accordingly, men who wish to persuade others that they feel when they do not, are obliged to counterfeit this mode of nature, that they may thus be believed to feel. Hence all the assumed fervour of demagogues, separatical preachers, and others of a corresponding character.

From this fact it is abundantly evident, that he who would persuade others that he is interested in the subjects on which he descants, must originally feel them; and must also express his views of them in the native language of feeling. To a preacher these rules are important in a degree which it will be difficult to estimate. The observance of them is necessary to convince his hearers that he is an honest man. The truths of the gospel are of such moment, as to render it impossible for him who cordially believes them, to avoid being deeply interested; and, if thus interested, very difficult to fail of discovering that interest, by the earnestness of thought and utterance in which it is naturally expressed. But a preacher of the gospel, unless he prove the fact to be otherwise, is originally supposed to be deeply interested in its truths, and is regularly considered as professing by his very office cordially to believe them. If, then, he brings them forth to his congregation in a combination of cold sentiments, lifeless phraseology, and languid elocution, it will not be easy for *them* to be satisfied that he feels what he professes to feel, or believes what he professes to believe.

Should he, however, escape the imputation, and by a life of exemplary piety and beneficence prove himself to be a good man (a case which, I acknowledge, has frequently existed), his preaching will, to a great extent, be still unhappy. If, from the force of phlegmatic constitution, or a habit of moving heavily in the concerns of life, he should have derived a dull, drawling mode of thinking, writing, and speaking, he will spread a similar languor over his hearers. And lull their moral powers, if not their natural ones, to sleep. They may believe him to be sincere, but they will never feel as if he were in earnest. From such preaching, no energy of affection, no solemn concern, no active fears, no lively hopes, no vigorous resolutions, no strenuous efforts about the salvation of the soul, can be ordinarily derived, and certainly can never rationally be expected.

He, on the contrary, who exhibits the doctrines and precepts of the gospel in an earnest, fervid manner, will instinctively be regarded as being really in earnest. Religion from his mouth will appear as a concern of high moment: a subject in which every man is deeply interested, about which he is obliged to employ the most solemn thoughts, and the most efficacious exertions. All who attend on his ministry will go to inquire, to listen, to feel, to act, and to be fervently employed in practising their duty, and obtaining their salvation.

Let no young preacher think himself excused for a moment in neglecting to acquire such a manner of preaching. Every preacher is bound to use all the means in his power for the purpose of rousing the attention, and engaging the affection of his flock to these mighty objects. Much more, at the same time, is in his power than he will easily believe. A too modest distrust of their own talents in this respect, is perhaps the chief reason why the eloquence of the desk is in so many instances less earnest, less animated, than a good man would always wish. All men will acknowledge this to be unhappy; often, there is reason to fear, it is criminal also. For he who has not laboured as much as is in his power to preach well in this respect, has certainly not laboured to preach as well as he can.

Young men have a peculiar interest in this subject. A preacher who is unanimated in youth, will be heavy in middle life, and torpid in old age.

I know of no class of preachers so prone to be defective in this particular, as those who are sometimes called moral preachers. By these I intend such as inculcate, not the morality of the gospel, but such a course of external conduct, as merely secures a fair reputation, and renders the state of society agreeable; in other words, the morality of Zeno and Seneca. It is impossible that he who recommends this morality, and stops here, should be in earnest himself, or appear in earnest to others.

6. The gospel ought to be preached affectionately.

No employment awakens, and calls into action all the generous emotions of the mind more than that of the preacher. He comes to his fellow men with a message infinitely more interesting, and more useful than any other. He is sent on an errand more expressive of tenderness and good-will. He comes to disclose the boundless mercy of God to mankind, as manifested in the condescension, life, and death of the Redeemer: in the forgiveness of sin, and the renovation of the soul; in its safe conveyance through the dangers of this world, and its final admission into heaven. This message he brings to his fellow men, guilty and ruined in themselves, exposed to infinite danger, and hopeless

suffering. What subjects can be equally affecting? What employment can equally awaken all the tenderness of virtue?

An affectionate manner is in itself amiable and engaging. Men naturally love those who appear benevolent and tender-hearted; and, most of all, require and love this character in a minister of the gospel. This character or its opposite can hardly fail to appear in his discourses. There are so many things in the subjects of his preaching which naturally call forth tenderness and affection, that, if he possess this disposition, it cannot fail to appear in his sentiments, in his language, and in his manner of utterance. Wherever it appears, it will be acknowledged and loved; and the words of a beloved preacher will always come to his flock with a peculiar power of persuasion.

There is one class of scriptural subjects, about which I wish especially to warn those of my audience who may one day become preachers of the gospel. This class involves all those which respect the anger of God against sin, and his denunciations against sinners; particularly the final judgment and retribution, and the future sufferings of the impenitent. It is no unfrequent thing to hear these subjects discussed in that strong language, and that vehement utterance, with which an impassionate speaker labours to express his own indignation, and to rouse that of his audience against atrocious crimes, or invading enemies. Vehemence is not the manner of address which is suited to subjects of this nature. The preacher ought to remember, that in disclosing the doom of the impenitent, he is perhaps pronouncing his own. How few, even of the best of men, are assured of their safety! Were this objection removed, how foreign, how unfitted (to say the least) is it to subjects so awful! I have heard sermons of this description. The emotions excited in my own mind, and abundantly expressed to me by others, were, I confess, a mixture of horror and disgust; feelings from which good can hardly be expected in a case of this nature. I wish these subjects ever to be handled plainly and without disguise. Such a mode is equally essential to the integrity of the preacher, and the usefulness of his discourses. But I wish them to be always handled also with such a mixture of solemnity and affection, as shall wholly exclude vehemence on the one hand, and strongly exhibit tenderness on the other. The words of the preacher should be those of a guilty man to guilty men; of a dying man to dying men; of a man who humbly hopes that he has found pardon for himself, and is most affectionately anxious that his hearers may find the same blessing also.

There are two other subjects, which I think are often improperly handled in a different manner; a manner which without much violence, may be styled too affectionate; viz. the love and the sufferings of Christ. These, many preachers labour to describe with as much strength and tenderness as possible. In their efforts to be peculiarly pathetic, they often exhibit such images, and adopt such expressions as have ever appeared to me unsuited to the nature and dignity of the theme. The love of Christ was wonderful in its degree. But it was attended with a glory and sublimity which repel all familiar views, all diminutive representations; and demand thoughts of the highest reverence, and language of the highest elevation. All those epithets which are applied with the utmost propriety and force to human tenderness, and the soft affections of our race, are here, in my view, wholly misplaced. Even the epithet *dear* when applied to the Saviour, although sanctioned in many hymns, some of them written by persons of great respectability, has ever appeared to me too familiar, too colloquial, too diminutive, to be applied to this exalted Person; so that I never either hear or read it without pain. At the same time, many of the strong, impassioned exclamations which are often employed in endeavouring to make deep impressions concerning the sufferings of the Saviour, produce, I acknowledge, on my own mind the contrary effects. The death of Christ ought never to be lamented in such language as may very properly exhibit our feelings for the intense sufferings of a beloved child, or a darling friend. How differently has even St Paul, who, among the writers of the New Testament, and David, among those of the Old, have expressed the strongest emotions concerning this affecting subject, exhibited each his own views! Although they are intense, they are yet always dignified, and very often sublime.

7. The gospel ought to be preached acceptably.

It is a common opinion, that all the censures thrown out against what is said by an orthodox preacher, arise either from his want of talents, from some prejudice against the man, or from the hatred of the human heart to the truth which he utters. Either of these attributes, particularly the last, may serve as a convenient shelter for the preacher's faults, but is not a fair account of the fact. That the heart is naturally opposed to divine truth, and that those who declare it honestly are for this reason often censured, I have not a doubt. But the preacher not unfrequently occasions the censure by his own fault; and ought never to shun the blame which he has merited.

Solomon has taught us, that 'a word fitly spoken is like apples (or citrons) of gold in a net-work of silver:' a beautiful object beautifully exhibited, and therefore making an impression remarkably delightful. Of Solomon, also styled, 'the preacher,' by the Spirit of God, it is recorded, that he 'sought to find out acceptable words:' and that while writing a part of the scriptural canon. Who, with these considerations before him, can doubt that this is universally the duty of such as preach the gospel?

But there are men who in the desk appear to choose the character and attitudes of polemics. This character is sometimes rendered necessary, and is then defensible; but, when taken up of choice merely, is always disagreeable and disadvantageous.

There are others who, when particular terms or phrases have become odious, by being used and marked in the progress of a vehement dispute, adopt them still, either from choice or negligence; and thus warn their hearers beforehand to dislike whatever they are prepared to say.

A third class select phraseology calculated to persuade an audience, that they hold unheard of and unwarrantable opinions; when, if they would use customary language only, their tenets would be found to differ in nothing from those which are commonly received. In this manner the preacher alarms his hearers, not concerning their sin and danger, but concerning his own heresy; and occasions an opposition literally causeless and useless.

Some attack from the desk such as have personally

offended them, and thus make it a rostrum of satire and revenge, instead of a pulpit, where the tidings of salvation are to be published.

To preach acceptably demands all the characteristics, already insisted on in this Discourse: plainness, variety, boldness, solemnity, earnestness, and affection. It also demands something more. It requires that the preacher should avoid all such irregularities; that he should be cautious of pushing his sentiments to rank extremes; that he should wantonly give no offence to any man; that he should select, as far as he can, acceptable words; and that he should appear wholly engaged in promoting the salvation of his flock. His discourses ought to be the result of solid thought, careful study, and complete conviction of the truth and importance of Christianity.

Finally, they ought to appear fraught with piety to God, and integrity to men.

In this manner the gospel, unless I mistake, was originally preached. In this manner it will I think be preached by every minister, who unites the 'wisdom of the serpent with the innocence of the dove.' In this manner, particularly, it will be preached by him who, comprehending thoroughly the nature of his office, and feeling the necessity of discharging the duties of it faithfully, designs in the end to give a joyful account of his stewardship to God.

SERMON CLIV.

THE MEANS OF GRACE.—EXTRAORDINARY MEANS OF GRACE.—VARIOUS DUTIES OF MINISTERS.

And sent Timothy, our brother, and minister of God, and our fellow-labourer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith.—1 Thess. iii. 2.

Having examined at length the great duty of preaching the gospel in the two preceding Discourses, I shall now proceed to a summary consideration of other ministerial duties.

In the text, Timothy is said to be sent to the Thessalonians, to establish them, and to comfort them concerning their faith.' What was here the business of Timothy, is the proper business of every minister of the gospel. From the text, therefore, I derive this doctrine:

That every minister of the gospel is appointed for the establishment of Christians. This truth will not be questioned. I shall, therefore, enter immediately upon a consideration of the principal remaining methods, in which the duties specified in the text are to be performed.

I. *Every minister is bound to give himself diligently to study.*

This duty is abundantly enjoined in the Scriptures. 'Meditate,' says St Paul to Timothy, 'upon these things. Give thyself wholly to them: that thy profiting may appear unto all.' 'A bishop,' he farther says, 'must be apt to teach.' Plainly, therefore, he must learn the things which he is to teach. He must not be 'a novice; lest, being lifted up with pride, he fall into the condemnation of the devil.' That these precepts require of every minister the diligent study of the Scriptures, will not, I suppose be disputed. This, however, is far from being all that is required. Every minister is bound to enable himself to study the Scriptures with success. Unless this is done, the thing directly commanded can never be done to any valuable purpose. A child may study them with great diligence throughout his childhood, and an ignorant man throughout his life, and yet both be novices in the end. 'A novice,' here, denotes a new convert to the faith; and by Chrysostom is said to mean one newly instructed, or one who has been instructed but a little time. The original word denotes a plant lately set out, or planted. Its real import is a person who knows little about what he pretends to teach. Timothy, at the writing of this epistle, was about thirty-two years of age; had been long, 'even from a child,' acquainted with the Holy Scriptures; had been a convert about twelve or thirteen years; had been continually instructed in the gospel by St Paul; and had enjoyed the benefit of his wisdom, learning, and inspiration throughout this period. Besides, he appears to have possessed superior talents, a good education, and supernatural endowments in a high degree. Still, all these directions Paul judged to be necessary for him. For he expressly cautions him not to let any man despise his youth. How much more are the same directions necessary to a youth, who is only preparing himself for the ministry of the gospel.

To every man who would well understand any complicated subject, comprehensive views, clear discernment, and the art of arranging his thoughts with skill and perspicuity, are indispensable. These attainments are the result only of long-continued study, habits of exact discrimination, and extensive practice in the art of methodizing his thoughts.

To a minister all this is peculiarly necessary. His prime business is to teach, and he must therefore have learned. An ignorant teacher is a contradiction in terms.

The prime object of study to a minister is the Bible. In order to understand this sacred book, it is necessary not only to study it intensely and abundantly, but to become acquainted also with the languages in which it was written. The importance of this knowledge is completely seen in the fact, that the Scriptures are ultimately what they were as they came from the hands

of the writers; not as they came from the hands of the translators.

Another requisite is an acquaintance with ecclesiastical history. This will teach him the sins and virtues, the errors and sound doctrines, the prosperous and the adverse circumstances, which have existed in the church in its various ages; together with the causes by which they have been produced. Generally, he will derive from this source the same advantages, in the ecclesiastical sense, which the statesman derives, in a political sense, from civil history. He will learn what the church has been, why it has thus been, and how, in many respects, it may be rendered better and happier.

Another requisite to the same end, is acquaintance with wise and learned commentaries on the Scriptures. The authors of these must, in many instances, have understood this sacred book better than himself. By a prudent recurrence to their explications, he will be enabled to gain a knowledge of it, which otherwise would be impracticable.

The science of ethics is only a branch of theology.

Logic is indispensable to make him a sound reasoner; and rhetoric, to teach him how to write and how to speak with skill and success.

The knowledge of history and geography is indispensable to all men who would make contemplation, or instruction, any serious part of their business.

The book of man is to every minister a necessary object of investigation, that he may know to what beings he preaches; how to preach to them in an interesting and useful manner; and how to understand, explain, and impress a multitude of scriptural passages.

Generally, all that knowledge which will enlarge and invigorate his mind, will so far as he can attain it, contribute to render him a more able and judicious preacher, and his discourses more instructive, interesting, and edifying to his hearers.

A considerable number of persons professing to believe the Bible, are found in this and other countries, generally persons remarkably ignorant, who have pronounced learning, or, as they have termed it, book-learning, to be a disqualification for the ministerial office. Ignorant as they are, they have still understanding enough to perceive that ignorance itself cannot furnish a man for the business of teaching. They have accordingly provided a substitute for learning, which in a preacher they could not otherwise avoid acknowledging to be indispensable. The substitute is this: Their preachers, as they profess to believe, are supplied directly from heaven with supernatural light and power; so as to enable them clearly to understand, and profitably to expound, the word of God. They farther declare, that men destitute of these endowments, cannot even understand his word; that the real and only profitable sense of the Scriptures is mystical, and not at all discerned by common eyes; that to understand it at all, the supernatural endowments which they claim are absolutely necessary; and that learning, therefore, is of no use to this end. This is the substance of their doctrine, although expressed by them, as everything else concerning religion is expressed by ignorant and enthusiastic men, with much uncertainty and confusion.

This scheme deserves a sober examination on two accounts only. One is, that it is seriously adopted by its votaries. The other is, that these are considerably numerous. For these reasons I shall animadvert upon it in the following observations:—

1. The Scriptures give us no reason to conclude that inspiration would continue after the apostolic age.

The endowment challenged by these men appears to be that kind and degree of inspiration, which was formerly given to those whose business it was to interpret unknown tongues. I do not mean that they directly challenge this character in express terms; but this is what they mean if they mean anything. The Scriptures they declare to be written in language which, as to its true and useful meaning, is unknown to mankind at large. They, as they profess, are endowed by heaven with a power of interpreting it to others. But the Scriptures give us no reason to believe that any such inspiration exists. The burden of proof plainly lies upon them; and, if they fail of furnishing it, their pretensions stand for nothing.

2. If they are actually thus inspired, their inspiration can be of no use to mankind.

The language which they use in interpreting the Scriptures is the plain, common language of men. The Scriptures are written in this very language, chosen with incomparably more skill and success, than that which is used by these preachers. The most important things in the Bible are written in the plainest possible manner. If mankind cannot understand the terms here used, the terms which they employ must be still more unintelligible; their labours, therefore, must be absolutely useless.

So far as the language of the Scriptures is attended with any difficulty, and demands any skill in interpreting it, the efforts of these men are worse than nothing. The only power by which any language can be correctly explained to those who speak it, is critical skill in that language. But this, these men have not begun to possess. When, therefore, they comment, they merely blunder. What they attempt to explain, they only perplex. As they do not understand the language themselves, it is impossible that they should make it understood by others.

3. They give no proof that they are thus inspired.

The apostles prove their inspiration in three unobjectionable ways. They wrought miracles, uttered unrivalled wisdom, and exhibited throughout their lives unrivalled virtue. These men furnish neither of these proofs. They do not pretend to work miracles; they are always weak, ignorant, and foolish; and though sometimes it is to be hoped men of piety, are never distinguished by any remarkable excellence; but fall below most other pious men, through the influence of characteristical pride, prejudice, enthusiasm, censoriousness, and bigotry.

As, therefore, they furnish no proof that they possess this power, mankind are under no obligation to believe their pretensions. Neither the apostles, nor even Christ himself, claimed the least faith in their mission, nor the least obedience to their precepts, until they had proved themselves sent from God, and inspired, with the knowledge of his will, by the unanswerable evidence of miracles. Nor can it be supposed, that God would require us to believe any man to be inspired, or sent with a commission from himself, unless he furnished clear, unquestionable proof of his inspiration. If we were to admit the contrary position, and were required to believe men to be inspired, because they asserted them-

selves to be inspired, there is no error which we should not be obliged to receive, and scarcely any crime which we should not be called upon to commit. No men have been more erroneous, few men have been more wicked, than such as have claimed inspiration. Such were Judas, Gaulonites, Theudas, and Barchochab; and such have been many in succeeding ages. But the preachers in question furnish no evidence of their own inspiration whatever.

4. They are not thus inspired.

From what has been observed under the last head, it is evident that, if they were inspired, their inspiration could be of no possible use to any but themselves; because, as they give no proof of it, none can warrantably believe it. But it is contradictory to the whole history of God's providence, that men should be inspired for their own benefit merely. No fact of this kind is recorded in the Scriptures; nor can it be admitted by common sense.

But the men themselves furnish ample proof that they are not inspired. They are ignorant of the propriety and meaning of language, and use it falsely, absurdly, and in violation of the plainest rules of grammar. They reason weakly, erroneously, and inconclusively; lay down false premises, and draw false conclusions. Their sentiments are regularly vulgar; often gross, and not unfrequently indecent. It is impossible that the author of all wisdom should be the author of folly, inspire absurdity, and disclose his own pleasure in the lame conceptions of ignorance, in the mistakes of mental imbecility, and in the disgusting sentiments of indecent vulgarism. Ignorant men he may undoubtedly inspire; but their inspiration makes them cease to be ignorant men; enlarges their views, ennobles their sentiments, and adorns all their communications with pre-eminent propriety and dignity. The writings of Peter and John have communicated wisdom, elevation, and refinement, to the ablest men of all succeeding ages. Nothing was ever more unlike their writings, than the crude effusions of the preachers in question. Besides, the doctrines which they teach are contradictory to each other. The language of Scripture they frequently misunderstand and misinterpret; supposing that which is simple to be figurative, and that which is figurative to be simple; and thus making the Scriptures speak not only what they never meant, but what it is impossible that they should mean; viz. gross absurdity. Were an intelligent man to attribute these things to the Spirit of God, he would, in my view, be guilty of blasphemy. These preachers are shielded from this charge only by their ignorance.

The priests and the prophets of the Jewish church were almost all educated men. Whenever they were not, and often when they were, they were inspired. 'The priest's lips,' says God in Malachi, 'should keep knowledge; and they should seek the law at his mouth; for he is the messenger of the Lord of Hosts.' If the priests were to 'keep knowledge,' they must have previously obtained it. Such, plainly, ought to be the conduct of every messenger of the Lord of Hosts. The apostles were educated for a series of years by the best of all teachers, the Saviour of mankind, and were then inspired. In this manner were ministers anciently prepared for the business of instructing mankind.

Thus, the pretence on which these men act is unfounded, false, and vain.

The basis on which it is erected is, I presume, the following text: 'The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.' But of this text, and of others like it, they totally mistake the meaning. Spiritual discernment is that view of divine truth which is experienced by those who love it. Such persons, by this discernment, perceive the excellence and beauty of that truth, but are not enabled by it to understand in any other respect the meaning of a single passage at all better than they would have understood it without this discernment. It does not at all enlarge the understanding, communicate knowledge of language, nor enable the mind to discern the proper sense of that language. Every sanctified child has spiritual discernment. Still he is a child; extremely limited in his understanding, ignorant of the meaning of words, and incapable of interpreting Scriptural passages. These preachers are only larger children. St Paul has forcibly described their character in Heb. v. 12, &c.: 'For when for the time ye ought to be teachers;' or, as rendered by Dr Macknight, 'For though you ought to have been teachers, on account of the time' (that is, have lived so long under the gospel, that ye ought to have known enough of it to teach others), 'ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God;' and are become such, as have need 'of milk, and not of strong meat.' 'For every one that useth milk, is unskilful in the word of righteousness; for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.' How different is this character from that of 'the scribe, instructed unto the kingdom of heaven, who is like unto a householder, that bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old!'

II. *Every minister is to conduct both the common and peculiar ordinances of divine worship.*

The common ordinances of this worship he is to regulate according to the Scriptures; and administer them to all who are present: and no other person is to interfere with his administrations. The peculiar ordinances he alone is also to administer: the Lord's supper, as the apostles did, to professing Christians only: baptism to professing Christians offering themselves to him, unexceptionably, as candidates for admission into the church; and to the infant children of professing Christians.

The rules by which he is to conduct the mode of administration are, so far as they are applicable, those which have been given concerning preaching. The administration is to be marked with dignity, solemnity, explicitness, and affection; so that everything may be distinctly understood, and deeply felt. In the prayers accompanying these administrations, and, when the occasion permits, in suitable expositions of the great things which they teach, he may advantageously unfold just conceptions of the nature and import of the ordinance administered; and powerfully impress them on the minds of those who are present. Still more particularly should he explain and impress them in his sermons to the utmost of his power. If they are not thus explained, they will become in the view of his flock, mere symbols, without meaning or use. If they are not thus impressed, they will be in danger of being profaned and disregarded.

III. *Every minister is to preside over and direct the discipline of the church.*

A minister is by his office a ruler in the church, and the ruler in his own church. In this character he is bound to 'rule well;' and in thus ruling, is to 'be accounted worthy of double honour.' He is required to 'take the oversight thereof, not as lording it over God's heritage, but as an ensample to the flock; not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but as of a ready mind.'

All government is intended for the benefit of the governed. In that which Christ has established for the benefit of his church, this equitable principle is conspicuous in every part of the system. A strong, uniform, controlling sense of this truth will of itself direct to almost all that conduct in ecclesiastical government which is evangelical, and prevent almost all that which is wrong. The minister is bound to feel, in this case, nothing but the honour of his Master, and the good of his flock. All favouritism and prejudice, all cunning and worldly policy, all selfish schemes and by-ends, are by the Scriptures shut out of the institution. As in preaching, so in ruling, he is required 'not to walk in guile, craftiness, or hypocrisy; to renounce the hidden things of dishonesty; and to commend himself to every man's conscience in the sight of God.'

Passion also is never to be indulged in the performance of this duty. 'A bishop must not be soon angry,' says St Paul, 'nor self-willed; but blameless, and patient.' —'The servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men; in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves.'

While he is bound 'to rebuke them that sin, before all; that others also may fear;' he is to 'prefer no man before another; and to do nothing by partiality.' In the discipline which respects other ministers, he is bound 'not to receive a railing accusation, but before (that is, on the testimony of) two or three witnesses:' and all 'those elders, who rule well,' he, together with their people, is to 'account worthy of double honour.'

The peculiar directions given in Scripture concerning ecclesiastical discipline, I propose to consider hereafter. At the present time it will be sufficient to observe, that he is to do nothing, to omit nothing, and, so far as is in his power, to suffer nothing to be done, or omitted, which is not directly authorised in the word of God.

IV. *He is also to unite with his brethren in ordaining other ministers.*

Ordaining is the consecration of a minister by the laying on of the hands of the presbytery and by prayer. At the same time, a charge, containing a series of solemn injunctions, and similar to that which St Paul gave to Timothy, is to be delivered to the person ordained by the united authority of those who act in the ordination. This charge is to enjoin all the great duties of his office, and the manner in which they are to be performed. The right hand of fellowship is to be given to him also, as it was to Paul and Barnabas by the apostles at Jerusalem, assuring him of the cordial friendship, communion, and co-operation of his Christian brethren, both in the ministry and in the churches.

Concerning all these things, since they are perfectly understood and uniformly practised with great decency throughout this country, it will be unnecessary to make any particular remarks. I shall, therefore, only add, that there are in the Epistles to Timothy and Titus, so many injunctions on the people concerning their duty, as in my opinion to warrant, and in a sense demand, that a charge, enjoining it upon them, should become a part of these solemnities.

The chief difficulty connected with the business of ordination will almost always be found in selecting the proper persons to be ordained. The character given of these persons, particularly in the above mentioned Epistles, and generally throughout the New Testament, is the authoritative, the perfect, and the only directory concerning this subject. This character is even to be regarded as indispensable, and invariably to be demanded. Unless it be found substantially in a candidate for ordination, he is of course to be rejected.

Particularly he is, in the evangelical sense, to be a good man; of a fair Christian profession, of an unblamable Christian life, holden in esteem by the church, well reported of by others, of a competent capacity and attainments, and marked with that prudence which our Saviour required of his apostles. His doctrines are to be evangelical and uncorrupt, and his public exhibitions edifying and approved. All these characteristics those who ordain are bound to see amply attested. Indeed, unless he possess them, he cannot in my opinion be warrantably licensed to preach the gospel.

Among the things indispensably necessary in the character of such a candidate, and yet not unfrequently less insisted on than this ministerial duty demands, is the prudence or discretion just mentioned. A man may be a good man, and yet be indiscreet: but he can hardly be a useful man. An indiscreet or imprudent minister will rarely do good at all, and will certainly do much harm. A minister is an object of inspection to all eyes, and regarded as responsible to all men. Every impropriety, even such as would be unnoticed in other men of fair characters, will be seen, marked, and remembered in him as a serious defect, and will produce serious mischief. The minister who would avoid this mischief must, like the wife of Cæsar, not be suspected by persons of moderation and candour.

It was a memorable observation of a late venerable minister, of Massachusetts, a man distinguished for wisdom and excellence, and of more than sixty years' standing in the sacred office, that among all the ministers at whose dismission he had been present, and who were dismissed for some fault in themselves, neither heresy nor immorality had occasioned the dismission of more than one out of twenty; while imprudence had been the cause of this calamity to the remaining nineteen. Of the truth of this observation there cannot be a doubt. He who considers the uneasiness, contentions, and other mischiefs accompanying this event, will deeply feel the importance of preventing the chief cause of these evils. But this can be effectually done only by refusing to admit imprudent men into the ministry.

It is remarkable, that the first direction given by Christ to the apostles, after he had commissioned them to go out and preach among the people of Judea, enjoined upon them discretion. 'Be ye wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.' The first article also in St Paul's two recitals to Timothy and Titus of the duties of a bishop is, 'A bishop must be blameless.' Discretion is the source of a blameless life. No excellence of heart attained by man will ensure this character. On the other hand, prudent men are sometimes, even when destitute of religion, more unblamable in their deport-

ment than some real Christians. Prudence and imprudence affect everything in a man's life, especially in a minister's life; and therefore give it a predominating colour. Prudence is the great preventive of all thoughtless, rash, and dangerous conduct. Imprudence, on the contrary, betrays a man into every headlong measure, and lays up abundant materials for sore mortification and repentance, producing multiplied evils which must be regretted, but can never be repaired. When, therefore, St. Paul requires Timothy to 'lay hands suddenly on no man,' in order to avoid becoming 'a partaker in other men's sins,' and to 'keep himself pure;' he is justly understood as cautioning Timothy against introducing imprudent as well as irreligious persons into the ministry. It is impossible that such persons should have 'a good report of those who are without,' or for any length of time, of those who are within. Nor is their misconduct a series of mere defects only, but of real faults also. The fact, that we will not take effectual care to avoid doing mischief, especially in so important a concern, is itself a gross fault. Of the same nature are all those minor transgressions which proceed from this negligence. Such persons can never be proper candidates for ordination, nor even for a license to preach the gospel.

That every candidate should be a man of piety, needs no proof; nor that he should be qualified by his capacity and attainments to perform usefully all the duties of the ministerial office. Both characters are abundantly required in the Scriptures; and every minister, when called to the business of ordaining, has his whole duty with respect to both summed up in that remarkable injunction of St Paul: 'The things which thou hast heard of me, commit thou unto faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.'

V. *Every minister is to instruct and edify his flock in private, as well as in public.*

Preaching is intended to be adapted to the common wants and circumstances of a congregation. But there are multitudes of cases in which individuals need peculiar counsel, exhortation, and reproof. These, sermons will not always furnish. Private advice must often be given to the person who alone is concerned. The subjects of this instruction are almost endlessly diversified; involving whatever is peculiar to sinners, and to saints. In every important case of this nature, those who are concerned are required to apply to their minister for spiritual direction and assistance, and this assistance he is required to furnish. For this purpose he is bound, as far and as speedily as may be, to obtain the necessary qualifications. In interviews of this nature he will find opportunities of doing good, which are not presented in the course of his public duties. The individuals who are under his charge he will there meet in the character of a beloved and most necessary friend. The difficulties under which they severally labour he will hear described exactly by themselves. Of course, he will learn exactly what is necessary or useful to the person who is concerned; the views, whether just or erroneous, which he entertains; the proper means of removing his prejudices, doubts, fears, and sorrows; the kind of consolation, instruction, and support to be administered; and generally the peculiar means of doing him peculiar good. Whatever the minister says also will at such a time be realized by the individual, as directed to himself, and not to another; as reaching his own peculiar case, and meeting the very difficulties under which he labours; will have all the lively and impressive, the engaging and endearing nature of conversation; and will therefore be peculiarly listened to, felt, and remembered. The minister will be especially beloved, and therefore peculiarly obeyed.

Occasions for the performance of this duty are numerous, and daily occurring. A house of sorrow, and a sick bed, furnish opportunities for doing good of this nature, which are eminently advantageous; as does also every season of peculiar religious anxiety. Generally, whenever a minister is with his parishioners, he should follow a rule given by a wise and good man to a young preacher who was his pupil, 'Wherever you are, remember on every proper occasion to drop a word for God.'

The administration of reproof is one of the most difficult duties of a minister. For all transgressions which are private, and for many which are not, reproof should be private. 'Go and tell thy brother his fault between him and thee alone,' is a rule of supreme wisdom, applicable to very many cases beside that which is directly specified, and scarcely capable of being too much regarded by ministers of the gospel. Nor in any case, except where necessity requires it, should the facts be disclosed afterward. To reprove successfully is an attainment highly important, and far less common than could be wished. The great secret lies in seeking the happiest opportunities; in exhibiting the gentleness, meekness, and forbearance of the gospel; and in evincing a desire of nothing but of doing real good to him who is reproved. Pride, petulance, and passion, airs of superiority, resentment, or indifference, stinging expressions, and even those which are blunt or cold, are here wholly misplaced, and will awaken no emotions but those of anger and contempt. Even the psalmist could say, 'Let the righteous smite me kindly, and reprove me: let not their precious oil break my head.' At the same time, every minister should remember that to reprove privately, as well as publicly, is an indispensable part of his duty; and that 'as an ear-ring of gold, and an ornament of fine gold, so is a wise reprover upon an obedient ear.'

All the parts of this duty are to be regulated by the same principles which have been mentioned as the directories of preaching. These every minister is bound therefore faithfully to observe. For the same end he ought also to converse with the books in which, and the persons by whom, cases of conscience are most judiciously explained, and the true and false evidences of piety most distinctly stated. In addition to this, he ought to read, in the most careful manner, the book of man, to examine the human character with the most critical observation, and to learn, as far as may be, its interesting varieties. A familiar correspondence with his own congregation will extensively furnish him with this valuable knowledge.

The greatest danger, with regard to the several divisions of this duty is, that from sloth, or reluctance of some other kind, he will be induced to perform it defectively. That he may avoid this evil he ought to begin it at the commencement of his ministry; and, as soon as possible, to make it an immovable habit. In this manner, and perhaps in no other, it will be effectually done.

VI. *Every minister is bound to enforce all the doc-*

trines and duties of religion upon his congregation, by an edifying and blameless example.

'Be thou an example of the believers,' said St Paul to Timothy, 'in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.'

On this subject, highly important as it is, I need not dwell: for both the truth and importance of the precept will be acknowledged by all men. The greatest difficulty which a good man will meet in obeying it, will be found, not in doing good things, but in avoiding bad ones. For this end he is required to watch himself, and to remember that he is watched by all men; especially that he is watched by God. He ought diligently to make it his settled plan, to consider all his conduct before it is adopted; to compare his designs of every kind with the scriptural precepts; and, wherever any action is not absolutely enjoined or forbidden, to weigh well even its remote consequences. He is bound to recollect continually, that he is appointed and required to be an example to the flock; that every false step which he takes will be an occasion of stumbling to others, a grief to Christians, a dishonour to his office, a violation of his duty, and an occasion which will be taken by the enemies of Christ to blaspheme. In a word, he ought ever to keep in mind, that if he adorns the doctrine of the gospel, he will glorify God, and prove the means of good to the church, and to his own soul. If, on the contrary, he disgraces that doctrine, let him remember that he will dishonour God, injure the church, wrong his own soul, destroy the efficacy of his preaching, and, instead of promoting, probably prevent the salvation of his fellow men!

REMARKS.

1. From these observations we learn, that the ministerial office is of great utility to mankind.

Of course, he who holds it, ought with extreme caution to avoid everything by which it may be either disgraced, or in any other manner prevented from its proper efficacy to accomplish its illustrious ends. At the same time, all others are bound to regard it with respect. The hatred and contempt, therefore, the obloquy and ridicule, with which this office has been so often loaded, are unmerited and misplaced; and ought to cover their authors with shame, confusion, and remorse.

2. These observations prove, that it is also an office attended with great difficulties, and demanding for the faithful and efficacious discharge of it, many important qualifications and many laborious efforts.

Hence it ought never to be assumed without solemn consideration, a thorough examination of the difficulties which it involves, the self-denial with which it must be attended, and a fixed determination to discharge its duties faithfully, and to sustain its difficulties with unshaken fortitude. Hence, also, every minister is bound to seek assistance from God in daily prayer. God only can enable him to discharge his duty faithfully, comfortably, or usefully; and he will thus enable him, if his aid be sought aright.

In the same manner, his people are bound to ask for him the same blessings. Thus Paul directs the churches to whom he wrote to 'pray' for him 'without ceasing,' that he might be a good, useful, and faithful minister of Christ.

A young man who thinks of devoting himself to this solemn employment in such a manner as he ought to think, will naturally ask, 'Who is sufficient for these things?' The answer to this interesting inquiry is given by St Paul: 'We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.' All these difficulties have ever existed, and usually in greater degrees than in this country; and they have all been successfully encountered by faithful men, even when possessed of moderate talents. Such men, in very great numbers, have been eminently successful ministers of righteousness. Every person solemnly devoting himself to this office, may for his consolation be assured, that the grace of God will be glorified in his weakness, and will be sufficient for him in every difficulty. Let him also remember, that 'when the Chief Shepherd shall appear, he shall receive a crown of glory, that fadeth not away.'

SERMON CLV.

THE MEANS OF GRACE—EXTRAORDINARY MEANS OF GRACE.—OFFICERS OF THE CHURCH.—DEACONS.

And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration. Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look you out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word. And the saying pleased the whole multitude, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas, a proselyte of Antioch, whom they set before the apostles; and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them.—Acts vi. 1—6.

This passage of Scripture is the history of the transaction in which *deacons* were instituted in the Christian church; and is in my view the only instance in which their origin is mentioned. Dr Mosheim, indeed, and

several other respectable writers, suppose that deacons existed before this time, and are spoken of by Christ, Luke xxii. 26, in the following passage: 'But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve.' Here the word for 'younger' is νεωτερος, and for 'he that doth serve,' διακονων. The latter word he supposes to be unanswerably explanatory of the former, and to denote here appropriately the office of a *deacon* in the Christian church. Μειζων, also, the Greek word for 'greatest,' he considers as denoting *a ruler*, or *presbyter*; because it is explained by ηγουμενος, 'chief,' and contrasted to διακονων.

In conformity to this interpretation, he supposes that the young men who carried Ananias and Sapphira to their burial, were deacons in the proper sense. In support, and, as he thinks, in absolute confirmation of this opinion, he observes, that St Peter says, 'And likewise ye younger, submit yourselves to the elder.' Here the words used are νεωτεροι and πρεσβυτεροι: the latter meaning, as he apprehends, the *elders* of the church, and the former the *deacons*. To all this he adds, that this sense of the word νεωτεροι might be confirmed by numberless citations from Greek and Roman writers, and a variety of authors sacred and profane.

From these considerations Dr Mosheim concludes that there were deacons in the church antecedently to the transaction recorded in the text. 'These,' he observes, 'were elected from among the Jews who were born in Palestine,' and were suspected by the foreign Jews of partiality in distributing the offerings which were made for the support of the poor. Hence was derived, in his view, 'the murmuring of the Grecian (or Hellenistic) Jews against the Hebrews,' mentioned in the text. To remedy this disorder seven other deacons were chosen by order of the apostles; of whom, he supposes, six are by their names determined to have been foreigners, and the other was a proselyte from Antioch.

This account must be allowed to be both ingenious and plausible: I cannot, however, think it just, for the following reasons:—

1. It seems to me incredible, that Christ should have formed an order of officers in his church, by his own immediate appointment, and yet that no writer of the New Testament should have furnished us any account, nor even any hint, concerning this fact.

The passage quoted from St Luke is, to say the most, not an account, but a mere recognition, of the fact. At the same time, the words, in their customary acceptation, are capable of a better, as well as a more obvious meaning than that annexed to them by Dr Mosheim. His interpretation of the text is, 'He that performs the office of a presbyter, or an elder, among you, let him not think himself superior to the ministers, or deacons.'

The amount of this interpretation is no other, than that Christ requires the presbyter not to think himself, as an officer of the church, superior to a deacon. But this certainly cannot be just. The superiority of the former to the latter, both in station and authority, is everywhere disclosed in the Scriptures. The presbyter, therefore, cannot but know this, and plainly ought to think it, because it is true. If Dr Mosheim intends, that the elders should feel that humble disposition only which the words evidently indicate, I answer, that humility is unquestionably the great thing here inculcated by the Saviour. But this is much more naturally and forcibly inculcated, if we take the words in their common acceptation, than by supposing them to denote these officers. The general phraseology, 'greatest,' and 'chief,' the 'younger,' and 'he that serveth,' indicates to every man the spirit and deportment enjoined by Christ, as perfectly as they can be indicated. When we are told, that the greatest is bound to feel and act as a youth or child ought to feel and act; and that he who is chief, ought to behave with the modesty and humility of him whose business it is to serve, humility is certainly inculcated with as much explicitness and force as language admits. Christ accordingly adopted this very manner of instruction concerning the same subject on other occasions. In Mark ix. 34, we are informed of 'a dispute,' which the disciples had among themselves, 'who should be greatest.' Christ, to reprove this foolish ambition, 'called the twelve, and said unto them, If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all. And he took a child, and set him in the midst of them; and when he had taken him into his arms; he said unto them, Whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name, receiveth me.'

At the same time, humility is enjoined by an allusion not only obvious and familiar, but applicable also to all men, and therefore much more extensively instructive to those who should either hear or read the precept.

2. The followers of Christ were not at this time sufficiently numerous to be organized in the manner here supposed.

The number of Christ's followers was at this time very small. A great part of these also followed him occasionally only, and seem to have been at other times at their own proper places of habitation, pursuing their customary business. In these scattered and changing circumstances we can scarcely conceive that Christians can have been so organized into a body, as to constitute a church with its proper officers. The first mention made of elders in the Christian church, even at Jerusalem, I mean as distinguished from the apostles, is in Acts xi. 30, about eleven or twelve years after the ascension. Until this time, there is not a hint in the New Testament, that any other men exercised authority in the Christian church, beside inspired men, as such, and the seven deacons, although the office of elder was constituted by Christ in the general commission given to ministers.

3. In the act of choosing the deacons, recorded in the text, there is not the least allusion to any pre-existing officers of that title or character.

On the contrary, the spirit of the passage appears to forbid this construction. The murmuring of the Grecian Jews against the Hebrews is not specified as directed against the Hebrew deacons, but against the Hebrews, or the body of Hebrew believers. If it was really directed against the Hebrew deacons, the record as it now stands cannot be true.

To remove the cause of this murmuring, the apostles summoned the church together, and addressed them, as in the text: 'It is not reason, that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables.' If the business of serving tables had been already committed to deacons, as the proper and known officers, to transact this business, could the apostles suppose the church would ex-

pect them to undertake it? Would not the Grecian Jews have complained of the Hebrew deacons in form, and required that others of a more satisfactory character should be appointed? The apostles would then, I think, have called the faulty deacons to an account, and censured them for their misconduct. After this, they would either have rejected them from office, or added to them others, or required of them a more faultless future behaviour. But they would not have supposed that the church could expect them to perform this duty, contrary to a known institution of Christ.

Again: They direct the church to choose seven men of specified qualifications, whom they might appoint over this business. If the appointment was now made for the first time, this language was natural; but, if Christ had already instituted the office, would scarcely have been used. The apostles, I believe, nowhere speak of any institution of Christ under the style of an appointment of their own. On the contrary, they always appeal to his authority, where he had expressly exercised it; and it is, I think, to be believed that the evangelists have recorded every such appointment.

The apostles farther say, 'But we will give ourselves to prayer, and the ministry of the word.' This language seems plainly to be that of persons who were expected in some measure to desist from prayer and the ministry of the word, in order to perform other necessary business; but cannot have been any answer to persons soliciting them to appoint an additional number of deacons in the church. On the contrary, it is the proper language of men who considered themselves, and were considered by those around them, as the sole officers of the church at that time. In consequence of this fact, their brethren naturally thought that every office was to be executed by them, or by others under their direction. The subject was, I think, left to them indefinitely; that they might resolve on such measures as they should choose to have pursued. In this view of the subject, the observations made by the apostles, seem natural and proper; but according to the scheme of Dr Mosheim are scarcely capable of a satisfactory explanation.

4. If this passage does not contain the original appointment of deacons, there is no allusion to it in the New Testament.

Is this credible? The appointment and the office are of divine authority, and therefore are required to be upheld by the church. Yet the church is nowhere informed when, or where, or how, this office was instituted. We are not, I acknowledge, warranted to determine in what manner Christ would direct the records of his mission and pleasure to be written. But we are, I believe, authorized to say, that the case here proposed would be singular, and without any parallel in the Scriptures.

The argument of Dr Mosheim is made up of these two parts: First, That the word νεώτερος is used in the Scriptures as equivalent to διακονος: and, secondly, that all bodies of men must have their officers. To the former of these I reply, that although this use of the term νεωτερος should be conceded, as in the passage alleged from St Peter perhaps it ought, yet it is I think evident, that this use of the word in the New Testament is very rare. I know of no other instance in which this interpretation of it can be even plausibly supported. It is, therefore, urged with little success for the purpose in view. To the latter, my answer is, that although all bodies of men must have their officers, such bodies must be formed and established in some numbers, and must have a known and stable existence, before those officers can be needed; and that the church had barely arrived at this state, when the deacons mentioned in the text were appointed.

I have felt myself obliged to consider this opinion of Dr Mosheim and others, on account of its connexion with the history of the subject. If the text contains the original institution of this office, the history of it is one thing; if not, it became quite another; and, from this supposed diversity, men, considerable for their numbers and respectability, have been inclined to derive inferences very differently affecting the office, and its duties.

Assuming the account which has been given of this subject as just, I proceed to observe, that the whole history of the transaction is the following:—

When the disciples, in the infancy of the church, saw some of their number poor and suffering, others necessarily devoted to the public service, and both standing in absolute need of support from the community, they determined with one voice to sell each man his possessions, and to throw the whole into a common stock. From this stock all the members were to derive their sustenance. A considerable number of the disciples were Grecian, or as they are more usually styled Hellenistic Jews. The widows belonging to this part of the fraternity were, or were thought to be, neglected in the supplies which were daily administered. These brethren brought their complaint to the apostles. The apostles seem plainly to have considered it as well-founded; for they directed the remedy mentioned in the text; viz. that the church should choose seven men of unquestionable qualifications to superintend this business. They accordingly chose the persons whose names are here recited, and, to satisfy the complaining brethren, selected most of them from among the foreign Jews. The men chosen were approved by the apostles, and regularly ordained to their office. Immediately after this event, St Luke observes, 'the word of God increased; and the number of disciples in Jerusalem multiplied greatly.' God, therefore, approved the measure, and annexed to it his blessing.

From this history, cleared as I hope of embarrassments, and connected with other passages of Scripture relating to the subject, I propose to examine.

I. *The manner in which deacons were introduced into office.*

II. *The character which they are to sustain.*

III. *The purposes for which they are appointed.*

I. *I shall inquire into the manner in which deacons were introduced into office.*

Concerning this I observe,

1. That they were chosen to it by a vote of the church.

'Wherefore, brethren,' said the apostles, 'look ye out among you seven men of good report, full of the Holy Ghost, and of wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. And the saying pleased the whole multitude,' says the historian; 'and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith, and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicholas, a proselyte of Antioch, whom they set before the apostles.'

This selection was directed by the apostles. It is, therefore, a pattern for all churches in the same concern. Every deacon ought, therefore, to be chosen by the suffrage of the church.

2. Deacons are to be ordained by the imposition of hands, and by prayer.

When the brethren had set these men before the apostles St Luke informs us, 'they prayed, and laid their hands upon them.'

This also is an authoritative example of the manner in which deacons are to be introduced into every church.

It is the example of inspired men; and was, therefore, the pleasure of the Spirit of God. There is no hint in the New Testament, nor even in the ecclesiastical history, that they were ever introduced in any other manner. At the same time there is no precept revoking or altering the authority or influence of this example. It stands, therefore, in full force; and requires that all persons chosen by the church to this office should be consecrated to the duties of it in the same manner.

It is to be observed farther, that if any such alteration had existed in periods subsequent to the apostolic age, it would have been totally destitute of any authority to *us*. This mode of consecration has, in fact, been disused in New England to a considerable extent. For this, however, there seems to have been no reason of any value. So far as I have been able to gain information concerning the subject, the disuse was originated at first, and has been gradually extended, by mere inattention; nor is it capable, so far as I know, of any defence.

II. *The character which deacons ought to sustain*, as exhibited in the Scriptures, particularly in the text, and in the third chapter of the first Epistle to Timothy, is made up of the following particulars;

1. They should be grave.

'Likewise,' says St Paul to Timothy, 'must the deacons be grave:' σεμνους, men of dignified gravity.

2. They must be sincere.—'Not double-tongued.'

3. Temperate.—'Not given to much wine.'

4. Free from avarice.—'Not greedy of filthy lucre.'

5. Acquainted with the doctrines of the gospel.—'Holding the mystery of the faith,' that is, the gospel.

6. Honestly attached to the doctrines of the gospel.—'Holding the mystery of the faith in (or with) a pure conscience.'

7. Of a fair Christian reputation.—'Brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report:' μαρτυρουμενους, 'well reported of,' or having an unblemished character: 'being found blameless;' ανεγκλητοι οντες, being unaccused, or irreproachable.

8. They ought to be proved antecedently to their introduction into office.—'And let these also first be proved.'

An ancient, perhaps the original, mode of proof was this: The name of the candidate was published in a Christian assembly, that if those who belonged to it had any thing to object to his character, they might have an opportunity of declaring it to the church. But as no mode is prescribed by the apostle, and as the end of the trial is a thorough knowledge of the candidate's character, whatever will accomplish this end in a satisfactory manner is undoubtedly sufficient. The accomplishment of the end is, however, always to be insisted on.

9. They are required to be husbands of one wife.

In an age when polygamy was so common, this direction was important.

10. They ought to be such as rule well their own families.—'Ruling their children and their own houses well.'

III. *The purposes, for which this office was established* are the following:

1. They were, I apprehend, intended in various respects to be assistants to ministers.

I have given this as an opinion; and am well aware that it has been, and probably will hereafter be, disputed. My reasons for it, are the following:—

(1.) I derive it from the directions given by St Paul concerning the character of the officer.

It must have struck every person who has read attentively the character of deacons, insisted on by St Paul, that it strongly resembles that of a bishop, or minister, presented to us in the same chapter, and also in the first of the Epistle to Titus, so as in most particulars to be the same. All that which is required in the character of a deacon is, together with some important additions, also required in that of a bishop. So far as the character in both cases is the same, it is fairly presumed to be necessary to the same ends.

Particularly, I see no reason why deacons should be required to be such 'as hold the mystery of the faith,' a direction given concerning bishops, Tit. i. 9, unless this qualification was to be employed in some manner and degree for the same ends. In a bishop this qualification is required that he may be able, by sound doctrine both to exhort, and to convince gainsayers." There is undoubtedly no warrant given to deacons in the Scriptures to preach. But there are a multitude of religious instructions of very great importance, which are to be given to many persons, and on many occasions; and which are still remote from preaching. Of these the most formal is that class of instructions which are appropriately styled catechetical. Another class is made up of the teaching immediately given in private religious assemblies. Another still may be sufficiently described by the word *occasional*. In all these it would seem that deacons might with great propriety act; and, unless they were to act in these, or some other similar modes, it seems difficult to explain why they should be required to possess skill and soundness in the gospel; or how the church should know that they sustain this character.

(2.) I argue the same thing from the nature of their office.

Men of such a character, as deacons are required to possess, and acting continually as ecclesiastical officers, cannot fail of obtaining a considerable influence in the church. Influence is one of the principal means of doing good in the present world. This influence can be exerted in no manner which is more natural, or of better efficacy, than that which has been mentioned.

(3.) I argue the same thing from ecclesiastical history.

Ancient ecclesiastical writers style deacons 'ministers of the mysteries of Christ, of the episcopate, and of the church.' They attended the presbyters in the sacramental service, received the offerings of the people, and presented them to the presbyter; and in some churches read the gospel both before and after the communion service; and in some cases administered baptism. In all these, and in a variety of other services

which they performed, they evidently sustained the character of assistants to the minister. It is immaterial to the present purpose whether these were the most proper services for deacons to perform; the general character of assistants being the only thing, at which I here aim. This being admitted, the nature of the case may sufficiently explain the kind of assistance from time to time to be furnished. It may not, however, be improperly observed, that there are many occasions, some in public, and more in private religious assemblies, on which deacons may profitably, as well as becomingly, act as assistants to the minister, by praying with those who are assembled, especially when he is absent or infirm. They may greatly aid him also by learning, and communicating to him, as they did in ancient times, the state of his congregation; particularly their errors, dangers, wants, and distresses.

2. *Deacons*, in the absence of the minister and of ruling elders, where such offices exist, are by their office moderators of the church.

3. It is their proper business to distribute the sacramental elements to the communicants.

This they have done in all ages of the church. Anciently they not only distributed the elements to the communicants present, but carried them also to those who were absent.

4. The great duty of this office is the distribution of the alms of the church to its suffering members.

The Scriptures abound in directions to Christians to provide liberally for the relief of their fellow Christians; although most of these directions have been unfortunately misunderstood to enjoin only the distribution of common charity. This mistake one would suppose, would be easily rectified by a single passage. 'As we have opportunity,' says St Paul, 'let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith,' Gal. vi. 10. To the same purpose we have a more particular direction, given in 1 Cor. xvi. 1, 2. 'Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him.'

Of this injunction I remark,

(1.) That it appears to have been a general direction; so far, at least, as the contribution for the poor saints at Jerusalem was concerned. The apostle, with respect to this contribution, had before given the same order to the churches of Galatia; and the churches of Macedonia and Achaia had embarked in the same design, as we are informed, Rom. xv. 26. The same thing seems to have been finally adopted, as a matter of system, by the apostles Peter, James, and John, in conjunction with St Paul, when he was at Jerusalem the second time after his conversion. 'They would,' said St Paul, 'that we should remember the poor; the same which I was always forward to do.'

But if we had no other directions concerning this subject in the sacred volume, the history contained in the text would be amply sufficient. The very purpose for which the office was instituted in the Christian church was the distribution of its alms; an employment highly honourable and evangelical. That this employment was to be universal in the church, and that its poor members were always to receive the benefit of it, is clearly taught in the fifth chapter of the first Epistle to Timothy, by the directions given concerning the reception of widows into the number of the poor supported by the church.

This duty of deacons is also enjoined in Rom. xii. 8, 'He that giveth,' (*μεταδιδους, distributeth,*) 'let him do it with simplicity,' that is, with disinterestedness and impartiality; or, perhaps, as in the margin, liberally; 'and he that showeth mercy,' that is, relieves the sick, the afflicted, the widow, and the fatherless, 'let him do it with cheerfulness.' The business of distributing and of showing mercy was especially the business of this office. Private bounty was to be given to the necessitous by the authors of it at their own pleasure; but the bounty of the church was to flow through its deacons, as its own proper almoners.

The primitive Christians obeyed the injunctions requiring this duty in a manner becoming their profession. They received their fellow Christians, when travelling, into their houses, and made them welcome to such accommodations as their circumstances permitted. They continually made feasts of charity, to which every Christian present was of course invited; raised weekly contributions, and conveyed them to their necessitous brethren by officers, whose especial business it was to see that all were impartially and effectually relieved. With a similar care and benevolence they administered relief to sufferers in every other situation.

This conduct, being a novelty in the world, and no less honourable than beneficial, strongly attracted the attention of the heathen, and extorted from them this high proverbial commendation: 'See, how these Christians love one another!' The emperor Julian, an apostate from Christianity, and therefore a bitter enemy to it, acknowledges the fact in terms extremely honourable to the cause which he so earnestly laboured to destroy.

'If,' said he, 'Hellenism,' that is, the religion of the heathen, 'does not prosper according to our wish, it is the fault of those who profess it. Why do we not look to that which has been the principal cause of the augmentation of impiety' (that is, the Christian religion): 'humanity to strangers, care in burying the dead, and that sanctity of life, of which they make such a show? It is a shame that, when the impious Galileans' (that is, Christians), 'relieve not only their own people, but ours also, our poor should be neglected by us.'

Again he says: 'It having so happened, as I suppose, that the poor were neglected by our priests, the impious Galileans, observing this, have addicted themselves to this kind of humanity; and by the show of such good offices have recommended the worst of things;' that is, the Christian religion. 'For beginning with their love feasts, and the ministry of tables, as they call it (for not only the name, but the thing is common among them), they have drawn away the faithful to impiety:' that is, heathens to Christianity.

We have here the strongest evidence, that the ancient Christians, down to the days of Julian, maintained the charity of the gospel to their poor and suffering brethren, and to strangers also: and that this charity was distributed in conformity to the account in the text; the ministry of tables being mentioned by him as one of the principal channels through which it flowed. It is plain, also, that in the view of this emperor, this charity was a primary reason why Christianity prevailed in the world. For he exhibits his full conviction, that

it was impossible to spread heathenism by any other means than a strenuous imitation of this excellent character. The justness of these opinions is in my view unquestionable.

This duty is no less incumbent on Christians at the present time. Nor would the advantages arising from the practice of it be less important or conspicuous. In all churches there ought to exist a regular system of contribution, designed solely to provide relief for their poor and suffering members. In every church a charitable fund ought to be begun, and continually supplied by continual collections. Of this fund the deacons ought to be the standing almoners, as being by the authority of God designated to this office.

It may here be objected, and not unnaturally, that the state has by law made provision for the relief of all poor persons; that all members of churches contribute to this charity, in common with others; and that their suffering members take their share of the bounty. My answer to this objection is the following:—

(1.) That the poor, both of the church and community at large, have exactly the same right to the property supplied by this tax, which the contributors have to the remainder of their own possessions.

The law alone creates every man's right to what he calls his estate. To the great mass of the property denoted by this word he has by nature no right at all. But the same law gives exactly the same right to the poor, of receiving whatever is taxed upon others for supplying their necessities. The payment of this tax therefore is in no sense an act of charity, but the mere payment of a debt, by which, together with other acts of the like nature, each man holds a right to his estate.

(2.) The charity in question was immediately instituted and required by God, and is independent of all human institutions.

No conformity to any regulation, no obedience to any law of man, can go a step towards excusing us from obeying a law of God.

(3.) The provision in question is not made by human laws.

The intention of furnishing this fund is not to relieve the absolute necessities of poor Christians; these being customarily supplied by the operation of law. The object here in view is to provide for their comfort. Nothing can be more contrary to the spirit of Christianity, than that one part of the members of a church should abound in the conveniences and luxuries of life, and another be stinted to its mere necessaries. Every one ought plainly to share in blessings superior to these. This provision ought to extend to all those enjoyments which are generally denominated decencies and comforts. Without the possession of these, in some good degree, life, so far as its external accommodations are concerned, can hardly be said to be desirable.

I am well aware, that the unhappy neglect of this great duty by many of our own churches will be urged and felt as a defence of the contrary doctrine. It is hardly necessary to observe, that no negligence can justify a farther neglect of our duty. Nehemiah and his companions, when 'they found it written in the law, that the children of Israel should dwell in booths,' at the feast of the tabernacles, 'went forth, and made themselves booths, every one of them,' although their nation had failed of performing this duty, as this excellent man declares, 'from the days of Joshua the son of Nun.'

I am also aware, that, 'the love of money, the root' of so much 'evil' in other cases, is the root of great evil in this, and will, even in the minds of some good men, create not a little opposition to this duty. Until such men learn to love this world less, and God and their fellow Christians more, objections springing from this source will undoubtedly have their influence.

My audience is chiefly composed of those who are young, and therefore neither devoted to avarice, nor deeply affected by the too customary negligence of this duty. Before them, therefore, I feel a peculiar satisfaction in bringing up to view this benevolent and divine institution. On their minds the arguments which have been urged will, I trust, have their proper weight. To quicken his just views of this subject, let every one present remember, that even the emperor Julian has said; 'I do not believe any man is the poorer for what he gives to the necessitous. I, who have often relieved the poor, have been rewarded by the gods many-fold; although wealth is a thing on which I was never much intent.' Above all things, let every one remember, that Christ, alleging the beneficence of Christians as a ground of their endless happiness in the world above, closes his infinitely momentous address to them with this remarkable declaration: 'Inasmuch as ye have done it to one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.'

SERMON CLVI.

THE MEANS OF GRACE.—EXTRAORDINARY MEANS OF GRACE.—THE ORDINANCES OF THE CHURCH.—BAPTISM.—ITS REALITY AND INTENTION.

Go ye, therefore, teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.—MATT. xxviii. 19.

In seven Discourses preceding this I have considered the institution of the church; the members of which it is formed; the officers appointed in the Scriptures to superintend its affairs; and the principal duties which

they are appointed to perform. The next subject in a System of Theology is the ordinances which belong peculiarly to this body of men, and which they are required to celebrate.

Of these, the first in order is Baptism; as being that by which the members of the church are, according to Christ's appointment, introduced into this body.

In the text, Christ directs his apostles to go forth into the world, and 'teach,' or make disciples of, 'all nations, and to baptize them in (or into) the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.' This then is a duty which the apostles were required to perform towards all nations, so far as they made them disciples of Christ.

The text, therefore, presents the subject of baptism to us, as an ordinance to be administered by the pastors of the church to its several members, in consequence of their discipleship. What was the duty of the apostles in this case, is equally the duty of all succeeding ministers. Of course, it is the duty of every person who wishes and is qualified to become a member of the church, to receive the ordinance of baptism.

In my examination of this subject, I shall consider,

I. *The reality,*

II. *The intention,*

III. *The proper subjects of this ordinance;* and,

IV. *The manner in which it should be administered.*

I. *I shall make some observations concerning the reality of baptism.*

To persons at all acquainted with ecclesiastical history it is well known, that several classes of men have denied baptism, in the proper sense, to be a divine institution. Some of these persons have supported their opinion from Heb. ix. 10; 'Which stood only in meats, and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation.' The word here rendered 'washings,' is in the Greek Βαπτισμοις, *baptisms.* In this passage they have, without any warrant, supposed the baptism of the gospel to be included. The apostle in this passage refers only to the Jewish worship, as is evident from the preceding part of the chapter, particularly from the ninth verse. That evangelical baptism was in use, as an institution of Christ, when this epistle was written, is abundantly manifest from the following chapter, verses 19—22, particularly from the two last of these verses: 'Having a high priest,' says the apostle, 'over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith; having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water;' or, in other words, being baptized.

The same persons endeavour to support their opinion also from 1 Pet. iii. 21; 'The like figure whereunto, even baptism, doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God) by the resurrection of Christ.' But the objectors are not less unhappy in their construction of this passage, than of that mentioned above. The true as well as obvious meaning in this passage is the following: 'Baptism, the antitype of the water of the deluge, doth now save us by the resurrection of Christ; not indeed the cleansing of the filth of the flesh, but that which is signified by it, the answer of a good conscience towards God.' This passage is a direct recognition of the existence of baptism as an institution in the Christian church; and therefore, instead of being a support, is a refutation of the scheme in question.

Persons who deny the doctrine of the Trinity, or the satisfaction of Christ, are in a sense constrained to deny baptism also, in order to preserve consistency in their opinions. The command to 'baptize in (or into) the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost,' is a plain unanswerable exhibition of the doctrine of the Trinity. The cleansing with water also is too unequivocal a symbol of our spiritual purification by the blood of Christ, to suffer any rational denial or doubt. It seems, therefore, scarcely possible for those who deny either the Trinity or the Atonement, to admit the institution of baptism, without a plain contradiction in their principles.

Others still have removed both baptism and the Lord's supper, by the aid of spiritual or mystical construction. These persons appear to build their scheme especially on the answer of John the Baptist to the Pharisees and Sadducees, who came to his baptism: I, indeed, baptize you with water unto repentance; but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear. He will baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire.' From this passage chiefly the doctrine has been drawn, that baptism with water was not intended to be, nor actually made, by Christ an institution of the gospel. It is hardly necessary to remark, that this interpretation of the Baptist's words is wholly erroneous; and that they have no connexion with the doctrine to which they are here applied.

The proof on which this institution rests, as a perpetual ordinance of Christ in his church, is so entire and so obvious, that every doubt concerning it is more properly an object of surprise, than of serious opposition. In the text, Christ commands his apostles, and all his succeeding ministers, to baptize those whom they should make disciples. In obedience to this command, the apostles accordingly baptized all those who were made disciples by them. Those who followed them in the ministry, followed them also in this practice. In this manner the institution has been continued in the church, with the exception of a few dissentients, to the present time. 'Except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.' To be born of water, is to be baptized. To be born of the Spirit, is to be regenerated. 'The kingdom of God,' is a phrase used in the gospel in a twofold sense; and denotes his visible, and his invisible kingdom; or the collection of apparent, and the collection of real saints. The indispensable condition of entering the former, or visible kingdom, is here made by our Saviour, baptism. The indispensable qualification for admission into the invisible kingdom is regeneration, the great act of the Spirit of God, which constitutes men real saints. Baptism, therefore, is here made by Christ a condition absolutely necessary to our authorized entrance into his visible church.

II. *I shall now inquire into the intention of this ordinance.*

Washing with water is the most natural and universal mode of cleansing from external impurities; and is therefore the most obvious and proper symbol of internal, or spiritual purification. Baptism denotes generally this purification; and particularly is intended to present to us the cleansing of the soul by the blood of Christ; and still more particularly by the effusion of

the Divine Spirit. To this interpretation of it we are directed by the prophet Isaiah, in the forty-fourth chapter of his prophecy; 'I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring.' The same explanation is given of it also by God, in the prophet Ezekiel, chap. xxxvi. 25—27, 'Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean.—And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes.' As both these passages refer to the evangelical dispensation, there can be no reasonable doubt that the application here made of them is just; or that baptism especially signifies the affusion of the Spirit of God upon the soul.

It is, however, to be very carefully remarked here, that, although baptism is a symbol of this affusion and of the regeneration which is its consequence, yet baptism neither insures, nor proves regeneration. The church of Rome has long taught, that regeneration is inseparably connected with this ordinance; and that the ordinance is absolutely necessary, at least in all ordinary circumstances, to the existence of regeneration. From that church this scheme has spread, with some variations, through several Protestant churches. I know not that it is in my power to express, in precise language, the different views entertained in the Christian world concerning this subject.

Often, if I mistake not, these views are given to us in phraseology which is indefinite, and sometimes perhaps designedly mysterious. A distinction, unknown to the Scriptures, is sometimes made between regeneration and renovation. Baptism is sometimes said to be the cause, or the inseparable attendant, of regeneration, and not of renovation. What the word regeneration thus used intends, I confess myself unable to determine. So far as I have been able to find, the regeneration of the Scriptures is but one thing; and denotes invariably that change of character, or the cause of that change, by which sinners become holy. Christ has taught us, that to be born again, is to be born of the Spirit of God. 'Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.' These two declarations, every person will see, are exactly parallel. To be 'born again,' in the first of them, is precisely the same thing, as to be 'born of water, and of the Spirit,' in the last. To be 'born of water,' as here intended, is, in my view, to be baptized; and is as absolutely necessary to our lawful admission into the visible kingdom of God; as to be born of the Spirit, is to our admission into his invisible kingdom. That to be born of water, and of the Spirit, is the same thing with being born again, must be admitted by every one who is willing that our Saviour should speak good sense, since he obviously mentions in this whole discourse but one birth; which he introduces to Nicodemus under the phraseology of being born again. What connexion water, here in my view standing for baptism, has with this subject, I shall farther explain hereafter.

With these things premised, I shall now proceed to consider the question, Whether baptism insures, or proves, regeneration.

The arguments in favour of the affirmative answer to this question are principally, if not wholly, derived from the following passages of Scripture:—

1. Mark xvi. 16, 'He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned.'

Of this passage it is only necessary to observe, that the concluding clause refutes the supposition which the introductory one is employed to support. Here Christ declares, that he who believeth not, whether baptized or not, shall be damned. This could not be true, if baptism and regeneration were thus connected.

2. The same doctrine is argued from the passage quoted above: 'Except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.'

The account given of the subject in this text, is exactly the same with that contained in the preceding passage. To be baptized, is to be born of water. To be a believer, is to be born of the Spirit. He who believeth, whether baptized or not, shall be saved: he that is born of the Spirit, whether born of water or not, shall enter into the invisible kingdom of God. In exact accordance with this construction of the passage, our Saviour, in every other part of his discourse with Nicodemus, insists only on being born of the Spirit, as the great qualification for acceptance with God.

It is, however, to be observed here, that he who, understanding the nature and authority of this institution, refuses to be baptized, will never enter either the visible or invisible kingdom of God. As he refuses to become a member of the visible, he will certainly be shut out of the invisible kingdom. Considered with reference to a case of this nature, the passage may be justly construed in the literal manner. For he who persists in this act of rebellion against the authority of Christ, will never belong to his kingdom.

3. This doctrine is also argued from Titus iii. 5: 'According to his mercy he saved us by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost.'

Whether the words translated 'the washing of regeneration,' denote baptism or not, according to the opinions of different commentators, is, in my view, immaterial to the present question. If baptism is denoted by these words, it is called 'the washing of regeneration,' because it is symbolical of that change in the heart; and because Christ has established it, as such a symbol, in his visible church. Beyond this, nothing can be pleaded from this passage in favour of the doctrine.

There is yet another text, to wit, Eph. v. 26, of an import similar to that last quoted, which may be urged with somewhat less plausibility, as favouring the same scheme. It is this, 'As Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word.' To this the same answer is obviously to be given with that which has been already given to the passage last quoted.

These are the only texts within my knowledge which can be seriously alleged in favour of this doctrine. I shall now, therefore, proceed to show that the doctrine is erroneous, by the following considerations:—

I. It contradicts the general tenor of the Scriptures relative to this subject.

(1.) Adults are in the Scriptures required to believe, antecedently to their baptism.

In the text, the apostles are directed to make disciples of all nations, and then to baptize them. That they understood their commission in this manner is unanswerably evident from their own declarations. 'Repent, therefore,' said St Peter to the Jews, 'and be

baptized, every one of you, in the name of the Lord Jesus.' When the eunuch said to Philip, 'See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?' Philip replied, 'If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest.' Lydia was baptized after the Lord had 'opened her heart.' The jailor was baptized in consequence of his faith. So was Paul. So were Cornelius and his household. From these facts and declarations it is evident, beyond controversy, that adults were baptized by the apostles, after they had become, or were supposed to have become, disciples of Christ: or, in other words, after they were either really or apparently, regenerated.

(2.) The Scriptures teach us that the gospel, or the truth of God, is the great instrument of regeneration.

'The truth shall make you free,' saith our Saviour, John viii. 32. 'Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth,' John xvii. 17. Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth,' says St James; James i. 18. 'Being born again,' says St Peter, 'not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God,' 1 Pet. i. 23. 'The gospel,' says St Paul, 'is the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth,' Rom. i. 16. Again: 'It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe,' 1 Cor. i. 21. Again: 'In Christ Jesus have I begotten you through the gospel,' 1 Cor. iv. 15.

(3.) The Scriptures expressly declare, that baptism is not the great instrument of regeneration.

This is directly declared by St Peter, in a passage already quoted for another purpose in this Discourse, from the third chapter of his First Epistle, verse 21, 'The like figure whereunto even baptism doth now save us; not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God.' In this passage St Peter teaches, that the 'putting away of the filth of the flesh,' is not, and that 'the answer of a good conscience' is the means of our salvation. In other words, baptism is not, but the virtuous character which is the effect of regeneration, is the means of eternal life to mankind. This character, I have already shown, is so far from being the consequence of baptism, that every adult candidate for this ordinance is required to possess it, before he can be lawfully baptized according to the Scriptures.

In perfect accordance with this declaration of St Peter, St Paul declares, 'Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing; but keeping the commandments of God.' To Jews, of whom there was a considerable number in the Corinthian church, circumcision was a 'seal of the righteousness of faith;' just in the same manner as baptism now is to Christians. It had also all the influence towards regeneration which baptism now possesses. But, had it insured or proved regeneration with respect to the Jews who were in the church at Corinth, the apostle would not, when writing to them, have declared it to be 'nothing.' For, in this case, it would to them have been the means of that holiness, in the exercise of which they would have 'kept the commandments of God.' What is true of circumcision in this respect is, I apprehend, precisely true of baptism also.

But this point is placed beyond all reasonable debate by the following declarations of St Paul; 1 Cor. i. 14. 17, 'I thank God, that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius. For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel.' Nothing is more certain than that, if baptism insures or proves regeneration, Paul, who so ardently desired the salvation of mankind, and wished to become as extensively as possible the instrument of their salvation, could not thank God that he baptized none of the Corinthians but Gaius, Crispus, and the household of Stephanas. To him it would, comparatively, have been a matter of indifference whether they accused him of baptizing in his own name, or not. Of what consequence could the clamour, the disputes, or the divisions be, which might arise about this subject, compared with the salvation on the one hand, and on the other, with the perdition of the Corinthians? Instead of thanking God in this manner, he would have baptized every Corinthian who would have permitted him; and, like a Romish missionary, have compelled crowds and hosts to the streams and rivers in the neighbourhood, that they might receive this ordinance at his hands. With still less propriety could he say, if baptism were the means of regeneration, especially if it insured or proved it, that Christ sent him not to baptize, but to preach the gospel.' Christ, as he himself hath told us, sent Paul to the Gentiles, and to the Corinthians as well as other Gentiles, 'to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God,' Acts xxvi. 17, 18. In other words Christ sent Paul to the Gentiles, to accomplish their regeneration. But if baptism be the means of regeneration, or be accompanied by it, then Christ actually sent him to baptize, in direct contradiction to the passage just now quoted. From both these passages it is clearly evident, that baptism neither insures nor proves regeneration.

2. This doctrine is contradicted by experience.

Such persons as have been baptized, in modes and by ministers altogether unexceptionable, in the view of such as hold this scheme, have by their fruits, the great scriptural touchstone, proved themselves to be unregenerated. Simon Magus, Hymeneus, Philetus, Phygellus, and Hermogenes, were all, probably, baptized by inspired ministers. By ministers possessing authority equally unexceptionable, were baptized those gross transgressors in the seven churches of Asia, so severely reproved by Christ in the second and third chapters of the Apocalypse. It will not be pretended that these men were regenerated.

Equally conclusive to the same point is the experience of every succeeding age in the Christian church. Nothing is more certain, than that a multitude of those who have been baptized by such as the abettors of this scheme will acknowledge to be authorized ministers, have in every Christian age and country, been guilty of such continual and gross sins, as have proved beyond a doubt that, instead of being regenerated, they were 'in the gall of bitterness, and the bond of iniquity.' Great numbers of such are found in every class of nominal Christians under heaven. Nothing can more perfectly demonstrate that baptism is not accompanied by regeneration.

It will probably be here replied, that regeneration may be actually conveyed to the souls of the baptized, and yet its influence be lost by their future apostasy; or, what is often called, falling from grace; either because they are not confirmed; or for some other reason. To this I answer,

(1.) That no such apostasy is known in the Scriptures. This position, if I mistake not, has been proved

in a former Discourse concerning the perseverance of such as are regenerated. 'He that heareth my word,' said our Saviour to the Jews, John v. 24, 'and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is (has) passed from death unto life.'

(2.) The Scriptures nowhere teach the doctrine or duty of confirmation, as necessary to the continuance of mankind in holiness; nor as an ordinance of the Christian church in any sense.

(3.) Multitudes of baptized persons give the most unquestionable evidence from their baptism, or, if infants, from their first possession of moral agency, that they are sinners only.

(4.) Immediately after their confirmation, they continue to exhibit the same sinful character, and exhibit it through life.

Thus in every point of view, the doctrine, that baptism is regeneration, that it ensures, or proves, that it is attended or followed by it, either regularly or commonly, is erroneous, unfounded, and unscriptural. So far is this from being the doctrine of the Scriptures, that, according to them, adults can never offer themselves for baptism, unless already regenerated. 'The answer of a good conscience,' spoken of by St Peter, cannot be given by him who is not regenerated.

In the ancient periods of the church, as we are informed by Tertullian, the minister asked the candidate for baptism, 'Dost thou renounce Satan? Dost thou believe in Christ?' The candidate answered, 'I renounce—I believe.' This Tertullian calls '*sponsionem salutis*;' 'An engagement of Salvation;' and says, that 'the soul is consecrated, not by washing, but by answering.' To this practice St Peter is supposed to refer in the text repeatedly quoted on this subject. But it is evident, that no person, who is unregenerated, can declare with truth that he renounces Satan, and believes in Christ. Thus no such person can give this answer of a good conscience, or lawfully receive the ordinance of baptism.

The case of infants will be more particularly considered hereafter. It will be sufficient, to observe at the present time, that although God has required believing parents to dedicate their children to him in baptism, he has nowhere promised that they shall be regenerated either in or by the administration of this ordinance. Accordingly, a great multitude of the circumcised children of the Israelites, and of the baptized children of Christians in every age and church, have plainly lived and died unregenerated. It may here be added, that very high evidence is necessary to convince a sober man, that God has in this manner placed the salvation of mankind in the hands, and under the control of their fellow men. To me it appears evident, that the clergy of the Romish church taught this doctrine supremely, if not solely, to extend their own domination, and to place mankind at their feet. He whose agency becomes indispensable to the salvation of others, he who can confer salvation on others, will, so far as this power is admitted, bring them universally under subjection to his pleasure. No man in his senses will question the decisions of him who can give or refuse salvation. Is it credible that such stupendous power should be placed in human hands?

But, although baptism neither insures nor proves the regeneration of the person who receives this ordinance, it is still an intitution of high importance to the Christian church; and that in a great variety of respects. Particularly,

1. It is a solemn, visible exhibition of these two great scriptural doctrines—THE EXPIATION OF SIN, AND THE CLEANSING OF THE SOUL BY THE BLOOD OF CHRIST; AND ITS RENOVATION BY THE SPIRIT OF GOD.

When these doctrines have been learned and understood by the reading or preaching of the gospel, so that the mind has become well acquainted with their nature and importance, it is prepared to discern the real import of this ordinance. In this situation, the ordinance of baptism becomes, in a high degree, subsidiary to the preaching of the gospel. It now teaches the same inestimable truths which were before taught by the preacher, and teaches them with a force peculiar and pre-eminent.

It is a truth known to all men, that the objects of our senses make an impression on our minds far more striking, influential, and enduring, than those of the understanding. When these objects are made symbolical, and are thus employed to declare evangelical truths, especially when the symbols are near and obvious, and therefore disclose the truths in a clear and indubitable manner, the truths actually disclosed are invested with all the force of sensible impressions. When an adult is the subject of baptism, the great truths which I have specified are brought home to his heart with supreme efficacy, and he is enabled, at least in ordinary circumstances, to feel the glory and excellence of forgiving, redeeming, and sanctifying love, in a degree, and with a benefit, which no words can accomplish. What is true of an adult in these circumstances, is true, probably, in a still more affecting and profitable manner, of parents dedicating their children to God in this solemn ordinance. Perhaps there is not in the world a sight more interesting than that of an infant, offered up by believing parents to God in baptism. The helpless circumstances of the child; the peculiar tenderness of the relation existing between it and the parents; the strong expression of their faith in God, in giving up their beloved offspring to him, devoting it to his service, and engaging to train it up for his glory; the exhibition of their reliance on the blood of Christ, and the agency of the Spirit of truth, to cleanse it from its original pollution; the affecting manifestation of the divine mercy and goodness, in permitting us thus to offer up our children to God; united with the solemnities of the day, the place, and the occasion; form a combination of facts, and doctrines, and duties, scarcely paralleled in the present world. On the minds of the parents, particularly, the impressions made cannot fail, unless through very gross stupidity, or gross wickedness, of powerfully persuading them to the duties involved in this dedication. Of the same nature are the impressions which will very naturally be made on those who are present at the administration. Persons heretofore dedicated to God in baptism, will naturally feel anew their own baptismal obligations; while those who have dedicated them, will realize also the privileges to which they and their offspring have been admitted; the engagements which they have made; and the duties which, in a peculiar manner, they are required to perform.

In all these points of view, the ordinance of baptism is of high importance to the Christian church, and fitted to impress the great truths of the gospel upon the mind in the happiest manner. It is here to be remembered, that, as religious education is constituted in the Christian church a primary mean of salvation, so the

ordinance of baptism is invested with a peculiar importance, from the intimate and acknowledged connexion between the act of devoting a child to God in this manner, and the duty of educating him for the service of his Maker, and the attainment of eternal life. No two religious employments are, in this country at least, and probably in most others throughout Christendom, more universally understood to be inseparably connected, than the act of giving up a child to God, and the duty of educating him for his service. The most solemn sense of the obligations which we are under to train up our children to God, is probably derived from the administration of this ordinance.

2. When children die in infancy, and are scripturally dedicated to God in baptism, there is much and very consoling reason furnished, to believe that they are accepted beyond the grave.

We are taught in the Scriptures, that 'praise is perfected out of the mouths of babes and sucklings.' It is perhaps improper to say, that praise is perfected on this side of heaven. When little children were brought to our Saviour, he said, 'Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven.' This seems to be a plain declaration, that children are admitted to this kingdom, and constitute not a small part of the persons of whom it is composed. 'The promise,' said St Peter to the Jews, 'is to you, and to your children.' If this promise is extended in any sense to those who die in infancy, and conveys to them any blessings, they must be found beyond the grave.

There is, I think, reason to hope well concerning other children, dying in infancy. But there is certainly peculiar reason for Christian parents to entertain strong consolation with respect to their offspring; whom God has not only permitted, but required them to offer to him in this ordinance, pointing so extensively and so significantly to their purification.

3. Those who are baptized in infancy are placed under the guardianship and discipline of the Christian church.

The manner in which this discipline is to be conducted will be the subject of a future discussion. It will be sufficient to observe at the present time, that children to whom this ordinance has been dispensed, are by these means doubly assured of the certain and inestimable benefits of religious education, and are entitled, in a peculiar manner, to the counsel, the reproof, the conversation, the example, and the prayers of Christians.

The importance of these blessings every Christian will understand. Nor can those who believe the declaration, that 'he who walketh with wise men shall be wise,' fail to acknowledge them as blessings of inestimable value.

4. Baptism is also the public sign by which the disciples of Christ are known to each other, and to the world.

All societies need indispensably some mark of distinction; some mode in which the respective members shall be known to each other; so that each individual shall feel that he himself is required, and that he is invested with a plain right to require others to perform the several duties incumbent on him and them, as members of the fraternity. This sign ought always to be publicly known, definite, unequivocal, solemn, significant, safe from being counterfeited, always the same, acknowledged by all the members of the body, and therefore established by authority which cannot be disputed. The power of such a sign to unite the members of such a body in affection to each other, in a common interest, and in corresponding pursuits, is incalculably great. A mere name often forms a party in politics and in religion; and engages those who often have very imperfect conceptions, if they conceive at all, of the party purposes for which they are embarked, in a harmony with each other, and in a course of zeal and violence against their fellow men, wonderful both in degree and continuance, and productive of effects, usually great, and often dreadful. Here the sign is the seal of God, set by his own authority upon those who in this world are visibly his children. It has all the properties mentioned above; and is possessed of more efficacy than can be easily comprehended, and incomparably more than is usually mistrusted, to keep Christians united, alive, and active, in the great duties of religion, and in the great interest of the church of God.

5. Baptism, as a symbol, holds out in a very forcible manner to those who have been instructed in the Christian religion, a great part of those doctrines and duties which are purely Christian; or which belong to Christians, as such.

Of this number, particularly, are the doctrines of regeneration, justification by the righteousness of Christ, adoption, sanctification, the gratitude, complacency, and obedience to God, the faith in Christ, the hope of salvation by him, and that love to the brethren, by which all are known to be his disciples; which together form so great a part of Christian doctrines, and the Christian character. The doctrine of adoption, particularly, is presented to us in this ordinance with peculiar clearness and force. Concerning this subject, however, I have had occasion heretofore to make all the observations which I thought necessary.

With all these doctrines is intimately connected that of the depravity of our nature. A serious observer is, perhaps, hardly ever a witness of the administration of this ordinance, without strongly realizing the existence of that moral pollution which is symbolically washed away by baptism. The baptism of infants particularly exhibits this subject in the strongest light. Here we see, that our race, in the view of their Creator, indispensably need the cleansing which is accomplished by the blood of Christ, and the renewing power of the Holy Ghost, antecedently to their possible commission of sin by voluntary acts. The original corruption is, therefore, taught by this ordinance in language which cannot be misconstrued, and is impressed upon us with singular force by its solemn and significant symbols.

Many other doctrines, duties, and blessings, are evidently and impressively presented to us in the administration of baptism. But to expatiate upon these, and even to point them out, is the business of a treatise, and not of a single sermon.

6. The ordinance of baptism, as a memorial of the death of Christ, exhibits powerful and immovable evidence of that great fact to the Christian church, throughout all the successive periods of its existence.

As I shall have occasion to resume this subject, when I come to discourse upon the Lord's Supper, I shall defer my observations upon it for the present; and shall conclude this Discourse with two—

REMARKS.

1. It is not a little to be regretted, that this ordinance is so rarely made a theme of discussion in the desk.

It is not unusual for a minister of the gospel to devote twenty-four sermons annually to the consideration of the Lord's Supper; twelve delivered at what in this country is commonly styled the sacramental lecture, and twelve more on the several sabbaths consecrated to the administration of this sacrament. On baptism, at the same time, ministers rarely preach. Perhaps it is no unreasonable supposition, that the subjects of this Discourse are now for the first time brought out in the desk to the consideration of a great part of this audience. Why such a difference is made between two institutions of Christ, invested with the same authority, solemnity, and influence, I am unable to determine. But whatever may be the ground of this distinction, I am satisfied that it cannot be a good one. There is but too much reason to believe that not only the persons, particularly the children who have been baptized, but the parents also, are in many instances lamentably ignorant of the nature of this institution, the truths which it declares, the duties which it involves, and the privileges which it confers. Were these things made more frequently subjects of preaching, were they clearly illustrated and solemnly enforced, there is the best reason to believe that it would become a far richer and more extensive blessing to mankind.

2. Persons baptized in their infancy are here solemnly reminded of their own peculiar duties, and severely reproved for their negligence in performing them.

How many persons are now in this house who have been dedicated to God by baptism in their infancy, and who yet never thought of a single privilege, realized a single obligation, nor performed a single duty, created by this ordinance! It is perhaps questionable, whether some of them are not now ignorant whether they have been baptized or not. How melancholy are these facts! How full are they of shame and sin! How productive ought they to be of remorse, contrition, and amendment! God has called you, my young friends, into his visible kingdom in the morning of life. He has publicly sealed you as his children, and planted you in the nursery of his church. Remember that this interesting event sprang not from chance, 'nor from the will of the flesh, nor from the will of man, but from God.' He gave your parents the disposition and the right to offer you up to him, and to consecrate you to his service. He has publicly acknowledged his particular relation to you, and given you this illustrious token of his kindness and mercy. Think then, I beseech you, of the guilt of disregarding or neglecting this testimony of his mercy to you. All men are bound voluntarily to become his, and to consecrate themselves to his service. To this duty you are under peculiar obligations. By openly acknowledging you as his children, he has, if I may be allowed the expression, laid claim to you in a manner which, while it demands of you the most intense gratitude, requires of you also to assume the character which he has thus externally conferred, and with all the heart to devote yourselves in the covenant of grace to his service and glory. All men under the gospel are immovably bound to the performance of this duty. But the obligations incumbent on you are peculiar and pre-eminent. Let me request you to ponder this subject with deep and solemn concern; and to inquire with all earnestness of mind, whether you are not in imminent danger of sharing the doom of Capernaum, Chorazin, and Bethsaida.

SERMON CLVII.

THE MEANS OF GRACE.—EXTRAORDINARY MEANS OF GRACE.—THE OBJECTIONS AGAINST INFANT BAPTISM ANSWERED.

Go ye, therefore, teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.—MATT. xxviii. 19.

IN the preceding Discourse I considered at some length the reality and intention of the ordinance of baptism. According to the scheme then proposed, I shall now proceed to inquire, Who are the proper subjects of baptism?

In answer to this inquiry, I observe,

1. That all those, who believe in Christ, and publicly profess their faith in him, are proper subjects of baptism.

That such a profession may be made with understanding, the person who makes it must be of sufficient age and sufficient capacity to know the great doctrines and duties of the gospel; and must already have become acquainted with them. He must also understand, that it is the religion of the heart which is professed, and not merely a speculative belief of the truths and precepts contained in the Scriptures. Without such knowledge no man can act in this solemn case with propriety, decency, or meaning. Nor do I know that the absolute necessity of such knowledge has ever been questioned. A public declaration of our cordial belief in the doctrines and precepts of the gospel, what is usually called in this country a profession of faith, is the ground on which, indispensably, adults are admitted to baptism.

In addition to this, what is equally necessary to such admission, the candidate also enters publicly into covenant with God, avouching Jehovah, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, to be his God; giving himself up to the Father, through the Son, and by the Holy Ghost,

as his child and servant; and engaging that, 'denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, he will live soberly, righteously, and godly in the world.' This engagement is substantially, what Tertullian calls 'sponsio salutis'—the engagement of salvation—made universally by adults who were baptized in his time.

One would think it hardly necessary to observe concerning this engagement, that it ought to be made with sincerity; or that the candidate ought to mean all that which is ordinarily intended by the terms of the profession; or, in other words, that it ought to be made with the heart, and not merely with the lips.

2. The infant children of believers are also scriptural subjects of baptism.

This doctrine, as you well know, has been extensively disputed, and denied; so extensively, that those who have contended against it have been formed into a distinct sect, existing in considerable numbers throughout most Christian countries. These persons, originally styled Anabaptists, and Antipædobaptists, have claimed to themselves improperly the title of Baptists; indicating, that they only baptized, or were baptized, in a manner agreeable to the scriptural directions on this subject. While therefore I cheerfully acknowledge the distinguished piety and respectability of a considerable number of men in this class of Christians, particularly in Great Britain, I protest against their assumption of this name, so far as it is intended to indicate that others do not baptize, and are not baptized, agreeably to the principles of the gospel. I acknowledge freely their right to their own principles. But their right to conclude, or to assert, that the point in debate between us and them is settled in their favour, I neither admit nor believe. The name Anabaptist, originally given to them because they re-baptized those who had received baptism in infancy, is an appellation in every view less objectionable.

In discussing this subject, I shall state, and answer, the objections commonly made against it; and then attempt to support it by direct arguments.

1. It is objected by the opposers of this doctrine, that it is not enjoined by any express command, nor warranted by any express declaration in the Scriptures.

How far this objection is founded in truth, I shall consider hereafter. At present it will be sufficient to observe, that there are many duties incumbent on us, which are neither expressly commanded, nor expressly declared in the Scriptures. The principle on which the objection is founded, when expressed generally, is this: 'Nothing is our duty, which is not thus commanded, or declared, in the Scriptures.' According to this principle, women are under no obligation to celebrate the Lord's Supper; parents to pray with their children or families, or to teach them to read; nor any of mankind to celebrate the Christian sabbath; nor rulers to provide the means of defending the country which they govern, or to punish a twentieth part of those crimes which, if left unpunished, would ruin any country. The extent to which this principle, fairly pursued, would conduct us, would, I think, astonish even those by whom it is urged.

It is impossible for the Scriptures, if they would be of any serious use to mankind, to specify all the particular doctrines and duties necessary to be believed and practised. The volumes in which such a specification, however succinct, must be made, would be too numerous even to be read, much more to be understood and remembered. The scheme of instruction adopted by the Scriptures is that of stating the objects of our faith, and the rules of our duty, in a manner which, taken together, may be styled general; although I acknowledge it is in many instances to a considerable degree particular. These it illustrates by examples, and frequently by comments on those examples. Both the instructions and examples also are intended to be still farther illustrated by a comparison of passages. Common sense candidly employed may easily, with these advantages, discover all those precepts which direct the faith and practice of mankind in ordinary cases. Those which in their nature are more involved are left to the investigation of superior intelligence, and laborious study.

Such a code of instruction every man of thought will perceive must lay a foundation for a great multitude of inferences. Of these, some will be distant and doubtful; others, variously probable; and others still, near and certain. Those which are included in the last of these classes, are ever to be received as being actually contained in the Scriptures, and as directing our faith and practice with divine authority. Every scriptural writer, by attaching this authority to his own inferences, teaches us this doctrine; and enforces upon us the duty of yielding obedience to inferences clearly and certainly drawn from truths and precepts expressed in the sacred canon. I will only add, that wherever our duty demands either the designed omission or the adoption of any given practice, we are obliged, wherever we cannot obtain certain evidence, to govern ourselves by the superior probability.

If, then, the duty of baptizing infants can be certainly inferred, or inferred with a probability superior to that which is supposed to justify the omission of it, the Scriptures require that infants should be baptized.

2. It is objected, that there is no certain example of infant baptism in the Scriptures.

To this I answer, that there is no instance in which it is declared in so many terms, that infants were baptized. But there are instances in which, according to every rule of rational construction, this fact is plainly involved. Lydia, and 'her house,' and the 'household of Stephanas,' were baptized. He, who has examined the meaning of the words house and household, in the Scriptures, cannot fail to perceive, that in their primary meaning they denote children, and sometimes more remote descendants. Thus, St Paul said to the jailor, in answer to his question, 'What must I do to be saved?'—'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.' There is no reason to think that Paul knew what family the jailor had. On the contrary, he appears merely to have uttered the same doctrine which had before been announced to the Jews by St Peter: 'The promise is to you, and to your children;' and to have used the word 'house,' necessarily from this ignorance, in the manner in which it was customarily used by his countrymen. Of this manner we have many examples in the Old Testament. 'Come thou and all thy house, into the ark,' said God to Noah, Gen. vii. 1. We, know that the house of Noah consisted of his wife and children. 'Let thy house be like the house of Pharez,' said the elders of Bethlehem to Boaz, Ruth iv. 12. In this passage the meaning is precisely limited to children. 'I rent the kingdom

away from the house of David,'—'I will bring evil upon the house of Jeroboam,'—'I will take away the remnant of the house of Jeroboam,'—'The Lord shall raise him up a king, who shall cut off the house of Jeroboam,' 1 Kings viii. 10—14.—'I will make thy house like the house of Jeroboam, and like the house of Baasha the son of Ahijah,' 1 Kings xvi. 3; and xxi. 22. In all these passages, and in others almost innumerable, the children only are meant. Thus, the house of Israel, the house of Judah, the house of Joseph, are phrases exactly synonymous with the children of Israel, the children of Judah, and the children of Joseph. In this manner, then, Paul unquestionably used the term in the passage already quoted. Accordingly, it is subjoined, 'He was baptized, and all his, straightway.'

In the same manner is the phrase used by St Peter, in reciting the directions of the angel to Cornelius: 'Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon, whose surname is Peter, who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved,' Acts xi. 13, 14.

When, therefore, we find the houses of these several persons baptized, we know that the language customarily, and therefore in the several cases certainly, means the children of those who are mentioned. When St Paul said to the jailor, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house,' he intended, either that the children of the jailor should be saved, or his servants, or both. I am willing to leave it to my opponents to choose that side of either alternative which they prefer: for they themselves will be compelled to admit that the children are at least included.

From the manner in which the baptizing of these families is mentioned, it appears strongly probable, that to baptize men and their households, was the standing practice of the apostles: for there is nothing which indicates that they practised differently in these instances from what was common in others. And St Paul declares to the jailor, that in consequence of his own faith, he and all his house should be saved. Should this, however, be contested, there is strong reason to believe that in some or other of these families, and not improbably in all, there were children too young to be baptized on their own profession of faith.

3. It is objected, that children cannot be the subjects of faith; and that faith is a necessary qualification for baptism.

I know not how far this objection is urged: but it is certainly not founded in truth. John the Baptist was filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb; and was unquestionably a subject of faith in such a manner, that, had he died in infancy, he would certainly have been received to heaven. What was true of him, can be true of any other infant. The objection, therefore, is founded in error.

4. It is objected, also, that infants cannot make a profession of faith; and that such a profession is a necessary qualification for baptism.

That infants are unable to make a profession of faith, is obvious; but that such a profession is a necessary qualification for baptism, in all instances, cannot be proved. 'Cornelius, and they that were with him,' made no such profession. No profession was demanded by St Peter; nor were any questions asked concerning the subject. They indeed gave evidence, and God furnished evidence for them, that they were true disciples of Christ. 'The Holy Ghost fell on them; and they spake with tongues, and magnified God.' These facts, and not a profession of faith, are alleged by St Peter as the reason why he baptized them. Acts xi. 15—17.

This conduct of Peter, which was directed by the Holy Ghost, is clearly expressive of the pleasure of God concerning this subject; and proves beyond debate, that a profession is not always necessary, nor always required, as a qualification for baptism. The objection, therefore, is not founded in truth.

A profession is required as evidence of the faith and piety of the candidate. Whenever, therefore, such evidence is complete without it, the profession, so far as this end is concerned, is of no use. In ordinary cases, a profession is indispensable to an adult, as a proof of his fitness for the reception of this sacrament; and, at the present time, is indispensable in all cases where adults are concerned; because, as I have shown in a former Discourse, it is required in the Scriptures; and because it furnishes important evidence of their character as proper candidates for baptism. But if God has exhibited a part of mankind as proper candidates for this ordinance by an institution of his own, and has not required a profession of them, the use of a profession, and the right of demanding it, so far as they are concerned, is taken away; their fitness for baptism being completely proved in another manner.

It is, however, true, that infants are baptized in consequence of a profession of faith; but it is the profession of their parents, not their own.

5. It is farther objected, that persons baptized in infancy prove that they were improper candidates for this ordinance, by the future degeneracy of their conduct.

The real amount of this objection is, that no persons can be proper subjects of baptism to the human eye, who, after their reception of this sacrament, prove themselves to be unrenewed.

This objection fails, because it proves too much. It proves not only that adults, who are candidates for this ordinance, are often improper subjects of it; but that the rules given in the Scriptures for our direction concerning this subject, are insufficient and useless. If we are required to baptize none but those who are regenerated, it is absolutely necessary that we should know whether the candidates for this sacrament are regenerated, or not. But this no scriptural rule enables us to know, even in a single instance. All scriptural rules, therefore, concerning this subject, are, on this ground, destitute of any use to us, since we can never lawfully baptize. The apostles themselves certainly did not always know: for they baptized Hymeneus, Philetus, and others, who afterward proved themselves to be sinners. According to this objection, therefore, the apostles acted with plain impropriety.

Should it be granted, then, as it must be, that ministers act lawfully and scripturally in baptizing some persons, who afterwards plainly appear to be unregenerated; the objection fails, and is given up; since the objector concedes the very point for which he contends; to wit, that regeneration is indispensable in the candidate, in order that he may be lawfully baptized. The truth obviously is, this objection is founded in gross error.

The rules given by God alone render baptism lawful in any case. No qualifications in any person render him a proper candidate for baptism, in any other sense

than as they place him within these rules. Without these rules, regeneration would not render his baptism lawful. With them we are to accord in every case; and are to ask no questions concerning anything except what they require.

6. It is objected, farther, that all baptized persons are, by that class of Christians to whom I have attached myself, considered as members of the Christian church; yet those who are baptized in infancy are not treated as if they possessed this character. Particularly, they are not admitted to the sacramental supper, nor made objects of ecclesiastical discipline.

As this objection has, in my own view, a more serious import than any other which has been alleged, it deserves a particular consideration.

(1.) I acknowledge without hesitation, that the conduct of those with whom I am in immediate communion, and, so far as I know them, their opinions also with regard to this subject, are in a greater or less degree erroneous, and indefensible.

Many of the churches of this country, and many of its ministers also, appear to me to have judged and acted with less accuracy, with less of scheme and comprehensiveness, concerning this subject, than concerning most others. I certainly do not intend to injure either churches or ministers by this remark, and persuade myself that I do not. A considerable number of ministers have expressed to me their own dissatisfaction with both the views and the practice of both themselves and their fellow Christians, with respect to persons baptized in infancy. I am equally dissatisfied with my own former views and practice respecting this subject; and readily admit, that a part of what is contained in this objection is justly chargeable on many churches and many ministers who hold the doctrine of infant baptism. But it lies only against the errors of men who adopt this doctrine, and not against the doctrine itself.

That infants should be baptized, and then be left by ministers and churches in a situation undistinguishable from that of other children, appears to me irreconcilable with any scriptural views of the nature and importance of this sacrament.

(2.) If baptized infants are members of the Christian church, I think we are bound to determine and declare the nature and extent of their membership, as it exists in our view.

That they are members of the Christian church, if lawfully baptized, I fully believe. All persons are baptized not *in*, but *into* the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; that is, they are in this ordinance publicly and solemnly introduced into the family, and entitled in a peculiar manner, to the name, of God. Accordingly they are called godly Christians, spiritual sons and daughters of God, and children of God, throughout the Scriptures. That this is the true construction of the passage just quoted is, I think, obvious from the Greek phraseology, εις το ονομα, the proper English of which is, 'into the name.' Accordingly it is customarily rendered in this manner by the translators of our Bible, in those passages where the same subject is mentioned. Thus, Rom. vi. 34, St Paul asks, 'Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death.' 1 Cor. xii. 13, 'For by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body.' Gal. iii. 27, 'As many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ.' In all these instances the phraseology is the same with that first quoted; and, from analogy, teaches us, that it ought there also to have been rendered in the same manner: *into* being the original and proper meaning of the preposition; and *in*, being a meaning so uncommon as heretofore to have been resolved into a Hebraism. Several of these passages also directly declare that those who are baptized, are baptized into Christ; that is, into the church, or body of Christ. At the same time, there is no other account given of this subject. Nor is there anything in the ordinance of baptism which in any manner indicates that adults, when baptized, are members of the church, and that baptized infants are not members.

To these observations it is to be added, that there is but one passage in which 'in the name of Christ,' is joined with the verb, 'baptize;' viz. Acts ii. 38, where the preposition is επι. It is also to be observed, that the preposition εις is never used in any other case, where any thing is done, or said to be done, in the name of Christ: denoting that it is done by his authority. I conclude, therefore, that all those persons who have been baptized, are members of the Christian church.

Still, no persons, in my view, become members of the Christian church by the ordinance of baptism, in the sense most commonly intended by those who use this phraseology.

To make my own apprehensions concerning this subject clear to those who hear me, it will be useful to consider some of the meanings annexed to the word *church*. This word denotes,

[1.] The invisible kingdom of Christ in this world; consisting of all those who are sanctified.

[2.] The visible kingdom of Christ in this world; consisting of all those who have publicly professed the Christian religion, and, in my own view, of their baptized offspring, who have not arrived at adult age.

[3.] It denotes, also, any body of Christians who hold the same doctrines, and are united in the same worship and discipline. Thus we speak of the church of England, of Scotland, or of Holland, of the Lutheran, Greek, and Romish churches.

[4.] It denotes, also, any body of Christians who worship together in the same place, under the care of the same minister.

From this account of the different meanings of the word church, it is evident that, when persons baptized in infancy are said to be members of the church, the word cannot be used in all these senses. Such a person is not, of course, a member of the Romish church, the church of England, the Presbyterian church, the Lutheran church, or the church of Holland.

Again: A person baptized in the church of England, and communing with that church, is not of course a member of the church of Scotland, or of the Presbyterian church in America.

Once more: A person baptized in one of the churches of this State, and acknowledged as a member in regular standing, is not, of course, a member of another of these churches. He could claim no right to vote, or to perform any other act of membership, on the ground of his admission into some other church.

Finally: A person baptized in the house in which one of our churches customarily worships, and by its own minister, is not of course a member of that church.

A presbyterian from Scotland may, in adult age, be conscientiously baptized by a minister of one of our churches; and yet having no intention of becoming a communicant in that church, may never become a member of it; or, in other words, never acquire a right to perform any act of membership.

From these remarks, it is perfectly plain, that something beside baptism, nay, that something beside making a profession of religion, is necessary to constitute any person a member of a particular church, or of a body of Christians worshipping together in one place, under the care of one minister, and acting together in ecclesiastical business.

The same doctrine may be also illustrated in another manner.

Persons are not unfrequently dismissed from particular churches, in good standing, and with full recommendations of their Christian character. These persons are certainly not members of any particular church, or churches, until they are severally united to other churches in form. It is plain, that they can act nowhere as members of the church of Christ, except in what is called occasional communion.

Farther: A minister by his ordination is constituted not a minister of a particular church, but of the church of Christ at large; and is acknowledged as such by all who consider his ordination as valid. Accordingly, he performs all the common duties of the ministry, wherever he is called to perform them, particularly in vacant churches, with the same propriety and authority as in the church immediately under his care. He becomes the minister of a particular church, solely by the fact, that it is committed to him in charge by the proper ecclesiastical authority. In accordance with this view of the subject, he is removed from the superintendence of one church, and placed over another, by the same authority, as often as it is judged proper. But his ordination is never performed a second time, although the charge which conveys to him the superintendence of a particular church may be repeated several times during the course of his ministry. According to this scheme also, individual ministers are not unfrequently ordained as evangelists, and have no particular churches committed to their care.

From all these facts it is evident, that a person may be a member of the church of Christ at large, and not a member of a particular church. A minister is a member of the church of Christ at large; but is never, in the proper sense, a member of a particular church. Peculiarly is this evident, when he is dismissed in good standing; for then his only relation to the church heretofore under his superintendence has ceased. An evangelist, also, that is, a minister ordained at large, and having no particular church committed to his care, is a minister in the church general; and is acknowledged as such by all those who acknowledge the validity of his ordination. He is not in any sense the minister of a particular church; nor in any sense a member of such a church.

When an adult offers himself for baptism, he professes his faith, and enters into covenant with God; or makes a profession of piety. He then receives baptism, as a seal, on the part of God, of his own covenant with the man, and of his acceptance of him into his family. As this seal is voluntarily received by the man, it becomes also his own seal of his own covenant with God; a solemn and final acknowledgment of his enrolment in the same family. He is now therefore a member of the church, and may lawfully commune at Christ's table, wherever his fellow Christians will receive him.

The eunuch who was baptized by Philip, was in all respects in this situation. He made a profession of religion, and was baptized by an authorized minister. He was therefore a member of the Christian church; but he was a member of the church general only, and not of any particular church. He could not have acted as a member of such a church in any ecclesiastical measure, nor voted in the regulations of worship, communion, or discipline.

This I conceive to be exactly the situation of persons baptized in infancy. They are members of the church of Christ; that is, of the church general. They are members in the same sense in which the eunuch was a member; in which those dismissed in good standing, and not yet united to other churches, are members; in which men lawfully ordained are ministers of the church; in which adults, after their profession and baptism, are members, antecedently to their union with particular churches. What then, it will be asked, constitutes persons members of particular churches? The answer is at hand: It is a covenant mutually made by Christians to worship God together, in the same manner, and in accordance with the same principles; and to unite together in the same fellowship, and the same discipline. None, beside those who have entered into this covenant, can act in any church as an ecclesiastical body; nor take any part in its ecclesiastical proceedings. This covenant, and this alone, binds them together as a church. None of the persons mentioned above are, at the time supposed, parties to such a covenant; and therefore none of them are members of a particular church. The ministers cease to be members of particular churches, by their ordination, which makes them officers in the church at large. The dismissed members whom I have specified have ceased to be members of particular churches, by the dissolution of the covenant which made them such, mutually agreed to by themselves and their brethren, with whom they were thus in covenant.

It will here, perhaps, be asked again, Is not every particular church a branch of the church general? I answer, It is, because all its members, lawfully introduced in the manner specified above, are members of the church general. In this respect, and in this only, is it such a branch. But this fact in no way affects its character or situation as a particular church: an ecclesiastical body, possessing within itself the power of regulating its own worship, communion, and discipline. In this power in any given church, no person can lawfully share, except those who have become parties to the mutual covenant which has constituted it a church.

Baptism renders any person capable of membership in a particular church, if he is disposed, and otherwise prepared to unite himself to it. But neither this, nor his profession of religion, will constitute him such a member. This can be done in no other way but by means of that mutual covenant between him and the church, which has been mentioned above.

It will probably be farther observed, that in many cases a great multitude of churches have been united together, so as to constitute, in their view, one church, and to be thus styled in their customary language.

Such, for example, are the churches of England and Scotland, and the Presbyterian church in America. What is the situation of baptized persons, particularly of baptized infants, in these churches? The same, I answer, in my opinion, as in our own. Any number of churches may unite together in their worship, communion, and discipline, and constitute themselves a single church. Of this church, however numerous, or however small, every individual who belongs to it becomes a member, either by an explicit or an implicit engagement to unite with its several members in their peculiar worship, communion, and discipline.

To those whom I am immediately opposing, the following observations from Dr Gill, which have lately come to my knowledge, will undoubtedly have great weight. 'Baptism,' he observes, 'is not a church ordinance: I mean, it is not an ordinance administered in the church, but out of it, and in order to admission into it, and communion with it; it is preparatory to it, and a qualification for it; it does not make a person a member of a church, or admit him into a visible church. Persons must first be baptized, and then added to the church, as the three thousand converts were. A church has nothing to do with the baptism of any, but to be satisfied they are baptized, before they are admitted into communion with it.'* It will be easily seen, that these opinions of Dr Gill coincide with those which I have advanced, in every particular but one. He supposes baptized persons not to be members of the church in any sense. I consider them as members of the church general, but not of a particular church.

The way is now prepared for an answer to the objection which we are examining. Persons baptized in infancy, are baptized on the ground of that profession of religion which their parents have made, when they themselves became members of particular churches. This I shall have occasion to show hereafter. At present I shall take it for granted. Whenever they themselves make the same profession of religion, they become entitled to communion at the sacramental table in any church which acknowledges their baptism and their profession to be scriptural. This communion is that which is customarily called occasional communion; such as a member of one church enjoys with another of the same communion. Whenever they enter into a church-covenant, and engage to adopt the worship, fellowship, and discipline agreed upon by a particular church, they then, and not till then, become members of a particular church. I have heretofore shown, that a profession of religion was necessary to constitute us members of the church of Christ. It has been here shown, and I hope satisfactorily, that what may be called a church-covenant is indispensable to constitute us members of particular churches.

If these things be admitted, the situation of persons baptized in their infancy becomes sufficiently plain, with regard to their communion at the sacramental table. Those particularly whom I am opposing cannot, so far as they admit the opinions of Dr Gill, object any longer to the baptism of infants on this score.

With respect to the discipline of persons baptized in infancy, my own views are these. It is chiefly committed to their parents and guardians; and is supremely administered in religious education, involving instruction, habituation, and government; duties respecting the persons baptized, which are of no small importance, and are incumbent also on the church, and on its individual members. But the consideration of this subject I shall resume, when I come to the examination of Christian discipline.

* Gill's Body of Divinity, vol. iii. p. 311.

SERMON CLVIII.

THE MEANS OF GRACE.—EXTRAORDINARY MEANS OF GRACE.—DIRECT ARGUMENTS FOR INFANT BAPTISM.

Go ye, therefore, teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.—Matt. xxviii. 19.

In the preceding Discourse I considered the principal objections of the Antipædobaptists to the doctrine under consideration, so far as I recollected them. I shall now proceed to offer some direct arguments, to prove that infants are proper subjects of baptism.

I. *Infants were circumcised in the church under the Abrahamic dispensation: circumcision was the same ordinance with baptism: therefore infants are to be baptized.*

The covenant made with Abraham was that which is made with the church, under the Christian dispensation. To Abraham God said, Gen. xvii. 7, 'I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee in their generations, for an everlasting covenant; to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.' In Lev. xxvi. 3, 12, it is said, 'If you walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments, and do them, then will I walk among you, and be your God, and ye shall be my people.' In conformity to this language, Moses declares to the Israelites, Deut. xxvi. 17, after they had entered into a solemn, public, national covenant with God, 'Thou hast avouched the Lord this day to be thy God; and the Lord hath avouched thee this day to be his people.'

In conformity to this covenant, God styled himself 'the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God

of Jacob;' and afterward, 'the God of Israel;' 'Jehovah, God of Israel;' and 'the Holy One of Israel.' Moses and the prophets, addressing the Israelites, call him perpetually 'your God;' and, when addressing the nation as one, 'thy God.' But nothing is more evident, than that God could not be the God of Israel, or of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in any sense in which he is not the God of all nations, and of all individuals, except by his own sovereign and gracious determination, expressed in his covenant. Equally evident is it, that no inspired man would style him the God of this nation, or of these individuals, but by his appointment. It deserves to be remarked, that he is never styled the God of Ephraim, nor the God of Judah. The covenant was not made with either of these divisions of Israel, separately considered, but with the whole nation. Nor is he ever styled the God of Moses, Joshua, Samuel, Solomon, Hezekiah, or Josiah; the covenant having never been made, in form, with either of these persons. But he is styled 'the God of David,' with whom he renewed this covenant in a peculiar form. See 1 Kings vii. and 1 Chron. xvii.

God is also called, as you well know, 'the God of Zion,' or of his church, for the same reason; to wit, that his covenant is made with her.

Now this is the very covenant which is made with the church under the Christian dispensation. Of this the evidence is unanswerable. St Paul, quoting in the eighth chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, from the thirty-first of Jeremiah, verse 31—34, says, 'For if that first covenant had been faultless,' to wit, the covenant made at Sinai, of which Moses was the mediator, 'then should no place have been found for the second;' to wit, that of which the apostle here declares Christ to be the Mediator: 'For, finding fault with them, he saith, Behold the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers, in the day when I took them by the hand, to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel: after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: and they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness; and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.' It will be observed, that the words of this covenant are the same with the words of that which was made with Abraham; as, from time to time, publicly and solemnly repeated by the nation of Israel; and the same in substance with those which God himself used in his original promulgation of the covenant to that patriarch: all that is involved in this covenant being expressed in this single, comprehensive declaration, 'I WILL BE YOUR GOD, AND YE SHALL BE MY PEOPLE.'

As the prophet Jeremiah has informed us—as St Paul, quoting his declarations and commenting upon them has informed us—that this is the covenant made with the church under the Christian dispensation, we cannot, without doing violence to the plainest language of the Scriptures, hesitate concerning this truth. As God made this very covenant with Abraham; as Moses, and all the inspired men who followed him in the nation of Israel, have declared these to be the very words of that covenant, it cannot, as I think, even with decency, be denied to be the same covenant.

But in this covenant God expressly promised to be a God to Abraham, and to his seed. The proper import of these words is explained by God himself, when promulging the covenant to Abraham, Gen. xvii. 10—14, in a manner which seems to admit of but one construction. 'This is my covenant, which ye shall keep between me and you, and thy seed after thee: every man-child among you shall be circumcised. And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you. And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you; every man-child in your generations; he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger, which is not of thy seed. He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised; and my covenant shall be in your flesh, for an everlasting covenant. And the uncircumcised man-child, whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people. He hath broken my covenant.' The covenant is here extended to infants, directly descended from the loins of Abraham; to servants born in the house; and to servants bought with money of any stranger. It is also declared to be a covenant extending to all succeeding generations of the descendants of Abraham. This, it is to be remembered, is the explanation which God himself has given us of the extent of this covenant.

The manner, in which the covenant was, in this respect, understood by Moses, he has taught us in Deut. xxix. 9—15, 'Ye stand this day, all of you, before the Lord your God; your captains of your tribes, your elders, and your officers, with all the men of Israel, your little ones, your wives, and thy stranger that is in thy camp, from the hewer of thy wood unto the drawer of thy water: that thou shouldest enter into covenant with the Lord thy God, and into his oath, which the Lord thy God maketh with thee this day: that he may establish thee to-day for a people unto himself, and that he may be unto thee a God; as he hath said unto thee, and as he hath sworn unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. Neither with you only do I make this covenant, and this oath; but with him that standeth here with us this day before the Lord our God; and also with him that is not here with us this day.'

In this passage Moses informs us, in the first place, that 'all Israel,' not only 'the men,' but their 'little ones' also, their 'wives, and the stranger who was in their camp, from the hewer of wood to the drawer of water,' were included in the covenant, made, or, in better terms, solemnly renewed, with God on that day.

Secondly: That this covenant also was made between God, and the succeeding generations of this people. 'Neither with you only' (that is, with Israel then present) 'do I make this covenant; but with him that standeth here with us this day before the Lord our God; AND ALSO WITH HIM THAT IS NOT HERE WITH US THIS DAY.'

Thirdly: That it was the same covenant formerly made by God with Abraham, and afterward renewed with Isaac and Jacob. It was the same in substance, —'that thou shouldest enter into covenant with the

Lord thy God, THAT HE MAY ESTABLISH THEE THIS DAY FOR A PEOPLE UNTO HIMSELF, AND THAT HE MAY BE UNTO THEE A GOD.' It was the same in fact,—'as he hath said unto thee, AND AS HE HATH SWORN UNTO THY FATHERS, TO ABRAHAM, TO ISAAC, AND TO JACOB.'

From these passages it is evident, as I apprehend, beyond all reasonable debate, that the covenant made with Abraham was made first, with himself; secondly, with his household, generally; thirdly, with his servants by name, whether born in his house or bought with money; fourthly, with his infant children, afterwards limited particularly to the descendants of Isaac, and afterward, again, to the descendants of Jacob; fifthly, to these descendants as a people; sixthly, to their little ones, or infants, in every generation; seventhly, to their servants universally; and eighthly, to the strangers who dwelt in their nation.

To all these God covenanted that 'he would be their God, and that they should be his people.'

I say this is evident beyond debate, because it is expressed in so many words, and those as unambiguous as are found in any language. He who attempts to reason away the plain import of such explicit declarations, may amuse and deceive himself, and those who listen to him; but he must be a very unhappy commentator on the word of God.

This covenant being then the only covenant of grace which God has ever made with mankind; the terms, and therefore the extent, of it must ever continue the same, unless repealed, or otherwise altered, by its Author. But this covenant was as really and expressly made with infants as with adults. If then God has not declared, in some manner or other, that he will no longer comprise infants within this covenant, it still comprises them. But he has made no such declaration in any manner whatever. Infants are therefore still comprised in this covenant.

As the fact, that infants were universally circumcised in the church during the continuance of the dispensation made to Abraham will not be contested, I shall proceed to show, that circumcision was the same sacrament with baptism. Concerning this subject, I observe,

1. That circumcision was appointed to be a token of the covenant, above explained, between God and his church.

A token is a sign or proof of anything of which it is constituted a token. Here circumcision is made a token of the covenant of God upon the circumcised. 'Ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskins,' said God to Abraham; 'and it shall be a token of my covenant betwixt me and you.' 'It is,' says Pool, commenting on this passage, 'a sign, evidence, and assurance, both of the blessing promised by that God who appointed this ordinance, and of man's obligation to the duties required.'

In a different form of expression, but ultimately with the same reference, and substantially with the same meaning, it is called a 'seal of the righteousness of faith.'—'And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith, which he had, being yet uncircumcised.' A seal, as you well know, is an instrument used to make an impression upon wax, annexed to some writing, containing the pleasure, determination, or engagement, of him whose seal it is. The intention of annexing a seal to such a writing, is solemnly to make known, that the writing is his writing, or the act his act; and that it contains and communicates his pleasure. Thus, bonds, deeds of gift, indentures, commissions, and other instruments, are sealed to authenticate the instrument itself, and to furnish an obligatory proof of the engagements of the sealer.

In the present case it will be necessary, in order to understand the import of the seal in question, to examine the nature of the transaction to which it is annexed. This transaction is the covenant which has been so often mentioned in these Discourses concerning baptism. A covenant between men consists universally of two promises, or engagements; one made by each of the parties. The fulfilment of each of these promises is the condition, alternately, on which the performance of the other is engaged. Both promises are voluntarily made; and neither party originally was under any obligation to the promise actually made.

These observations, however, are only in a partial sense applicable to a covenant made between God and man, particularly to the covenant now under discussion. This covenant is a *law*, published by God, directing in an absolute manner, the conduct of men with respect to the subjects of the covenant; and annexing penalties to their transgressions, and rewards to their obedience. Thus the man-child which was not circumcised on the eighth day, God says, 'shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant.' Thus, also, in Lev. xxvi. he says, 'I will walk among you, and be your God, and ye shall be my people; but if ye will not hearken unto me, and will not do all these commandments, but that ye break my covenant, I will also do this unto you; I will even appoint over you terror, consumption, and the burning ague, that shall consume the eyes, and cause sorrow of heart.' In Deut. xxvi. Moses says to Israel, 'Thou hast avouched the Lord this day to be thy God, and to walk in his ways, and to keep his statutes and commandments, and his judgments, and to hearken unto his voice; and the Lord hath avouched thee this day, to be his peculiar people, as he hath promised thee, and that thou shouldest keep all his commandments.' In the eighty-ninth Psalm, which contains a full and remarkable promulgation of the covenant of grace, or more properly, perhaps, of the covenant of redemption, speaking of Christ, God says, 'If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments, then will I visit their transgressions with a rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless my loving-kindness I will not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail: my covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips.' In Jer. xxxi, quoted Heb. viii. God says, 'This shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts.' In Ezek. xxxvi. the same things are expressed in the following manner: 'Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; a new heart also will I give you; and I will put my Spirit within you; and I will cause you to walk in my statutes; and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.' The same things are also repeated in similar language, in the thirty-seventh chapter. From these passages, it is unanswerably evident, that this covenant, as well as every other made by God with mankind, is a law, requiring abso-

lutely their obedience; annexing to it rewards; and threatening disobedience with the merited penalties.

Still, it is not merely a law; it is also a covenant. In it God makes engagements to mankind, and those in the highest degree gracious. He engages, on the terms proposed, to be their God, and promises that they shall be his people. These engagements involve all that is meant by grace; and admit of no additions. They may be branched out endlessly, into particular promises included under them; but they involve all gracious promises whatever. The covenant made with Abraham, therefore, is not only a covenant of grace; but includes all other gracious covenants which can be made with mankind: while it is also a law, absolutely obligatory upon all to whom it is proposed.

In accordance with its character as a covenant, men are made parties to it. In accordance with its character as a law, they are required to become parties to it, and are punished for their refusal with the most distressing evils.

From these observations it will be seen, that a seal, when annexed to this covenant by God the Author of it, is a solemn sign and proof that this is his covenant, and contains the terms on which he has chosen to act towards those to whom he has published it, whom he has involved in it, and whom he has required to become parties to it. It is his seal, annexed authoritatively by himself. It is a seal also put upon mankind. It is, therefore, to be placed upon all those whom he has included in the covenant; so far as he has directed them to be thus sealed. Every one of these is a proper subject of the seal. No question can be asked concerning the fitness of such persons to receive the seal; because that point is already decided by himself, in the direction which he has given to seal them.

It has been often supposed, that the seal of this covenant was annexed to it by man; to wit, by every believer, when, acknowledging the obligation under which he was placed, he took the covenant upon himself, in making a public profession of religion. Formerly this was my own opinion; but, upon examining the several things which are said in the Scriptures concerning both the covenant and the seal, I have become convinced that it was a groundless opinion. My former apprehensions were, as I believe those of others frequently have been, not a little influenced by the nature of covenants between men. In these, the parties antecedently to the transaction, have no moral interest, and are under no obligation to make them. Their only obligation to perform that which they engage arises from the engagement itself. If, then, both parties do not engage, the covenant can have no existence. By both parties, also, it must be sealed; and a seal set to it by *one* of them only stands for nothing.

To the covenant under discussion these considerations are wholly inapplicable. It is proposed to us as a law; and our obligations to conform to its terms, arise solely from the command of God; and are binding upon us absolutely, whether we consent to them or not. We are in no sense at liberty to consent, or not consent; but our compliance is required by divine authority. The seal of this covenant, therefore, is not set by us; but by God upon us; and that, whether we voluntarily comply with its terms or not; and is set upon such person, as he has thought proper to direct.

According to this exhibition of the subject, the 'circumcision' which is declared to be 'a seal of the righteousness of faith,' and 'the token,' or proof 'of the covenant' of grace made with Abraham, was placed by the command of God upon him, and upon all the males in his household. Of these, some were infants, and some were servants. The consent either of Abraham, or of his family, was not asked. The compliance of some of them, to wit, such as were infants, was impossible. That of many others in his household was probably never yielded, either knowingly, or voluntarily. Yet upon all these was the seal placed by the divine command, under a penalty for omitting it, no less than excision. In the same manner was it placed upon the whole nation of Israel, and upon all the strangers who were within their gates.

To the existence of the opinion which I have rejected above, the fact, that circumcision is styled 'a seal of the righteousness of faith,' has probably not a little contributed. The righteousness of faith denotes two things. One is, the faith itself, which is 'counted for righteousness.' The other is, the righteousness, in the proper sense, which springs from faith. In the former of these senses I consider the phrase as used in the passage so often alluded to. For it is said, that 'he receiveth this seal, that he might be the father of all them that believe, whether circumcised or uncircumcised, that righteousness might be imputed (or counted) unto them also.' In other words, that their faith might be counted to them for righteousness, even as his was. If this explanation be admitted, circumcision is here styled 'the seal of the faith of Abraham;' that is, it was a seal put upon Abraham, as a believer, by the appointment of God. In the same manner was it put upon his infant offspring, upon his servants, upon all the people of Israel being infants, upon all the strangers who dwelt with them, and upon their infant offspring. In every one of these cases, it was a token, or proof, that the covenant of God was upon them, as in the case of Abraham and his family. The covenant was the same, and the seal was the same. The import of the seal was, therefore, the same to them all. But it is perfectly plain, that Abraham's family were not all believers, in the evangelical sense, nor indeed in any sense, at the time when this seal was affixed to them; for some of them were infants. It is equally plain, that the great body of his descendants were also not believers when they were circumcised; they too being almost all infants. The conclusion is, therefore, irresistible, that circumcision was not, and could not be intended to be, a seal set by God upon the actual existing evangelical faith of those who were circumcised; because a part of those who were first circumcised by the immediate command of God, and almost all those who were circumcised afterward, were at the time of their circumcision unpossessed and incapable of this faith. Neither was it intended to be a seal set by the person circumcised of his own faith; for, in most instances, he did not possess this faith; and in no instance set this seal. He merely received it from the hand of God as a religious rite, both ordained and affixed by him.

Here it will reasonably be asked, What then is the import of circumcision? I answer, It is what it was at first declared to be. God said to Abraham, 'Ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you.' The

covenant was a covenant of grace in these terms, 'I will be your God, and ye shall be my people.' The conditions of it were on the part of man, that he should believe in God, especially in the Redeemer, with an evangelical faith; and on the part of God, that this faith should be counted to the believer for righteousness. Of this covenant circumcision was originally the seal.

To mankind this covenant is, as I remarked above, a law. All persons to whom it is published are required thus to believe. The Israelites, and the strangers who dwelt with them, were expressly placed under it, and expressly required to receive circumcision as a token, seal, or proof, that the covenant of God was placed upon them by his authority; as a proof, that he was the God of Israel, and they his people; as a proof also that they were required to believe in him, and that he would count their faith to them for righteousness.

In conformity to this view of the subject, they were required, as was observed in a former Discourse, publicly and universally to swear into his name; that is, to make a profession of religion, or to covenant that they would be his people in the manner already specified; to wit, by faith in him. This they were universally required to do, whenever they arrived at such an age as to be capable of doing it with the heart and the understanding, united. In this transaction, and not in circumcision, man may, in a remote and humble sense, be said to set his own seal to the covenant of grace.

2. Circumcision was the initiatory seal of this covenant.

By this I intend, that it was the public means of introducing the Israelites into covenant with God.

3. Circumcision was a symbol of the internal cleansing of the heart, by the effusion of the Spirit of God. This is directly declared by St Paul; 'Circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, and not in the letter, whose praise is not of men, but of God.'

4. There were two sacraments in the ancient church, circumcision and the passover. There are two sacraments in the Christian church, baptism and the Lord's supper. The passover is the same sacrament with the Lord's supper. It follows, therefore, that baptism is the same sacrament with circumcision.

This, independently of the preceding considerations, is, I acknowledge, a presumptive argument only. Connected with them, its force will not be easily avoided. But baptism was appointed equally with circumcision, to be a token of the covenant between God and his church; a seal of the righteousness of faith. It is also the initiatory seal of this covenant. Finally: it is a symbol of the cleansing of the heart by the effusion of the Spirit of God. It is, therefore, under the present dispensation, the same thing with circumcision under the former.

Hence the conclusion appears to me unavoidable, that as infants were circumcised under the former dispensation, they are to be baptized under the present.

There are but two ways which I can think of, in which this conclusion can be escaped, even with plausibility: by supposing either that the command to circumcise infants was, as to its spirit, repealed at the commencement of the Christian dispensation; or that the Christian church is not the same with the Abrahamic church. The former of these suppositions will not be alleged by Antipædobaptists; for the latter they contend. On this subject I observe,

(1.) That the covenant on which the church was founded under the Abrahamic dispensation, is the same with that on which it is founded under the Christian dispensation. This, I flatter myself, has been unanswerably proved.

(2.) St Paul asserts the church, under both these dispensations, to be ONE.

'If,' he says, 'the root be holy, so are the branches And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou being a wild olive tree, wert graffed in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree; boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee.' In this passage it is clear, that the church is considered as an olive tree, of which Abraham is the root, and the Jewish members the natural branches; that some of these branches were broken off; that the Gentile members were originally the branches of a wild olive, which being cut as scions, were graffed in among the remaining natural branches; that is, the existing Jewish members; and that the Gentiles thus become (συγκοινωνοι) joint partakers with them of the root and fatness of the olive tree.

In no manner of which I can conceive, could St Paul have more decisively declared the unity of the church under these two dispensations.

(3.) That the church under these dispensations is but one, is evident also from Eph. ii. 14: 'For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us.' In this passage, Christ is said to have broken down the wall of partition between the Jews and the Gentiles, and, having become the peace of both, to have made both one, that is, one church. But the Jews were in his church before. The Gentiles were therefore made one with the Jews, by being received into the same church.

Thus it is evident, that the church under the Abrahamic and Christian dispensations, is the same church. All the ordinances and privileges, therefore, with which the church was originally constituted, remain the same, unless annulled or altered by that Divine authority from which they were derived. But it was one original ordinance of this church, that the infant children of professing believers were constituted members of it, and were accordingly to receive the initiatory seal of the covenant. This ordinance has neither been annulled nor altered. The infant children of professing believers are therefore, now, constituted members of the visible church, and are now to receive the initiatory seal of the covenant.

I have dwelt thus particularly on this branch of the discussion, because I consider the point in debate as turning upon it; and because it has not always been considered in a manner which appeared to me accordant with either reason or Scripture.

II. *All the observations made on this subject in the New Testament, accord with the view of it which has here been given, and confirm the doctrine of infant baptism.*

Among such passages, the following deserve particular attention: 1. Mark ix. 36, 'And he took a child, and set him in the midst of them; and when he had taken him in his arms, he said unto them, Whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name, receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me, receiveth not me, but him that sent me.'

The meaning of the phrase, to 'receive a child in the name of Christ,' is explained by himself in the 41st verse of the context: 'Whosoever shall give you a cup of water in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward.' To receive such a child in the name of Christ, is to receive him because he belongs to Christ. Infants, therefore, such at least as *he* spake of, belong to Christ; and in this character are to be received by his followers. But they can be received as belonging to Christ, in no other manner than that of receiving them into his church.

2. Matt. xix. 13—15, 'Then were there brought unto him little children, that he should put his hands on them, and pray: and the disciples rebuked them. But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not to come unto me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven. And he laid his hands on them, and departed thence.' Mark adds, that 'he took them up in his arms, and blessed them.'

Of this passage I observe, (1.) That the parents who brought these children to Christ, were believing Jews, who wished for his blessing on their offspring. (2.) They were infants; being called by Luke, Βρεφη: Luke xviii. 15. (3.) The disciples rebuked the parents. (4.) Christ reproved the disciples; and directed them to 'suffer the infants to be brought to him.' (5.) He declared, that 'of such children the kingdom of God is composed.' (6). 'He took them in his arms, and blessed them.' The kingdom of God denotes either the church on earth, or the church in heaven. Whether one, or the other, or both, are here intended, is of little importance to the question in debate. It is, however, in the highest degree probable that the church on earth is intended; as, very plainly, children can come to Christ in the present world, so as to constitute a part of his kingdom, in no other manner than by becoming members of the visible church. It is plain, also, that they cannot be forbidden by his ministers to come to him in any other manner, beside being excluded from the church. Christ blessed these children, after he had made this declaration. Those whom Christ has blessed, and whom he has directed ministers to permit to come to him, ministers ought not to forbid to come to him in the only manner in which they can either forbid, or permit, this to be done.

The interpretation which makes our Saviour say, 'Suffer little children to come unto me, because the kingdom of God is composed of Christians,' that is, of such as have a child-like spirit, sometimes alleged, is undeserving of a refutation.

In accordance with the account which I have given of this passage, as well as with the whole scheme of this Discourse, the apostles preached, so far as we are informed of their preaching. They preached to a man and his house; and their language was, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, thou and thy house.' The angel who appeared to Cornelius, said to him, 'Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon, whose surname is Peter, who shall tell thee words, whereby thou, and all thy house, shall be saved.'

3. Acts ii. 38, 39, 'Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.'

The promise here referred to is plainly that which was made to Abraham—a promise to him and to his seed; to wit, the very persons on whom God directed the seal of his covenant to be placed. These, we well know, were to a great extent infant children. As there is no other promise in the Scriptures made to the Israelites and their children, we know that this is the promise referred to by St Peter: and this declaration assures us, that it is extended to the church under the Christian dispensation. As there is no limitation of the promise here, nor in any other part of the New Testament, we have in this fact ample proof, that it is extended to Christians without any limitation. It may, I think, be safely concluded, that, if so great a change had been made in the conditions of the promise, St Peter would at this very time have advertised these Jews of such a change. We may at least be certain, that he, or some other apostle, would have announced this change somewhere. But no such annunciation exists in the New Testament. The change, therefore, has not been made; and children hold exactly the same relation to the church at the present time, which they held under the Abrahamic dispensation.

4. 1 Cor. vii. 14: 'For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the believing wife, and the unbelieving wife by the husband, else were your children unclean; but now are they holy.'

The word 'unclean,' in almost all instances in the Scriptures, denotes that which may not be offered to God, or may not come into his temple. Of this character were the heathen universally; and they were, therefore, customarily and proverbially denominated *unclean* by the Jews. The unbelievers here spoken of, were heathen; and were therefore unclean. In this sense, the children born of two heathen parents are here pronounced to be unclean also; as being in the proper sense heathen. To be holy, as here used, is the converse of being unclean; and denotes that which may be offered to God. To be sanctified, as referring to the objects here mentioned, is to be separated for religious purposes; 'consecrated to God;' as were the first-born, and vessels of the temple; or to be in a proper condition to appear before God. In this text it denotes that the unbelieving parent is so purified by means of his relation to the believing parent, that their mutual offspring are not unclean, but may be offered unto God. There is no other sense in which a Jew could have written this text, without some qualification of these words. The only appointed way in which children may be offered to God, is baptism. The children of believing parents are therefore to be offered to God in baptism.

III. *Infant baptism was uniformly practised by the early Christians.*

Justin Martyr, born near the close of the first century, observes, when speaking of those who were members of the church, that 'a part of these were sixty or seventy years old, who were made disciples to Christ from their infancy.' But there never was any other mode of making disciples from infancy, except baptism.

Irenæus, born about the year 97, a disciple of Polycarp, who was a disciple of John, says, 'Christ came to save all persons, who by him are born again unto God; infants and little ones, and children, and youths, and elder persons.' By being born again, Irenæus intends being baptized, as he himself elsewhere clearly shows.

Clemens Alexandrinus, born about the middle of the second century, says, 'If any one be a fisherman; let him think of an apostle, and the children taken out of the water.' Clement is here giving directions concerning images, to be engraven on seal rings. These engravings were sometimes indecent, and sometimes idolatrous. Clement exhorts Christians to adopt such as are becoming and useful; and particularly exhorts fishermen to choose the image of an apostle baptizing infants. This furnishes a decisive proof, that in Clement's view the apostles baptized infants, and that this practice was, in his own time, the general practice of the Christian church.

Tertullian, born about the same time with Irenæus, says, 'The delay of baptism is more useful, according to every person's condition and disposition, and even their age; but especially with regard to little children.' The reason which he urges for this delay is, that 'their faith was not entire, or complete.' As Tertullian is here directly opposing the common opinion, it is obvious, that little children were then commonly baptized. The reason why Tertullian proposed this delay, was, that he attributed to baptism an importance not given to it by the Scriptures.

Origen, born about the year 184, and a man of more information than any one of his time, says, 'Infants are baptized for the remission of sins.' And again: 'The church hath received the tradition from the apostles, that baptism ought to be administered to infants.'

Cyprian, who was contemporary with Origen, says, that 'sixty-six bishops, being convened in a council at Carthage, having the question referred to them, Whether infants might be baptized before they were eight days old? decided unanimously, that no infant is to be prohibited from the benefit of baptism, although but just born.'

Gregory Nazianzen, born in the early part of the fourth century, exhorts parents to offer their children to God in baptism.

Saint Augustin, born in the middle of the fourth century, says, 'The whole church practises infant baptism: it was not instituted by councils, but was always in use.' He also says, that he 'did not remember ever to have read of any person, whether catholic or heretic, who maintained that baptism ought to be denied to infants. This,' he says, 'the church has always maintained.'

Pelagius, a contemporary with Augustin, declares that 'he had never heard even any impious heretic, who asserted that infants are not to be baptized.' Again he asks, 'Who can be so impious as to hinder the baptism of infants?' Pelagius is here a witness of high authority. He was born in Britain; and travelled through France, Italy, Africa Proper, and Egypt, to Jerusalem. Had such a practice existed in his time, it seems impossible that he should not have heard of it. He was also an inquisitive and learned man; and must therefore have been well informed concerning preceding periods. At the same time, the doctrine of infant baptism was objected against his own opinions by St Augustin, in such a manner, that Pelagius knew not how to answer the objection. Still these are his own assertions.

A person who employed himself extensively in examining this subject, gives the following result of all his inquiries:—

'First: During the first four hundred years from the formation of the Christian church, Tertullian only urged the delay of baptism to infants, and that only in some cases; and Gregory only delayed it, perhaps, to his own children. But neither any society of men, or any individual, denied the lawfulness of baptizing infants.

'Secondly: In the next seven hundred years, there was not a society, nor an individual, who even pleaded for this delay; much less any who denied the right, or the duty of infant baptism.

'Thirdly: In the year 1120, one sect of the Waldenses declared against the baptism of infants; because they supposed them incapable of salvation: but the main body of that people rejected the opinion as heretical; and the sect which held it soon came to nothing.

'Fourthly: The next appearance of this opinion was in the year 1522.'

Had the baptism of infants been ever discontinued by the church; or had it been introduced in any age subsequent to that of the apostles, these things could not have been, nor could the history of them have been found.

SERMON CLIX.

THE MEANS OF GRACE.—EXTRAORDINARY MEANS OF GRACE.—NO INFANTS BUT THE CHILDREN OF BELIEVERS PROPER SUBJECTS OF BAPTISM.—MODE OF ADMINISTRATION.

Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.—Acts ii. 38, 39.

The persons here addressed by St Peter, were a collection of Jews. Of course, they were persons on whom God had placed his covenant, and to whom he had affixed the seal of circumcision. They were persons who had regularly partaken of the Passover through life. They were not excommunicated persons. They

were therefore still in the covenant. On this ground St Peter declares to them, that the promise was still to them, and to their children.

Still they were gross sinners, and had imbrued their hands in the blood of the Redeemer. They had not, indeed, been employed in the external act of putting him to death: this was done by the Roman soldiery. But they had sought and procured his death with a disposition probably more malignant and abominable than that of his real murderers. Thus they were gross sinners, and were therefore called upon to 'repent.' They were also required to be 'baptized, every one of them, in the name of the Lord Jesus, for the remission of sins;' because baptism was now become the initiatory seal of the covenant. As the promise was to them and to their children, according to the gracious declaration of God to Abraham, it follows, that they, being baptized, and thus introduced into the covenant under the Christian dispensation, and made members of the church under that dispensation, their children also were placed under the same covenant, and were to be baptized according to the appointment of God.

These persons, I say, were to be baptized. The question naturally arises, What is it to be *baptized?* It will be the design of this Discourse to show.

I. *That infant baptism is in the Scriptures confined to the children of professing Christians;*

II. *To show what baptism is, considered as an external religious rite.*

I. *I shall attempt to show, that infant baptism is in the Scriptures confined to the children of professing Christians.*

This doctrine I derive,

1. From the constitution of the Abrahamic church.

All the Israelites were circumcised. All of them, as was shown in a former Discourse, made a public profession of religion, or entered publicly into covenant with God. They all also partook regularly of the Passover. Thus, the children of every Jew were the children of a professor of religion; and, as such, received the initiatory seal of the covenant of grace.

As the covenant under the Christian dispensation is, unless in some respect or other altered by the authority which first promulgated it, exactly the same as it was under the Abrahamic dispensation, and cannot be lawfully either widened or narrowed by man; it follows, that children are now to be considered in exactly the same light as under the former dispensation, unless the Scriptures have evidently changed the state of their relations and privileges. But, in these respects, no such alteration can be pleaded; for the scriptures evidently contain none. The church is not now confined to a single nation; nor are the individuals of any one nation, as such, made members of the church. But the duty of professing the religion of the Scriptures, and the peculiar duties and privileges of those who have professed it, are now, in substance, exactly what they were under the dispensation made to Abraham.

It is evident, therefore, that since no children, beside the children of those who publicly professed the religion of the Scriptures, could lawfully receive the initiatory seal of the covenant under the Abrahamic dispensation, no children but such as these can lawfully receive this seal under the Christian dispensation; unless the covenant with respect to this subject can be shown to have been altered. But this, it is presumed, cannot be shown.

2. The parents who are presented in Matt. xix. 13, 14, as having 'brought their children to Christ, that he might bless them,' were professors of religion.

As they were Jews, this will not be disputed. In addition to this, they were evangelical believers. They brought their children to Christ, 'that he might bless them;' and therefore believed that he was able to give them an efficacious blessing. Of consequence, they believed that he was the Messiah. For as he declared himself to be the Messiah, if he was not, he was an impostor; and therefore utterly unable to communicate any blessing. At this time of Christ's ministry, it is hardly possible that these parents should have been ignorant of this subject, since it was the great topic of inquiry and debate among their countrymen. Nor is it conceivable that they should have adopted this remarkable conduct, if they had not acknowledged him as the Messiah.

It is to be observed, that Christ, when he opposes the conduct of his disciples, who would have hindered these children from being brought to him, says not, 'Suffer little children,' but, 'Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not. The words in all the three evangelists, who have recorded this story, are τα παιδια, *the little children;* and cannot be pleaded as a warrant for bringing to Christ in baptism any other children, than such as are in the like circumstances with those mentioned in this passage.

3. The text directly declares the same doctrine.

'The promise,' says St Peter to the Jews, 'is to you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.' Those, who were 'afar off,' were Gentiles; as St Paul has taught us, Eph. ii. 17; 'Christ came,' says the apostle, 'and preached peace to you who were afar off, and to them that were nigh;' that is, to the Ephesians, and other Gentiles, and to the Jews. 'The promise,' St Peter informs us, is to 'as many' of these Gentiles, 'as the Lord our God shall call.' That it is to them in the same manner, and on the same terms, as to the Jews, is decisively concluded; because neither St Peter, nor any other scriptural writer, specifies any difference. The 'scions of the wild olive,' St Paul informs us, were graffed on the good olive; where they grew, and partook of the fatness of the root, in exactly the same manner as if they had been the natural branches. The terms, it is to be remembered, are the same; and the promise conveys no more, as well as no less, to the Gentiles than to the Jews; unless the alteration is declared. Such children then among the Gentiles, as are born of those who profess the religion of the Scriptures are included in the covenant, and are to be baptized. But the warrant extends to no others.

4. The same doctrine is declared still more explicitly in 1 Cor. vii. 14.

'For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; else were your children unclean, but now are they holy.'

In this passage St Paul declares, that, if both parents are unbelievers, 'their children are unclean:' that is, may not be offered to God; or, in other words, may not be baptized: there being no other mode of offering children to God under the Christian dispensation.

Thus the doctrine under discussion is, I think, clearly evident from the Scriptures. Accordingly, it has been adopted as the doctrine of almost all Protestant churches; and exists in the plainest language in almost every Protestant catechism, and confession of faith.

This doctrine has, however, been opposed in two ways, and by considerable numbers of divines, and other Christians; and among them, by many men of learning and piety.

One class of those who have rejected this doctrine, have considered children as entitled to baptism in their own right; and without any reference to the relation which they bear to their parents. These, I suppose, build their scheme on the fact, that the Jewish children were universally circumcised;—on the direction given by Christ to ministers, to 'teach all nations, baptizing them,' &c.;— on the declarations of Christ concerning little children;—and, perhaps, on some other foundation of which I am ignorant.

After what has been said concerning this subject in these Discourses, it seems to me wholly unnecessary to make any farther observations on the scheme in question. The views which I have formed of it, I have already expressed with sufficient minuteness. If what I have said is not satisfactory, I shall despair of giving satisfaction.

The other class require parents to make a profession of religion before they will permit their children to be baptized; but neither require, nor expect them to partake of the Lord's supper. In this manner parents are taught, that there is a distinction between the qualifications which in the view of the Scriptures are necessary to warrant us to offer up our children in baptism, and those which are necessary to make us lawfully communicants at the table of Christ. This distinction appears to me to be altogether unscriptural. In support of this observation I observe,

(1.) That the scriptures have nowhere exhibited two such distinct sets of qualifications.

If such a distinction be found in the Scriptures, it can be shown. Until it is shown, this position must be admitted.

(2.) The tenor of the Christian covenant precludes every idea of such a distinction.

In this covenant we avouch Jehovah to be our God, and ourselves to be his children. This is a full profession of piety. That a profession of piety ought to be sincere, and to be made with the heart, will not be questioned. But, if the profession be sincere, it cannot be questioned that the professor has every possible right, and is under every possible obligation, to partake of the Lord's supper. If he believes the profession sincere; he will certainly believe, that he has this right, and is under this obligation. If he believes that it is not sincere, he will certainly believe that he has made it hypocritically and wickedly; for he cannot doubt that God 'requires truth in the inward parts.' If before he has made a profession, he doubts whether he shall make it with sincerity, he certainly cannot but know that 'he who doubteth is condemned;' and that 'whatsoever is not of faith is sin;' that is, as I understand St Paul, we cannot do that which we do not find to be, with a fair, rational probability, warranted in the Scriptures. That he who enters into covenant with God should possess 'truth in the inward parts,' cannot be doubted. For 'unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do, that thou shouldest take my covenant unto thy mouth?' That real religion, or the religion of the heart, ought to be professed in a covenant with God, where the words always contain a profession of real religion, cannot be doubted by a man of common sobriety. No more can it be doubted, that he who is about to make this profession ought first to be fairly persuaded, that he can, and shall make it sincerely. If it cannot be made sincerely, it is, I think, unanswerably evident that it ought not to be made at all. In what manner and on what grounds he who makes a profession which he either knows or believes to be false, can in consequence of that profession, expect blessings for himself or his children, I confess myself unable to divine.

Tenderness of conscience is, I am aware, usually pleaded for the practice against which I contend; and is pleaded in the following manner. 'The person who wishes to make a profession of religion for the purpose of obtaining baptism for his children, feels that they ought not to be deprived of such a privilege through his negligence; and is satisfied to enter into covenant with God, and to dedicate his children to him; but cannot come to the sacramental table, because of the denunciations contained in the Scriptures against an unworthy participation of that ordinance. To this tenderness of conscience,' it is added, 'Christian charity is bound to exercise a corresponding tenderness; and to permit him who is the subject of it to make a profession with these views; and, of course, to suffer him to absent himself from the table of Christ, until his scruples shall be removed.' This plea, as it seems to me, proceeds wholly on a series of errors; and those, I think, of a very unhappy nature. The tenderness of conscience here alleged, appears to me to be wholly mistaken. Tenderness of conscience, in the true and proper sense, always supposes that the person who is the subject of it is sincerely inclined to do his duty, wherever he knows what it is. Its only perplexities, therefore, arise from the uncertainty of its duty. The person who did not know that it was lawful, and was not satisfied that it was unlawful, to eat things offered to idols, would feel himself deterred from eating these things by tenderness of conscience. A person who, with a belief that he was a Christian, has made a profession of religion, may afterward doubt whether he was really a Christian, and whether his profession was sincere; and, of course, may entertain serious and distressing scruples concerning the lawfulness of his attendance upon the Lord's supper. To tenderness of conscience thus existing, and thus exercised in the same manner on any other occasion, Christians are bound to give every charitable indulgence.

But the case in hand appears to me to be of a widely different nature. Here the original supposition, as declared by the candidate himself, is, that he is not in his own view a Christian. Of this he exhibits himself as being clearly satisfied: for he alleges it as a reason why he cannot come to the sacramental table. But he thinks, that, without being a Christian, he may offer up his children in baptism.

This error is founded on the supposition, that there is one condition upon which men may lawfully dedicate their children to God in baptism, and another upon which they may lawfully come to the Lord's supper. This is a distinction wholly unknown to the Scriptures. The only condition on which both these things may be

done is, that we first offer up ourselves to God in the covenant of grace. Until this is done, we can lawfully celebrate neither of these sacraments. When it is done, we can with exactly the same lawfulness celebrate them both. But the person concerned actually enters into this covenant. In this transaction he is sincere, or he is not. In other words, he is a Christian, or he is not a Christian. If he is not, he cannot make this covenant with God in truth, and therefore cannot make it at all. If he is, as he engages to walk in all the commandments of God, he is not only entitled, but obliged by his own engagement, as well as by the divine command, to celebrate the Lord's supper.

Another error in this scheme is the supposition of the candidate, that he can dedicate his children to God, while he cannot dedicate himself. If his heart is right, that is, if he is religiously sincere in one of these cases, it will be so in the other, and the offering will in both cases be accepted. If he be not thus sincere in the one case, he will not be sincere in the other, and the offering will be accepted in neither. In vain will it be pretended, that a man loves his children better than himself; or that he can perform an act of religious duty on their behalf, which he cannot perform on his own.

Another error attending this scheme is the supposition, that baptism is in its own nature a privilege. Nothing is a privilege, in the religious sense, but what God has made such: and he has made nothing such except in his own way, and on his own terms. Baptism is a privilege, when administered and received in the manner appointed by him, but in no other. When this ordinance is received in any other manner, it is plainly no obedience to any command of his, and therefore has no promise, and, let me add, no encouragement to hope for a blessing. Blessings descend when God is pleased to give them. But he cannot be expected to give them, unless when he is obeyed.

(3.) This scheme introduces disorder into the Christian church.

Some of the persons who hold this scheme, consider those who make a profession without an intention to partake of the Lord's supper, as being members of the church; yet, so far as I know, very few of them regard themselves as sustaining this character. Accordingly, few of them offer to vote in ecclesiastical proceedings. Others consider them, as they usually consider themselves; to wit, as not being members of the church. If they are not members of the church, it may be asked, but cannot be answered, Why do they act as church-members in offering their children in baptism? If they are members of the church, it may be asked in the same unanswerable manner, Why do they not act as church-members throughout; particularly in celebrating the Lord's supper? The Scriptures have confined infant baptism to the children of those who are members, and all these they have required to 'do all things, whatsoever Christ hath commanded.' But there is not a more solemn command, there is not a command which addresses itself to the heart of a Christian in a more forcible and affecting manner, than 'This do in remembrance of me.' Yet the persons in question not only live in a constant disobedience to this command, but when they assumed the covenant plainly declared that they formed no design of performing this duty. Upon this plan they were received both by the minister and the church to whom they joined themselves. At the same time, although these persons disobey this command through life, they are, so far as I know, never called in question concerning their disobedience by any church with which they have been united. In what manner this conduct can be supposed consistent with the duty of ministers to teach, and of churches to require those who are of their communion to 'observe all things whatsoever Christ hath commanded,' I am unable to explain.

Several other things of minor importance, which I have not time to consider at present, are alleged in behalf of this practice. Indeed, had I ever so much time, they are of too little weight to demand any very serious attention.

On the other hand, the evils resulting from it are, at least in my view, of serious importance. It introduces into the minds of those within, and those without, unhappy views concerning the importance of the covenant; concerning that profession of religion which we make when we enter into it; and concerning the nature and tendency, the obligation and efficacy, of both baptism and the Lord's supper. All these, as they are presented to us in the gospel, are, even in the view of the church itself, lowered beneath the evangelical standard; while, in the apprehension of others, they are apt to be regarded as mere forms, and cease to be considered as services of piety. The discipline of the church, at the same time, becomes unhinged. Negligence in one case begets negligence in another; and thus a general spirit of disregarding this duty takes possession of the church at large. In this state of things it is hardly possible that Christians should improve, or that sinners should feel any strong inducements to enrol themselves in their number.

II. *I shall now attempt to show what baptism is, considered as an external religious rite; or, in other words, in what manner baptism is to be administered.*

Concerning this subject, I observe,

1. Those to whom this ordinance is to be administered, are to be baptized 'into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.'

In other words, they are to be admitted into the visible family of God in the world; to have his covenant publicly established on them, by receiving this ordinance, its initiatory seal; to be openly enrolled among his children; and to take his name upon them as a godly seed.

The reasons, why I suppose persons should be baptized 'into,' and not in 'the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost,' I have alleged in former Discourses. It will be unnecessary to repeat them here.

2. They are to be baptized by a minister of the gospel.

The proof of this position lies in the fact, that the commission to baptize was given to no other. No others, therefore, are warranted to perform this office.

3. Baptism is to be administered with water only.

This only is mentioned in the Scriptures. Nothing else, therefore, can with propriety be used by us.

4. This water may be administered indifferently, either by sprinkling, affusion, or immersion.

On this subject the Christian world has, for a considerable length of time, been disturbed by the clashing opinions and laborious contests of men, arranged on the two sides of the question concerning baptism. It is remarkable, that those who have adopted the doctrine

of infant baptism, have very generally considered sprinkling, or affusion, and that those who have opposed it have considered immersion, respectively, as the proper modes of administration. Why this has happened I am unable to explain. The latter of these classes have founded their opinion, professedly, on the proper meaning of the word *Βαπτιζω*, and its root *Βαπτω*; and on certain texts in which they think they find proofs that the proper mode of baptizing was immersion, or plunging.

Concerning the former of these subjects I observe,

1. That the body of learned critics and lexicographers declare, that the original meaning of both these words is to *tinge, stain, dye,* or *colour*; and that, when it means immersion, it is only a secondary and occasional sense; derived from the fact, that such things as are *dyed, stained,* or *coloured,* are often immersed for this end. This interpretation of the words also they support by such a series of quotations, as seem unanswerably to evince that this was the original, classical meaning of these words.

2. I have examined almost one hundred instances, in which the word *Βαπτιζω,* and its derivatives, are used in the New Testament, and four in the Septuagint: these, so far as I have observed, being all the instances contained in both. By this examination it is to my apprehension evident, that the following things are true :—

That the primary meaning of these terms is cleansing; the effect, not the mode of washing :

That the mode is usually referred to incidentally, wherever these words are mentioned: and that this is always the case, wherever the ordinance of baptism is mentioned, and a reference made at the same time to the mode of administration :

That these words, although often capable of denoting any mode of washing, whether by affusion, sprinkling, or immersion (since cleansing was familiarly accomplished by the Jews in all these ways); yet, in many instances, cannot without obvious impropriety be made to signify immersion: and in others cannot signify it at all.

St Paul informs us, 1 Cor. x. 1, 2, 'Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud, and in the sea.' Happily for us, we have so particular an account of this transaction, as to be able to determine, absolutely, what St Paul intended by the baptism of the Israelites in this instance.

In Exodus xiii. 21, 22, it is said, 'And the Lord went before them,' that is, the children of Israel, 'by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them in the way, and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light, to go by day and night. He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people.' In the fourteenth chapter, 19th and 20th verses, it is said, 'And the angel of God, which went before the camp of Israel, removed, and went behind them; and the pillar of the cloud went from before their face, and stood behind them; and it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel; and it was a cloud of darkness to them, but it gave light by night to these, so that the one came not near the other, all the night. And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the Lord caused the sea to go back, by a strong east wind, all that night, and made the sea dry land; and the waters were divided; and the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea, upon the dry ground; and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left.' In these passages, we find among others the following facts declared :—

(1.) That God, or the angel of God, went before the Israelites, from the commencement of their journey at Succoth, in a pillar of cloud by day, and in a pillar of fire by night, until they were overtaken by Pharaoh and his army on the margin of the Red Sea, beside Pihahiroth.

(2.) That the angel of God, who hitherto had gone before the camp of Israel, removed, and went behind them, together with the pillar of the cloud; and that this symbol of the Divine presence was a source of peculiar darkness to the Egyptians, and of peculiar light to the children of Israel; so that the former came not near the latter all the night.

(3.) That the waters of the Red Sea were divided, so as to be a wall on the right hand, and on the left.

(4.) That the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon dry ground.

In the whole of this story it is evident there is no account whatever of that baptism of the Israelites mentioned by St Paul in the passage quoted from 1 Cor. There is not even an allusion to this baptism, unless it is in the declaration, that 'the pillar of the cloud went from before the Israelites, and stood behind them.' By the waters of the Red Sea, they were not even sprinkled, much less immersed, but went, as Moses expressly informs us, between two walls of water upon the dry ground. Neither is there here any account that 'they were baptized in the cloud,' whatever this phraseology may mean.

But what Moses has omitted, Asaph has particularly recorded in the seventy-seventh Psalm, in the following words: 'The waters saw thee, O God; the waters saw thee; they were afraid; the depths also were troubled; the clouds poured out water; the skies sent out a sound. Thine arrows also went abroad; the voice of thy thunder was in the heaven; the lightnings lightened the world; the earth trembled and shook. Thy way was in the sea, and thy path in the great waters; and thy footsteps are not known. Thou leddest thy people like a flock, by the hand of Moses and Aaron.' In this account of the passage through the Red Sea, we have the baptism spoken of by St Paul expressly mentioned; together with several other facts, not recorded by the historian. 'The clouds poured forth water' upon them, or descended upon them in rain, while they were journeying through the sea. The marginal and literal translation is, 'The clouds were poured forth with waters.' There is reason to believe from this declaration, that when the cloud passed from the van of the Israelites to the rear, or when in the language of the psalmist, 'they were poured forth' from before the Israelites to stand behind them, the rain may have descended from the cloud during this passage. Whether this be admitted, or not, it is clear, that this is the only account of the baptism mentioned by St Paul which is contained in the Old Testament. And it is equally clear, that this baptism was a cleansing, accomplished by the sprinkling of rain, and certainly not by immersion. The fancy of some of my antagonists, that the cloud, in some manner or other,

embosomed the Israelites by resting upon them, and thus enveloping them, as water envelopes a person immersed in it, would appear well I think in poetry; but has an aspect scarcely serious enough to claim a place in a theological discussion.

Here then is one instance in which this word denotes cleansing by sprinkling, and not by immersion.

Another is found in Heb. ix. 10, 'Which stood only in meats, and drinks, and divers washings,' διαφοροις βαπτισμοις, *diverse baptisms.* The word διαφοροι, when united with a substantive in the same number, denotes regularly, that the things signified by the substantive are different in their nature. Thus in the present case, the phrase, 'diverse baptisms,' denotes baptisms which were different in their nature from each other. Now, as the element with which all these washings were accomplished was water, the difference lay, of course, only in the manner in which the washing was performed. Here then is another instance in which the word signifies something altogether different from immersion.

Another example is found in Matt. iii. 11, where John the Baptist says concerning Christ, 'He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire.' The bare rendering of this passage, 'He shall immerge you in the Holy Ghost, and in fire,' is, one would think, a sufficient exposition of the impropriety of translating βαπτιζω, by the word *immerge,* or plunge. Substitute cleanse for immerge, and the impropriety vanishes.

But we are not left to conjecture concerning this subject. Both prophecy and history informs us of the manner in which this baptism was accomplished. The prophet Joel, chap. ii. 28, 29, says, 'It shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions; and also upon the handmaidens in those days will I pour out my Spirit.' Such is the language of the prophecy which St Peter declares to have been fulfilled on this occasion.

The history is given us in the following words: 'And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord, in one place; and suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing, mighty wind; and it filled all the house where they were sitting; and there appeared unto them cloven tongues, like as of fire; and it sat upon each of them; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost.' Here we are directly told, that the baptism with the Holy Ghost and with fire was accomplished by the affusion of both on the disciples from heaven. To avoid the force of these direct declarations of the prophet and the historian, some of those with whom I am contending have, in the indulgence of an excursive imagination, gravely told us, that St Luke declares the Holy Ghost to have *filled* the house. Hence they conclude, that the disciples were enveloped, and, in a proper sense, immersed in the Holy Ghost. This is one among many specimens of the length to which even wise and good men are carried by favouritism for a darling point. Beside the metaphysical absurdity, and, as I think, indecency, of attributing place and extension in this manner to the Divine Spirit, these gentlemen do direct violence to the words of the evangelist. St Luke informs us, that 'the sound filled the house.' The pronoun it, which precedes the verb filled, has, for its antecedent, sound; the only substantive in the verse to which it can possibly refer. The words of the original are still more explicit, and are thus literally rendered: 'And suddenly there came from heaven a sound, like that of a rushing mighty wind, and filled the whole house, where they were sitting.' Were there any room for a possible doubt, that doubt is removed by the exposition of an inspired commentator. 'Therefore,' says the apostle Peter, verse 33, 'being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he (that is, Christ) hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear.' The word translated 'hath shed forth,' is εξεχεε, *hath poured out:* the same verb which St Peter uses to denote the same thing, in translating the passage from Joel. Here then is another instance in which the word βαπτιζω does not mean, to immerse.

I shall be excused, on account of the length of even the most concise comments of this nature, from proceeding any farther. Suffice it to say, that there are many other instances in which it is in my own view incredible, that this verb, and its derivatives, should mean immersion; and that, on the contrary, cleansing is directly indicated by them, in all cases, as their principal meaning.

3. It is incredible, that the multitudes whom John baptized in the wilderness were immersed.

Of these a very great multitude were women. These multitudes certainly came to hear John, without having prepared any proper dress in which to be baptized: for they could not even know that he would baptize them. It will not be mistrusted, that this promiscuous assembly were immersed naked. To have immersed them with their clothes on would have exposed them to certain disease and death.

4. It is impossible that those whom Peter and his companions baptized on the day of Pentecost should have been immersed.

All the difficulties which attended the baptism of John's followers, attended that of these people also; and, probably in a still higher degree; because they did not assemble to be baptized, nor even to hear the preaching of the apostles. They therefore certainly assembled in their own usual dress. At the same time, it seems almost a thing of course, that the apostles, who had just received a spiritual baptism, by the affusion of the Holy Ghost, and announced it to their hearers, should follow the mode in which this baptism was administered to them, in administering the baptism which was symbolical of it, to their hearers.

But, independently of these considerations, the thing itself could not be done by the apostles, to the circumstances and within the time specified, in the mode of immersion. St Luke informs us, that they who received the word of Peter were then baptized; and that the same day there were added to them about three thousand souls. The only way in which these persons could be known to be added to the church, or could in fact be added to the church, was by their baptism. They were, therefore, baptized that day. But the apostles could not, in any supposable circumstances furnished by the city of Jerusalem, nor indeed in any circumstances whatever, baptize by immersion three thousand persons within the utmost part of that day which the story will allow us to consider as left for this purpose, after the other transactions mentioned in it

were ended. The least consideration of the time necessary for each administration will clearly show this impossibility. I conclude therefore, without hesitation, that these persons were not immersed.

5. The fact, that the affusion of the Holy Ghost is called baptism, is a direct proof that the affusion of water is in the view of the Scriptures baptism also.

The only question with which we are here concerned, respects the mode merely. If then, the communication of the Holy Ghost, whether for the purpose of enduing with supernatural gifts, or of sanctifying the soul, regularly expressed in the Scriptures by the verbs εκχεω, εκχυω, and εκχυνω, *to pour out*, be in the same Scriptures styled baptism; then the affusion of water in the ordinance symbolical of this spiritual baptism is, in the view of the Scriptures, baptism also.

6. Christ has expressly taught us, that immersion is unessential to the administration of this ordinance.

In John xiii. when Christ offered to wash the feet of Peter, he at first opposed it; but, afterwards consenting, requested that not only his feet, but his hands and his head might be washed also. Our Saviour replied, 'He that is washed need not, save to wash his feet; but is clean every whit.' The word here rendered, 'he that is washed,' is ὁ λελουμενος, generally denoting the washing of the whole body, or bathing; and by respectable critics is supposed to have this meaning here. My reasons for differing from them are the following:—

(1.) The words of Christ are a reply to those of Peter, and intended to oppose the proposal made by him, that his Master should wash his hands and his head, as well as his feet.

But the declaration, that a person bathed has no occasion to wash any part of his body, except his feet, contains no opposition to Peter's proposal, since Peter was not bathed, nor indeed any relation to it, so far as appears to me, except what is very distant and fanciful.

(2.) Peter, upon this declaration of Christ, yields the point; and consents to have his feet only washed, on the ground of this declaration.

Had he understood his Master to intend by λελουμενος, a person who had been bathed; he would naturally have replied, that this was not his own situation: at least, he could not have failed to think in this manner.

(3.) The opinion of those who consider Christ as speaking here of a person bathed, is, if I mistake not, that he intends, by a figurative use of this term, a person regenerated, or sanctified. But in this sense, I cannot see that the declaration is true. Understood in this manner, Christ declares, that a person who is regenerated, is, with a small additional purification, perfect. The Scriptures, on the contrary, exhibit mankind as very imperfect in their best estate. St Paul when he wrote the Epistle to the Romans, and was about fifty-six years of age, and of course far advanced in the Christian character, says, 'Oh! wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' It can hardly be believed, I think, that in the view of Paul the additional purification, indicated by washing the feet, would have made him a perfect man.

If Christ is supposed here to intend a literal bathing, the meaning is obvious enough, and undoubtedly contains a truth; but the application of it to the case in hand seems difficult, if not impossible, to be conceived; the situation of a person who had been bathed not being that of Peter.

The meaning of the passage in my view is this: The washing of the disciples' feet was a symbolical washing. As Christ performed it, it exhibited, on the one hand, his pre-eminent condescension, and, on the other, indicated the fact, that he was the author of their internal purification. This appears to me decisively proved by the declaration of Christ in answer to Peter, who at first, not understanding the design of the washing, and thinking it very improper that his Master should perform it for him, said, 'Thou shalt never wash my feet.' Christ then answered him, 'If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me:' that is, 'Unless thou receivest the sanctification from me, of which this washing is a symbol, thou art not my disciple.' Peter appears to me plainly to have understood it in the same manner: for, being now acquainted with the real design of Christ, he replied, 'Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head:' Christ rejoined, 'He that is washed, needeth not, save to wash his feet; but is clean every whit.' A symbolical washing is perfect, although applied only to the feet; as perfect as if it were also applied to the hands and the head. If this construction be admitted, it must also be admitted that the declaration is general, and extends to every other symbolical washing, and therefore to baptism, unless excluded by some plain exception.

7. The same doctrine is taught by God, in the thirty-sixth chapter of the prophet Ezekiel.

Here, speaking of the Israelites, he says, 'Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; and I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes.' Whether this is a direct prediction of the ordinance of baptism, as well as of the regeneration symbolically denoted by it, or not, is to the present purpose a matter of indifference. It cannot be denied, that it is symbolical language, in which God thought it proper to denote regeneration, by the affusion of the Spirit upon the soul. But if the language describing the act of sprinkling, was proper symbolical language to denote the act of regenerating, then the act itself of sprinkling is a proper symbolical act, unless God has made it improper by some plain declaration. The propriety of the act, as a symbol, is evidently the only source of propriety in using the language descriptive of the act, as a symbolical exhibition of that which it denotes; to wit, regeneration.

To these observations may be added, the unsuitableness of immersion, as an ordinance of public worship, to the circumstances of many nations in the world.

In a nation whose manners are like ours, there is, to say the least, a degree of impropriety in this practice which is very unhappy. This, it will be easily seen, is a subject on which I cannot here expatiate. It will be sufficient to say, that whatever impressions may be made by this practice in countries where bathing is a standing custom, here they are of a very unfortunate nature, and such as are directly opposed to every religious feeling. I speak from fact, and not from opinion; and from facts repeated through a century, and therefore operating, not by their novelty, but by their nature.

At the same time, the health and the lives of those who are baptized are often injured and destroyed. Here also I speak from facts. Both these considerations

form, I acknowledge, only a presumptive argument in the present case; for God has an unquestionable right to require us to undergo this exposure, or any other, according to his good pleasure. But the presumption is a very strong one; and to be admitted in its full force, unless the practice contended for is expressed with indubitable clearness.

On the texts alleged by those with whom I am contending, as proofs of baptism by immersion, I shall make but a few observations; because the Discourse has already been long; and particularly because they appear to me to furnish very little support to the side of the question in behalf of which they are alleged. It is said of our Saviour, that after he was baptized, 'he went up straightway from the water,' ανεβη απο του ὑδατος, 'he ascended from the water:' the word αναβαινω signifying to go or come up; to ascend, in whatever manner. This passage appears to be descriptive solely of Christ's ascending the banks of Jordan, after he had received baptism. That this is not the meaning of the phrase, cannot be shown, nor rendered probable. The preposition απο is erroneously rendered, 'out of,' in our translation. Its proper meaning, as every Greek scholar knows, is *from;* and can be 'out of,' only by accident: as in Matthew vii. 4, 'Let me pull out the mote *out of* thine eye.' Even here it would be much better rendered, 'Let me take the mote *from* thine eye.' If Matthew intended to express Christ's rising out of the water, he has certainly used phraseology of a very peculiar nature.

Another passage, often triumphantly alleged for the same purpose, is Acts viii. 38, 39, 'And they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him.—And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip.' To the translation here no reasonable objection can be made. I will therefore not avail myself of what might, however, be justly alleged, to wit, that εις may with equal propriety signify *to*, and εκ, *from*. Still I object to the construction of my antagonists, for these reasons:—

(1.) That we as naturally say that they went into the water, of those who went in to the depth of the knees, or even of the ancles, as of those who have plunged themselves.

(2.) The declarations here made, are made concerning the eunuch and Philip alike. Of both it is said, that 'they went down into the water;' if we render the word εις, *into*. Of both also it is said, that 'when they were come up out of the water;' if we render the word εκ, *out of*. Now let us see what will be the true import of the passage according to this mode of construing the words in question. 'And they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch;' that is, they were both plunged. 'And he baptized him;' that is, Philip plunged the eunuch. 'And when they were come up out of the water,' that is, when they had both been plunged the second time, and risen up from their immersion, 'The Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip.' In other words, both were plunged twice, and the eunuch the third time.

It is, I presume, unnecessary to comment on this version of the text under consideration. The only remark which I shall make upon it is, that the adoption of such a sense for the two words, αναβαινω and καταβαινω, by some learned critics, in the face of this construction of this text, is not a little surprising.

(3.) I conclude, as I think with certainty, that these words have no reference to the immersion of either; but are barely descriptive of the fact, that they went down to, or into the water, in which, perhaps, they waded a little distance.

Another text of the same nature is Romans vi. 4. 'Therefore we are buried with him, by baptism, into death.' The word 'buried' is here supposed to denote immersion. In the next verse it is said, 'For if we are planted together in the likeness of his death.' My antagonists are bound to show, that this figurative expression, which refers to the same thing, does not as strictly signify the mode in which baptism is received, as the word 'buried,' and, if it does, to point out the particular mode of administering baptism, denoted by the word planted.

These are among the texts more frequently alleged by those with whom I am contending. I do not suppose that they are regarded as being of any great importance to the controversy. Their principal strength lies, as I conceive, in their own view, in what they suppose to be the original meaning of the words βαπτιζω and βαπτω, and these texts are pressed into the service, as auxiliaries. If, then, their principal support fails, as, if I mistake not, I have shown that it does, these texts will be alleged without success. The general conclusion, therefore, appears to me to stand on solid ground; to wit, that baptism is in the Scriptures instituted as a symbol of the affusion of the Spirit of God upon the soul in regeneration, and the cleansing of its sins by the blood of Christ; and that the mode in which it is administered, is not in the Scriptures exhibited as a subject of serious importance, and is nowhere declared to be immersion.

SERMON CLX.

THE MEANS OF GRACE.—EXTRAORDINARY MEANS OF GRACE.—THE LORD'S SUPPER.—ITS NATURE AND DESIGN.—THE QUALIFICATIONS OF COMMUNICANTS.

And as they did eat, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and brake it, &c.—Mark xiv. 22—25.

Having considered at length the nature, intention, and subjects of baptism, and the manner in which it is to be administered; I shall now proceed to examine the other sacramental ordinance of the Christian church, the

Lord's Supper. In the progress of this examination, I propose to consider,

I. *The nature.*

II. *The design, of this ordinance.*

III. *The qualifications necessary for attendance upon it.*

IV. *The disposition with which it is to be attended.*

V. *The motives to this attendance.*

I. *The nature of this ordinance may be generally described in the following manner* :—

It is a symbolical religious service, instituted by Christ as a commemoration of his death. The symbols are bread broken, and wine poured out, denoting the breaking of his body, and the effusion of his blood upon the cross. The bread is to be broken, and the wine poured out by a minister of the gospel only ; and by him both are to be distributed to every member of the church who is present. All these are to receive them both : the Romish doctrine, that the laity are to receive this ordinance in one kind, and only the clergy in both kinds, being merely a human invention uncountenanced by the Scriptures. Before the administration of each of these elements, a prayer is to be made, in which the blessing of God is to be implored upon the celebration of the ordinance, and thanks are to be given to him for his mercy and goodness, generally and particularly, as displayed in the interesting event which is commemorated. The whole service is to be concluded with singing a psalm or hymn by the communicants.

This solemnity has been commonly styled a sacrament, from the resemblance between the engagement made to Christ by the communicants, and the oath of the Roman soldiery, by which they pledged their fidelity to their general. This name, however, it bears in common with the ordinance of baptism.

It is also often called the eucharist ; ευχαριστια, probably from the use of the word ευχαριστησας, 'having given thanks,' found in all the accounts of this institution contained in the New Testament.

But the most usual name which it bears among Christians, is the Lord's supper, the original of which needs no explanation.

The time at which this ordinance is to be celebrated, is of no material importance. It was instituted in the evening ; it is, however, celebrated most commonly at noon. This fact seems to have been determined by mere convenience ; and, as the Scriptures have laid no stress on the time of celebration, it has been determined, I think, with entire propriety. I cannot but observe here, that as the time and manner of celebration when this ordinance was instituted are distinctly exhibited, those who contend so strenuously for immersion, as essential to the ordinance of baptism, from the meaning of the word βαπτιζω, and the few hints, which they think they find in the language of the Scriptures, at the best doubtful, are bound, on their own principles, to spread a table in the evening, to sit in a reclining posture, and thus to celebrate this sacrament, on the evening preceding every Lord's day. All this ought also to be done in a large upper room, contained in a private dwelling. It is presumed, no reason can be given why so much solicitude should be shown concerning the mode of administering baptism, and so little concerning the mode of administering the Lord's supper.

This ordinance is customarily celebrated by a great part of the churches in New England, on the first sabbath of every month. This seems to be as frequent as convenience will ordinarily allow. In the Presbyterian churches it is celebrated either twice or four times in a year ; an infrequency for which I am unable satisfactorily to account.

II. *The design of the Lord's supper may be summarily exhibited in the following manner* :—

It is intended,

1. To represent the great sacrifice of Christ on the cross.

The truth here declared is sufficiently evident from the breaking of the bread, and the pouring out of the wine ; and completely, from the words of Christ, 'This is my body which is broken for you,' 1 Cor. xi. 24 ; 'And this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many,' Mark xiv. 24. Accordingly, all Christians, so far as I know, have admitted the position as true.

In a former Discourse concerning baptism, I have remarked, what indeed is felt and acknowledged by all men, that sensible impressions are much more powerful than those which are made on the understanding. This truth is probably neither so fully nor so deeply realized in any religious ordinance, as in the Lord's supper. The breaking of the bread, and the pouring out of the wine, exhibit the sacrifice of Christ with a force, a liveliness of representation confessed by all Christians, at all times ; and indeed by most others also ; and unrivalled in its efficacy even by the Passover itself. All the parts of this service are perfectly simple, and are contemplated by the mind without the least distraction or labour. The symbols are exact and most lively portraits of the affecting original ; and present to us the crucifixion and the sufferings of the great subject of it, as again undergone before our eyes. We are not barely taught ; we see, and hear, and of consequence feel, that 'Christ our Passover was slain for us ;' and died on the cross, that we might live.

As this event, more interesting to mankind than any other which has ever existed, is thus clearly presented to us in this ordinance ; so those doctrines of the Christian system which are most intimately connected with it, are here exhibited with a corresponding clearness. Particularly, the atonement which this divine Person thus accomplished for mankind, is here seen in the strongest light. With similar certainty is that depraved character of man, which is here expiated, unfolded to our view : the impossibility of our justification by works of law ; our free justification by the grace of God through faith in the blood of Christ : and, generally, the whole scheme of reconciling apostate man to his offended Creator.

The guilt of sin, particularly, is exhibited to us in the strongest colours. This ordinance, by presenting to us in the most lively and affecting manner, the sufferings of the Redeemer, powerfully enforces on us a conviction that those sufferings were necessary. Every Christian will readily subscribe to the declarations of St Paul, 'If there had been a law given, which could have given life ; verily righteousness should have been by the law ; and if righteousness come (or be) by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.' Had such a law been possible and proper in the sight of God, it would, I think certainly have been published to mankind. Had 'it been possible, this cup would have passed from

Christ.' Could the great purpose of pardoning sin and justifying sinners have been accomplished without the death of the Son of God, this event could never have found a place in the counsels of infinite wisdom and goodness. To accomplish this end, then, the infinite mind saw no proper way which was less expensive. How fearfully guilty are those, to expiate whose sins this glorious Person died on the cross; to save whom this death was indispensable!

In this solemn ordinance these truths are in a sense visible. The guilt of sin is here 'written with a pen of iron, and with the point of a diamond.' Christ, in a sense, ascends the cross, is nailed to the accursed tree, is pierced with the spear, and pours out his blood, to wash away the sins of men. Thus, in colours of life and death, we here behold the wonderful scene, in which was 'laid on him the iniquity of us all.'

2. The Lord's supper is designed to be a standing proof of the mission of Christ, and of the truth of the gospel, which is an account of that mission.

In the first of the Discourses concerning baptism, I made a similar observation concerning that ordinance, and remarked, that I should defer the particular consideration of it to a future time. The present is the occasion to which I then referred. I now therefore observe generally, that baptism and the Lord's supper are, together with the Christian sabbath, standing proofs in the church of the mission of Christ, and the truth of his gospel; and that the observations which in this view are applicable to one of these subjects, are substantially applicable to the others also. St Paul, after finishing his account of the institution of this ordinance, makes this remark, 'For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come.' That, which the Spirit of inspiration declares to be invariably done in the celebration of an ordinance, was undoubtedly included in the institution of that ordinance. But the Spirit of inspiration here declares, that whenever Christians celebrate the Lord's supper, they show forth, or exhibit, the reality of his death, until the time of his second coming. To do this, then, was one design with which this ordinance was instituted.

The manner in which the Lord's supper becomes, and operates as a proof of these things, may be seen in the following particulars:—

(1.) It was instituted either at the time specified, or afterward. If it was instituted at the time specified, it was certainly instituted by Christ himself. His enemies certainly would not, and did not, institute a solemn religious service, as a memorial of a Person whom they hated and despised. His friends would not dare to institute a religious service, unless it had been enjoined, or directly countenanced by himself; or, in other words, unless he himself had directed it. It was therefore instituted by himself.

But if it was instituted by himself, it is unnecessary to observe, it was instituted before his death, and with a full expectation on his part that he should die in the manner predicted in the institution itself; viz. upon the cross. It was also instituted by a person, and in commemoration of the death of a person, assuming the character, and being believed by his followers rightfully to assume the character, attributed to Christ: a person who came into the world with a mission from God, to publish the way of salvation, and to give his life a ransom for many. It is impossible that men of that age and country should not know, whether the person who is declared to have instituted this ordinance, lived, and lived among those who were witnesses of the institution. They could not but know whether the character which is declared of him was his true character, in the view of his followers; and whether he so lived, preached, and wrought miracles, suffered and died. His life, miracles, and preaching, and whole apparent character, were all public, and were therefore certainly known to his countrymen, particularly to the Pharisees and other leaders of the Jews, who with so much zeal, hatred, and envy, laboured incessantly, with a severe and prying scrutiny, to detect his haltings, if he had any.

All these things also must have been known particularly to the apostles. They lived with him daily; and saw every thing which he did, heard every thing which he said, and knew, so far as the nature of the case would allow, every thing which he was.

Judas had access to him at all times, and knew the worst, as well as the best, of his character. He hated Christ, betrayed him to the Jewish leaders, and corresponded with them intimately. If Christ was an impostor, he knew it; and, instead of hanging himself, under remorse of conscience for his treachery, would certainly have declared his Master's fraud to the world, and congratulated himself for having delivered mankind from such a cheat. Particularly, he would have disclosed this to the Pharisees, and they to mankind.

But the apostles themselves could never have commemorated a person, whom they believed to be an impostor, in an act of religious worship. Whether he was an impostor, or not, they certainly knew. In their long familiarity with him, they could not fail of understanding the nature of all his conduct. It was impossible that they should have thus commemorated a person whom they believed to be a cheat; especially a person who left them no worldly benefits; who was hated and despised by almost all their countrymen; and to follow whom was productive of unceasing obloquy, contempt, and persecution. No human being ever commemorated one whom he believed to be an impostor, in this manner.

The institution itself is a prophecy of the death of Christ, and of his death on the cross. He had also repeatedly prophesied the same event before, both to his apostles and to others. It was publicly known, as the Pharisees prove in their conversation with Pilate, Matt. xxvii. 62, &c. With equal publicity had he declared his resurrection on the third day, as is manifest in the same passage. If he did not thus die—if he did not thus rise—he was beyond all controversy proved to be an impostor, and would have been remembered only with execration. No person believed to be an impostor has ever been remembered otherwise.

If this institution was introduced after the period specified, this fact is, in the first place, contrary to the united declarations of Ecclesiastical History. Secondly: it is inexplicable: and, I think, plainly impossible.

If the Lord's supper was not introduced at the time specified, those to whom it was first proposed could not but certainly know that they had never heard of it before. The Christians to whom it was first proposed must have been those at Jerusalem, or at some other

place; and the time of this proposal must have been either before, or after, the publication of the gospel.

If the Christians to whom it was at first proposed were those at Jerusalem, they perfectly well knew the life and death of Christ; and the evidences of his mission, miracles, and character. If he had not lived, taught, wrought miracles, died, and risen again, in the manner declared, it is impossible that these persons should not have known the falsehood of these declarations. If they had not believed him to be the Messiah, they must have believed him to be an impostor; and would never have commemorated him in a religious service. It is to be remembered, that these persons were all Jews, whose bigotry to their own religion, and hatred to Christianity, are proverbial and wonderful; and who would no more willingly, to say the least, have commemorated Christ as the Saviour of mankind, after than before his crucifixion, unless they had become completely convinced of his resurrection, and consequently of his Messiahship. The very proposal of such a commemoration they would have received only with indignation and horror. This certainly would have been the state of facts, if the institution had been attempted antecedently to the publication of St Matthew's gospel, written in Hebrew for the use of these very people.

If this sacrament was introduced after this period, and (what is necessary to give even plausibility to the supposition) so long after, as to infer some obscurity, and oblivion of the events commemorated, the attempt would have been attended with two inseparable difficulties. The first is, St Matthew declares, that Christ himself instituted this sacrament. Those to whom the proposal was now made for the first time must, of course, have seen that the apostles themselves had not obeyed the injunction of their Master, and therefore falsely professed to believe him to be the Messiah. The account given by Matthew must have contradicted any accounts which they could give, and clearly convicted them of gross and absolute disobedience to Christ, and in a capital point of Christian practice. With Matthew also agree the other evangelists. There must therefore have been an entire opposition between Matthew and the other evangelists on the one side, and those who attempted to form this new institution on the other. Such a schism must have been too dangerous to have been ventured upon for the sake of any institution, in so early a period of the church, and would not improbably have terminated its existence.

The second difficulty is, St Luke declares that the disciples began the celebration of this institution on the day of Pentecost, ten days only after Christ's ascension, or just about that time; and asserts, that they continued this practice daily, and weekly, without ceasing. See Acts ii. 42, 46; and Acts xx. 7. The last of these passages asserts this to have been the practice of the apostles, on the first day of the week in the year 56, twenty-three years after the crucifixion. The Book of the Acts appears to have been finished in the year 64. The last declaration therefore assures us, that the celebration of the Lord's supper continued to be a weekly practice of Christians until that time. Thus we learn from St Luke, that Christians, as a body, regularly celebrated the Lord's supper, under the authority of the apostles, for twenty-seven years after the crucifixion.

St Paul was converted about the year 37. He wrote the first Epistle to the Corinthians in the year 56. In this Epistle, chap. ix. 20, &c., he teaches us in the most decisive manner, that the Lord's supper was a standing ordinance in the church at Corinth, and, by necessary analogy, in every other part of the world. The same thing he indicates, also, in chap. x. 21. As St Paul was converted four years only after the crucifixion, and was at Jerusalem with the other apostles, three years afterward, it is impossible that he should not have known whether this ordinance was universally celebrated, or not; and whether it had, or had not, been universally celebrated in the earliest moments of the apostolic church. St Paul is thus a decisive witness of the truth of St Luke's account. Of both these testimonies, it is farther to be observed, that they are given incidentally, without any design of establishing this fact, and for purposes of a totally different nature. They are therefore absolutely unexceptionable, and undesignedly confirmatory of each other.

It may here with propriety be added, that Justin Martyr, who flourished about the year 130, and was born about the close of the first century, says, 'All Christians, both of the city and the country, assemble on Sunday, because our Lord rose on that day; and then we hear read the writings of the prophets and apostles; then the person presiding makes a speech to the congregation, exhorting them to follow and perform the things which they hear. After this, we all unite in prayer, and then celebrate the sacrament; and such as are willing and able give alms.' Here the celebration of this ordinance is declared by an unexceptionable witness to be the regular practice of all Christians throughout the world, on every Lord's day. The universality of this celebration at the period specified proves, beyond debate, that it was an original practice of all the apostles.

With these testimonies of the evangelists, and St Paul before them, the primitive Christians would have certainly seen, that the institution was declared in the four Gospels, particularly the three first, to have been instituted by Christ antecedently to his death; and accompanied by a command, requiring a continual celebration of it by all his followers. In the Acts, and the first Epistle to the Corinthians, it would be seen with equal certainty, that St Luke and St Paul declare the celebration to have corresponded exactly with this command, and to have been thus regular and universal from the beginning. Had the apostles then, the only persons who had sufficient authority to introduce an ordinance of religious worship, proposed the institution of this sacrament as a new thing, at any distance of time after the crucifixion, they would have been seen directly to contradict their own assertions; which declared it to be instituted by Christ before his death, and to have been celebrated regularly by themselves from that date. At the same time they must have attempted to impose another gross and impossible falsehood on their followers; viz. that they themselves had also regularly united in this celebration. It is obvious that an attempt to establish this institution in such circumstances would not only have been impracticable, but pre-eminently ridiculous; and equally evident, that no man who seriously made such an attempt could, in a religious service, have any followers.

Thus it is clear, that the Lord's supper was instituted

by Christ himself, at the time, and in the circumstances, specified; that it is a standing, unanswerable proof of his mission, and of the Gospel which records it; and that Christians, whenever they celebrate this ordinance, actually 'show forth the Lord's death until he come.'

3. The institution of this ordinance exhibits, in a strong light, the purity of Christ's character.

This sacrament was instituted by him as a commemoration of his death; and proves unanswerably, that he foresaw with certainty the time and the manner in which he should die. It proves, therefore, beyond debate, the following things:—

(1.) That he was a prophet; because he foresaw, and foretold, his death, and the time, and the manner, in which he was to die.

(2.) That his death was voluntary; because, with this foresight, he might easily have avoided it.

(3.) That his death was intended to be an atonement for sin; or, in other words, 'his body was broken, and his blood shed, for many.'

(4.) That he died without a crime.

No criminal, who can escape the death which rewards his crimes, ever yielded himself to such a death; particularly, to one so painful as that upon the cross.

At the same time, no person ever introduced, no person can be supposed to introduce, among any of mankind, much less among his friends and followers, a remembrance of himself as a malefactor, publicly convicted of an infamous crime, and put to death by an infamous punishment. No man ever wished to have any thing remembered concerning himself which was not creditable to his character. Much less would any man become the voluntary recorder of his own guilt, and the remembrancer of his own shame. But here, the death was in the highest degree infamous; solicited by a whole nation, and its government; awarded on the charge of a capital crime; and attended with circumstances of singular disgrace, as well as of unexampled suffering. The commemoration of it was instituted by the sufferer, from his own choice merely, with the full knowledge and direct declaration of all these facts; and attended with such circumstances as to perpetuate the remembrance of them throughout every generation of his followers. He who can believe these things to have been done by an impostor, and to have been recorded and celebrated in a religious service by the followers of an impostor, can believe anything.

4. The sacrament is intended to admonish Christians of the second coming of Christ.

'For, as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come;' that is, to the judgment. This passage is an explicit declaration of one of the purposes, accomplished by the celebration of the Lord's supper; to wit, the exhibition of his death, both to themselves and to mankind, until his second coming. This exhibition, therefore, was intended solemnly to remind them of this great truth; that the same Saviour, whose death they thus celebrate, who was once broken on the cross, and is now symbolically broken before their eyes, will finally appear as the Judge of the quick and the dead.

No considerations can furnish Christians with higher consolation than this; nor can consolation be furnished in a more proper or impressive manner. He whose love to them was 'stronger than death'—who 'died for their offences, and rose again for their justification'—whose death is in a very affecting symbolical manner repeated before them at every celebration of this ordinance—here holds out to them this awful but delightful truth; that he will one day be their Judge, as well as the Judge of the world. From a Judge, who 'loved the church, and gave himself for it,' what blessings may Christians not expect hereafter! What blessings are they not here taught to expect! The very ordinance which admonishes them that he is to be their Judge, brings all his love before their eyes. He 'is the same, yesterday, to-day, and for ever;' and will entertain for them the same tenderness as when he hung upon the cross. He has promised, 'never to leave them nor forsake them;' he has promised, that the contribution of 'two mites' to his service, and the administration of 'a cup of cold water to a disciple,' as such, shall be rewarded by him in the coming world. These promises, he here announces to them, he will one day come to perform; and will bring with him the same love for them with which he went to his crucifixion. What truth can be more replenished with comfort? How could this truth be declared in a more affecting manner? Every Christian at the sacramental table, solemnly pondering his own sins, and the condemnation to which he is exposed by them, is naturally led to exclaim, 'Who is he that condemneth?' and to answer, with hope and exultation, 'It is Christ that died.'

5. The Lord's supper is intended to unite Christians in a known, public, and efficacious bond of union.

In a former Discourse I have mentioned baptism as a sign, by which Christians are known to be the followers of Christ; and then mentioned also the importance of some public mark of distinction to every standing society of men. The observations which I then made concerning baptism, considered as such a sign, are with the same propriety applicable to the Lord's supper also. But there are some observations relative to this subject which are applicable to the Lord's supper only. In baptism, Christians appear as subjects of the ordinance but once in their lives; and most of them, at this appearance, being infants, are altogether passive. At the Lord's Supper, they are always voluntary, active partakers; and appear often in this character, throughout their whole Christian life. They appear at the table of Christ in a body, as members of him, the head. They appear as Christian friends and brethren, and are 'all members one of another.' They appear as open professors of his religion, as his followers, as attached to his cause, as interested in his death; as expectants of his coming, as voluntary subjects of his government. They exhibit themselves as being united in 'one faith, one baptism,' one worship, one system of doctrines and duties, one scheme of communion and discipline, as having one common interest, one common pilgrimage, and one final home. All these things are exhibited and established by the Lord's supper. Where Christians are faithful to themselves, this ordinance separates them, so far as is necessary for their edification, from the world; and becomes the distinctive badge of their character as disciples of the Redeemer.

6. This sacrament was intended to be a visible and affecting pledge of Christ's love to his followers.

In the administration of this sacrament Christ is exhibited as dying on the cross, and as dying for them. When he took the bread at its institution, he said,

'This is my body which is broken for you;' and 'This is my blood, which is shed for many, for the remission of sins.' The benefits here communicated, are of a value which is inestimable. They are benefits, communicated to these very persons, at an expense unexampled in the universe; and procured by a love which admits no parallel. All the sufferings of Christ were necessary to this end; particularly, his sufferings on the cross, the consummation of them all. These sufferings, the bread broken and the wine poured out present to us, in the most lively and affecting images; and thus set before our eyes, in the strongest manner, that unlimited and divine benevolence by which they were undergone. The language which these symbols speak is always the same. Throughout every age and every land they declare the same sufferings and the same love; and are thus a monumental pledge of Christ's tenderness to his children, to the end of the world.

7. This sacrament was also designed to edify Christians in the divine life. The edification of Christians is the increase of justness in their views, of purity and fervour in their affections, and of faithfulness in their conduct with respect to the objects of religion. To this increase, in all respects, the Lord's supper naturally and eminently contributes.

To the justness of a Christian's views, it lends important aid, by presenting in a very affecting manner the atonement of Christ, and all the doctrines connected with it, which were mentioned under the first head of this Discourse. All these, also, and their connexion with this great event, it presents to the mind in the most forcible manner, arresting and engrossing every ingenuous affection. In this manner it leads us, except when under the dominion of a sensual, obdurate heart, to ponder all these subjects with deep attention, and a strong sense of our own personal interest in them. Instead of regarding them with loose, superficial, and transient inquiries, we make them objects of intense study, and most critical investigation. The 'love,' which 'rejoiceth in the truth,' is here excited to an elevation and fervour not easily derived from any other source, and diffuses all its candour and equity over every scrutiny. The Saviour, seen in the most amiable of all characters, and in the most wonderful manifestation of that amiableness, is loved with peculiar ardour; and the mind, feeling at once the duty and excellency of resembling him, naturally labours, under the influence of the same disposition which was in him, to 'walk as he also walked;' to 'purify itself,' in some measure, 'as he is pure;' and to wear an untarnished resemblance of his beauty and glory. It remembers, it feels what he was, and the duty and desirableness of being like him. In this situation it naturally summons to its aid all the motives to obedience by which it ought to be influenced; the loveliness of virtue, and the odiousness of sin; the threatenings on the one hand, and, on the other, the invitations and promises. In the full sight of these, it acquires new vigour, and forms new resolutions; enters upon its duty with alacrity, and pursues it with delight and perseverance. Thus it becomes wiser and better; more fitted to be a blessing here; and more adorned with that beauty and loveliness which prepare it for a triumphant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of its Redeemer.

III. *The qualifications of this ordinance*, I shall briefly consider in the following observations.

1. It is an indispensable qualification for this ordinance, that the candidate for communion be a member of the visible church of Christ, in full standing.

By this I intend, that he shall be such a member of the church, as I have formerly described; to wit, that he should be a person of piety; that he should have made a public profession of religion; and that he should have been baptized. All these things, if we substitute circumcision for baptism, were required of every Israelite, in order to his acceptable participation of the passover, and to his being and continuing an acceptable member of the Abrahamic church. God formed the church, under the dispensation to Abraham, by natural descent from this patriarch; or rather he formed the visible church by the ordinance of circumcision, set, as a seal, according to his own appointment on all its members, constituted originally of all his descendants, limited afterward to those of Isaac, and then to those of Jacob. Such of these, as did not receive this seal, or, in other words, were not thus introduced into the visible church, he directed to be cut off from his people. Those who were thus introduced into the visible church, and did not partake of the passover, he commanded also to be punished with the same excision. All the Israelites he farther required to make a public profession of religion, by entering publicly into that solemn covenant with him, which has been so often recited in these Discourses concerning the church and its ordinances, and by 'avouching Jehovah to be their God, and themselves to be his people.' This covenant they were, however, required to enter into with religious sincerity. In the fiftieth Psalm, it is written, 'Unto the wicked, God saith, What hast thou to do, to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant into thy mouth?' In other words, 'Thou hast no right, no permission from me, to take my covenant into thy mouth.' They were required to enter into covenant with God; and were entitled in this manner to all the external privileges connected with this transaction. But they were required also to do this with a spirit of universal obedience. 'Thou hast avouched the Lord this day to be thy God,' says Moses to Israel, 'and to walk in his ways, and to keep his statutes, and commandments, and judgments, and to hearken unto his voice; and the Lord hath avouched thee this day to be his peculiar people, as he hath promised thee, and that thou shouldest keep all his commandments.' 'And thou shalt swear, The Lord liveth, in truth, in judgment, and in righteousness,' said God to Israel, Jer. iv 2. I have elsewhere shown, that to swear, considered as a duty of the people of Israel, is the same thing as to enter into covenant with God. These words, therefore, contained a command to the Israelites, to exercise truth and righteousness in this solemn transaction.

Accordingly, this people are, in a great multitude of passages, severely reproved, threatened, and declared to be punished, because they violated this covenant. See Hos. viii. 1; and vi. 4—7; Jer. xxxiv. 18—20; and xi. 2, 3; and xxii. 8, 9; Ezek. xvii. 15—19; Mal. ii. 8, 9, &c. &c.

That Christians in making this profession, which I have heretofore shown to be their duty also, are bound to act with sincerity, and to exhibit before the eye of God 'truth in the inward parts,' is so plain a case of duty, as hardly to admit of argument or evidence.

When, let me ask, ought men to exhibit this truth, if they are not bound to exhibit it here. If the Israelites were severely censured, and dreadfully punished for covenanting falsely, this conduct must be still more guilty on the part of those who enjoy the light of the gospel.

Independently of the superior privileges enjoyed by the Christian, the only material difference between him and the Israelite lies chiefly in these two things: That the Christian is not, of course, a member of the church by natural descent, and that he is not punished with excision for not becoming the subject of the initiatory, and for not attending upon the confirmatory sacrament. As the circumcised person was required to make a public profession of religion, so is the baptized; and both are equally required to make this profession with sincerity and piety. The baptized person is also required, not only as a rational being under the dispensation of the gospel, but also as a person who by his baptism is brought under new and additional obligations to celebrate the sacramental supper, as soon as he becomes possessed of sufficient understanding to discern its nature and use, and to celebrate it with decency; and, so soon as he shall have sufficient understanding to make a rational profession of religion, previously indispensable to his participation of this ordinance. This profession, as I have already observed, must spring from piety, and be made with evangelical faith and repentance.

It will probably be here said by baptized persons generally, that they cannot make such a profession, because they are destitute of faith, repentance, and piety. To this, I answer, that they are inexcusable for not possessing this character. God requires it indispensably of all men; and has laid them under peculiar obligations to assume it, by bringing them into his visible church, through the administration of baptism. I know that they will allege here their inability to become possessed of this character, as their excuse for being destitute of it, for not making a profession of religion, and consequently for not communing at the sacramental table. Let me exhort them to remember, that this inability is no other than the common, natural disinclination of the human heart to do its duty; the very sin with which they are charged in the Scriptures. Let me exhort them to believe and to feel that God will not accept this sinful character, as an excuse for the omission of this, or any other duty.

At the same time they are bound to remember also, that this situation will in no degree justify them in making an insincere profession. This would be only substituting one sin for another: a sin, which in my view is of a still grosser nature. That which they are required to do is, not to cease from sin in one form, by perpetrating it in another; but faithfully to perform their duty. They are bound to make a profession of religion; to make it with the piety of the gospel; and thus to become evangelical communicants at the table of Christ.

It has been supposed, that, because the Jewish circumcised children universally partook of the passover, therefore baptized children ought now universally to partake of the Lord's Supper. To this position I answer, that St Paul, as was observed in a former Discourse, has directly forbidden believers to hold religious communion with unbelievers; and, by unavoidable consequence, has forbidden unbelievers to commune at the table of Christ. Unbelieving parents, also, he has declared, cannot offer their children in baptism; and that, notwithstanding themselves have been baptized. Plainly, then, they cannot for the same reason offer themselves to God in the covenant of grace, nor appear as qualified communicants at the table of Christ. 'Unto the wicked,' now, as well as anciently, that is, to all unbelievers, 'God saith, What hast thou to do, that thou shouldst take my covenant into thy mouth?'

As the moral character of man is, at the best, imperfectly known by himself, and as evangelical assurance is no part of the character of a new convert, it is an indispensable qualification for communion in the church of Christ, particularly at the sacramental table, that the candidate possess a rational and preponderating persuasion of his own sincere piety.

In all cases, where certainty is unattainable, no rule exists for our direction, but the commanding probability.* The commanding probability ought, therefore, to control in this case, because certainty is evidently beyond our reach. The soundness of this rule of our duty may be also illustrated in the following manner: We are absolutely required to offer ourselves up to God in the covenant of grace. We therefore know, certainly, that this is our duty. In the case supposed, we do not know, that we shall make an insincere profession, but are furnished, by this rational persuasion of our piety, with a commanding probability, that our profession will be sincere, and acceptable to God. We know that we shall commit sin, if we neglect to make this profession; but we do not know that we shall sin in making it. On the contrary, we are furnished with a commanding probability that, if we make a profession of religion in this case, we shall not sin, but perform a service acceptable to God. To do this, in the case supposed, becomes then, if I mistake not, our unquestionable duty.

The apostles, I think, certainly acted in accordance with this doctrine. They address the members of the churches founded by them, as saints. But when they come to exhibit their character with reference to this subject they plainly exhibit that this saintship was imperfectly known, either to themselves, or to those in whom it was supposed to reside. A few passages will make this position sufficiently clear. 'Examine yourselves,' says St Paul to the Corinthians, 'whether ye be in the faith.' This direction could not, I think, have been given to persons who were supposed by him who gave it to know themselves to be Christians. Of course, when they were admitted into the church of Christ, they were not admitted because they knew themselves to be Christians, but because they had a fair hope, or a preponderating, rational persuasion, that this was their character. But St Paul received these Christians into the church upon a plan which was accordant with their duty. Of course, it is accordant with our duty to become members of the church, whenever such a persuasion becomes the standing view of our own minds. Of the same nature is the direction immediately following this; 'Prove your ownselves.'

The same is also implied in the succeeding question, 'Know ye not your ownselves, how that Jesus Christ is formed in you, except ye be reprobates:'—ἀδόκιμοι, unapproved.

* See on this subject, the Sermon on the Truth of God.

Of the same nature is the direction given to the church, 1 Cor. xi. 28, 'But let a man examine himself; and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.' This direction is plainly given to professing Christians, to enable them to determine whether they are worthy communicants at the table of Christ. But no such examination would be necessary for those to whom the apostle wrote, if, at their admission into the church, they knew themselves to be saints; for every saint is, essentially, a worthy communicant.

By a rational, preponderating persuasion, I intend such a one as is the result of repeated, thorough, solemn self-examination, aided by a faithful resort to books which exhibit the genuine evidences of piety, and by the advice of wise and good men, particularly ministers of the gospel. He who does not in a case of this magnitude seek for all these, is regardless of his own well-being.

SERMON CLXI.

THE MEANS OF GRACE.—EXTRAORDINARY MEANS OF GRACE.—THE LORD'S SUPPER: DISPOSITION WITH WHICH IT IS TO BE ATTENDED; AND MOTIVES TO THE ATTENDANCE.

And as they did eat, Jesus took bread and blessed, and brake it; and gave to them, and said, Take, eat, this is my body. And he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and they all drank of it. And he said unto them, This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many. And when they had sung a hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives.—Mark xiv. 22—25.

In the preceding Discourse I proposed to consider,

I. *The nature,*

II. *The design of this ordinance.*

III. *The qualifications necessary for attendance upon it.*

IV. *The disposition with which it is to be attended.*

V. *The motives to this attendance.*

The three first of these heads were considered in that Discourse. I shall now proceed,

IV. To consider *the dispositions with which this ordinance is to be attended.*

By this I mean that state of mind with which a person generally qualified in the manner described under the preceding head, should celebrate this ordinance.

This disposition is directly indicated by the injunction, 'This do, in remembrance of me.' It will not be supposed, that Christ directed us merely to remember him on this occasion; or to remember him with indifference, or distrust, or opposition, or disrespect. The very idea, both of enjoining and of voluntarily engaging in a commemoration, supposes that there is something great or good in that which is commemorated. Whenever a person is formally and solemnly made an object of commemoration, it is of course implied, that the commemoration is an intentional honour to his character, and that those who thus honour him, regard him with sincere affection and respect.

Such being plainly and pre-eminently the nature of this religious rite, we become deeply interested to inquire, What are especially the constituents of that disposition, which we ought to experience, while celebrating this ordinance in remembrance of our Saviour?

To this inquiry, I answer,

1. We are to remember Christ in this ordinance with admiration.

Everything pertaining to the character of this glorious Person is fitted to awaken this emotion of the mind. Beside the incomprehensible mysteries of his original character, his incarnation, his life, his death, his love for mankind, his propitiatory sacrifice of himself, his resurrection, his exaltation, and his intercession, are all marvellous beyond measure; and are investigated by angels with astonishment and rapture. Hence his character is declared by the prophet Isaiah, and summed up by himself, when he appeared to Manoah and his wife, in that remarkable name, Wonderful. This singular character, containing in itself a combination of all that is great and good, is presented to us in the most affecting manner at the sacramental table, and demands of us the highest exercise of religious admiration. This exercise of the Christian spirit is formed by the union of wonder, reverence, and delight; wonder, excited by the greatness of the things which are done, reverence for the exalted character displayed in doing them, and delight in the manifestations which they contain of mercy and goodness, and in the benefits from them to the innumerable multitude of the first-born. At the sacramental table, the whole character of Christ is brought before our eyes. We behold him there in the act of 'giving his life a ransom for many.' Again his body is broken, again his blood is poured out, for the sins of men. His compassion for this ruined world is presented to us in living colours. We cannot fail to remember who it was that thus 'loved us, and gave himself for us.' We cannot fail to remember, that he who was 'the brightness of the Father's glory, and upheld all things by the word of his power, by himself purged our sins; and then sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.' We cannot but call to mind, that by him, whom we here follow to the cross, 'all things were created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible; whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; that all things were created by him, and for him; that he is before all things; and that by him all things consist?' We cannot fail to recollect, that he is

now 'head over all things unto the church;' having 'a name above every name which is named in this world, or in the world to come;' reigning in a kingdom, which is 'an everlasting kingdom;' and ruling with 'a dominion which shall know no end.' We cannot fail to realize, that the day is approaching, in which 'he will come in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory, with the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God;' will summon the dead from their graves; will sit on the throne of judgment, and pronounce the final doom of angels and of men: while from his face 'the heavens and the earth will flee away, and no place be found for them any more.' This is the wonderful Person, whose sacrifice of himself is symbolized on the altar of Christians; whom we there behold, bleeding, broken, dying, and consigned to the grave. This condescension was exercised, this humiliation was undergone, from 'the love wherewith he loved the church, and gave himself for it.' Who, that has any share of the heavenly spirit, can fail to exclaim, in unison with the heavenly host, 'Worthy is the Lamb, that was slain, to receive power and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing; for He hath redeemed us to God by his blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation, and hath made us kings and priests unto God, even his Father. To him be glory, and dominion, for ever and ever. Amen.'

2. We are to remember Christ in this ordinance with GRATITUDE.

That gratitude is to be exercised towards every benefactor, is a doctrine readily acknowledged by all men. Hence, in every age, and in every land, where civilization has made even a moderate progress, testimonies of this emotion of the mind have been publicly given to those who were esteemed public benefactors. To heroes and statesmen; to those who have founded beneficent institutions; or otherwise enlarged the means of relief, or enjoyment; nay, to such as have merely increased the reputation of a people by efforts of ingenuity, to philosophers and poets, statues have been set up, pillars raised, magnificent sepulchral monuments erected, days set apart to their honour, and festivals instituted in commemoration of what they had done. Yet how few of them have been real benefactors to mankind! How few of them have done that which a wise man can approve, or a good man be willing to imitate! How few of them have been such as a person of sobriety would cheerfully acknowledge as his own sons! How imperfectly do the best of them resemble HIM 'who came to seek and to save that which was lost!' How dimly, how interruptedly does their benevolence shine, in comparison with the effulgence of the Redeemer: a rushlight trembling and failing in the beams of the sun! At the same time, the benevolence which they really possessed, he gave them. The beneficence which they wrought, he enabled them to accomplish. But neither the things which they have spoken, done, or suffered, nor the motives which gave them birth, nor the consequences which they produced, are to be thought of, when placed at the side of those which are here presented to our view. All the writings of philosophers, poets, and orators are inestimably inferior in wisdom and efficacy to the single sermon of Christ on the mount. A great part of the efforts of statesmen, heroes, and patriots have been nuisances to the world, and merely means of raising them to distinction and applause. The best of these efforts have been mingled with much folly and much sin, and have terminated only in little and temporary good. In all that Christ said, supreme wisdom shone; in all that he did and suffered, supreme excellence. His efforts have accomplished the salvation of a world, and produced boundless good to unnumbered millions of rational beings. Disinterestedness immensely glorious illumined his whole life, and encircled him on the cross with intense and eternal splendour. Nothing so beautiful, so lovely, was ever before seen by the universe, or will be seen hereafter. With what emotions, with what praise, with what solemnities, ought he then to be commemorated by the race of Adam!

The solemnities with which he is pleased to be commemorated, he himself has instituted in this ordinance; simple, obvious, easily comprehensible by the humblest intelligence, coming directly to the heart with a powerful and undiminishing impression. When we assemble to celebrate these solemnities, all the great things which I have specified are set in full view before our eyes. They are all exhibited, also, as done for *us*. Our souls were sinful, condemned, and lost, equally with those of others. We stood on the brink of perdition, and infinitely needed the cleansing of the great Sacrifice. There was not an eye to pity, nor an arm to save. We did not even wish, much less did we ask, for deliverance. At that terrible period, unsolicited, undesired, unwelcomed, this immensely glorious Benefactor stationed himself in the gap between us and ruin; and voluntarily became the substitute for sinners. Then God said concerning the soul, 'Deliver it from going down to the pit; for I have found a ransom.' The guilt of 'our sins,' this Divine Person 'washed away in his own blood.' The impurity of our character, 'the root of bitterness,' by which we were 'defiled,' he destroyed for ever. The gates of hell, to all his sincere followers, he finally shut: the doors of heaven he opened with his own hand; destroyed the sting of death, and the victory of the grave; and disclosed the path from that dark and desolate mansion to the world of immortal glory. From this desolate mansion he himself first trode that path; and went before, to prepare a place for them in his Father's house. There, on 'a throne' of glory 'high and lifted up,' he intercedes for their protection from enemies, their deliverance from sin, and their perseverance in holiness unto the end. To them he calls from that happy world, with the unceasing voice of boundless mercy, 'Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' There he watches all their 'goings, and preserves their feet from falling, their eyes from tears, and their souls from death.' There he marks all their weaknesses, temptations, dangers, and enemies; and says to each, 'Hitherto shalt thou come, but no farther.' Thence he stretches out his arm, takes them by the hand, and leads them onward in the path of life. Their sighs he hears, their tears he numbers, their frail, feeble attempts to serve him, he records in the book of his remembrance. The 'bruised reed' he suffers not to break, the flame that feebly trembles on 'the smoking flax,' he suffers not to expire. Over every enemy he enables them finally to triumph, and from every danger to escape. Through the valley of the shadow of death' he conducts them with safety and hope; and supported

by 'his rod and staff,' brings them to the land of light and peace, which rises beyond it. There, purified from every stain, error, and imperfection, he admits them to his own 'presence, where is fulness of joy,' and surrounds them 'with pleasures for evermore.'

To provide this train of blessings for them, both here and hereafter, he became man; an humble, suffering, dying man; agonized in the garden, expired on the cross, and descended into the grave. Had it been 'possible' that these blessings could be procured at less expense, 'this cup' would certainly have 'passed from him.' In this ordinance, then, we see the real means of all the good for which Christians hope in this world, and in that to come. Here they behold their suffering Saviour in the very act of purchasing for them eternal glory by his tears and blood. What Christian's heart will not distend, what Christian's bosom will not heave, with inexpressible emotions, in the full sight of this amazing object! Who among them will not anticipate the exultation of heaven, and begin the new song on this side of the grave! Who, with a mixture of gratitude and transport, will not exclaim, 'Blessing, and glory, honour, and power, be unto him that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever!'

3. We are to appear at the table of Christ with the deepest HUMILITY.

When we remember the things which Christ has done, we are bound to remember also the character of those for whom they were done. 'God commendeth his love to us, in that, while we were yet sinners, he gave his Son to die for us.' Christ commendeth his love to us, in that, while we were yet sinners, he gave himself to die for us. We are bound never to forget, that we are of the humblest class of intelligent creatures; born of the earth, and kindred to worms; of yesterday, comparatively knowing nothing; our strength weakness, and our life a vapour. At the same time, we are sinners, apostates, rebels against the government of Jehovah; condemned by his law, outcasts from his kingdom, and destined to an endless banishment from his presence in the regions of woe.

In this miserable situation of guilt and danger, he was pleased to publish to us the glad tidings of salvation by his beloved Son. But we turned a deaf ear, a hard heart, and a blind mind, to the benevolent proclamation. We said, when Christ appeared, 'This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours.' We had before, with bold impiety, violated his law; with a corresponding ingratitude we now abused his grace. In the mean time, we are of no importance to him. 'Of the stones' of the street, he could have 'raised up' unto himself innumerable 'children,' all wiser and better than we; perfectly obedient, excellent, and lovely; instruments of his glory, and objects of his delight, throughout the ages of eternity.

But notwithstanding our insignificance, notwithstanding our provocations, he still had mercy on us, and sent his holy and good Spirit, to enlighten our mind, renew our hearts, and purify our lives. He commissioned his apostles to preach the gospel, established his church, founded the ministry, appointed the ordinances of that worship which he was pleased to accept, and thus disclosed to us the hopes and the means of salvation. All these things also he published and perpetuated in that volume of truth and righteousness, which he has announced to us as his own word. Through the glorious name of him who is broken before us in this ordinance, he has taught us, that our humble, faithful, religious services will, notwithstanding all their imperfections, be acceptable to him, and profitable to us. Thus he exhibited to us infinite compassion, kindness, and forbearance; and all this through the death of his only begotten and dearly beloved Son. Nay, this glorious Person with unlimited condescension calls to us, surrounding his table, 'Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any man will hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.'

Who are we, my brethren, and 'what is our father's house, that God has brought us hitherto? For his word's sake, and according to his own heart, has he done all these great things, to make his servants know them.' Who, that looks into himself, who that considers how little he is, how prone to error, how perverse, how unbelieving, how obdurate, how worldly minded, how exceedingly guilty, and therefore how odious in the sight of God, can fail to exclaim to his divine Redeemer, 'Behold, I am vile, what shall I answer thee? I will lay my hand upon my mouth. I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.'

From this lowly opinion of ourselves, irresistibly awakened by these considerations, naturally springs condescension and kindness to others. That pride, which here receives so deep a wound, is of all human passions, perhaps the most unfeeling, unjust, and abusive. From no source do the poor and powerless suffer more injuries, or injuries fitted to be felt more deeply; nor is any human feeling more unbecoming the character of a man, nor more contrary to that of a Christian. But it seems scarcely possible that he who solemnly regards the condescension of Christ, so strikingly manifested by this ordinance, should fail to experience the most abasing view of his own pride, and the most exalted views of the excellence of his Redeemer's condescension. It will be difficult for him not to feel, that the distance between Christ and himself is infinite; and that that between himself and his humblest neighbour is nothing. When therefore he beholds this divine Person stooping immeasurably, to regard with kindness a creature so insignificant and unworthy as himself, he cannot but realize both the beauty and the obligation of this glorious example; and be compelled to imitate it in exhibiting kindness and condescension to others.

4. We are bound on this occasion, also, to form vigorous RESOLUTIONS OF OBEDIENCE.

We sit at the table of Christ, in the professed character of his disciples. In no situation do we so often, or so solemnly, profess ourselves to be of this character. But our Saviour says, 'If ye love me, keep my commandments.' And again, 'Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I have commanded you.' This then is the great end of our profession; the great criterion by which its sincerity is tried. Accordingly, St John says, 'Hereby we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.'

All obedience is to a great extent dependent for its existence, continuance, and vigour on the determinations, or, as they are commonly styled, the resolutions of him who obeys. Such resolutions, are stations whence our obedience sets out; guides, by which its course is directed, remembrancers, which warn us of

our sloth, wanderings, and backslidings; and powerful excitements to diligence and faithfulness in our duty. A solemn resolution is, perhaps, always given up with reluctance. A resolution often renewed, and rendered habitual, is hardly given up at all.

But the Lord's supper both requires and enables us to form resolutions of obedience to his commands, with a power which may, I think, be pronounced singular. The immeasurable beneficence of Christ is here presented to our view by images of the most persuasive efficacy, making their appeals directly to the heart. When we behold him who was infinitely rich, for our sakes voluntarily becoming so poor, and so distressed, 'that we through his poverty might become rich' in all good, temporal and eternal; we are forced to ask, 'What shall we render to the Lord for all his benefits?' The single word obedience involves the whole answer to this question; and comes home to the heart recommended by all the love of Christ, by all the reasonableness of his commands, and by the divine and immortal rewards which he has promised to those that obey him.

As our obedience is in this forcible manner enjoined, so we are equally required to form those resolutions, whence it must spring. We here form them at the foot of the cross, by the side of our expiring Redeemer, in the full prospect of his last agonies, and with the strongest conviction of the immeasurable love which induced him to undergo them. Here, therefore, our resolutions will be solemn, ardent, firm, and faithful. Of course they will be lasting and operative; neither removed by the wiles of the tempter, nor broken down by tribulation and persecution, nor choked by the cares and seductions of the present world; but producing fruit to the glory of our Lord, thirty, sixty, and a hundred fold.

5. We are required to appear at the table of Christ with BROTHERLY LOVE.

'One is your Master, even Christ,' said our Lord to his disciples, 'and all ye are brethren.' At this solemn scene, Christians appear in this interesting relation more frequently, more publicly, and more intimately than at any other. They sit around one table, unite in one covenant, commune in one worship, celebrate one crucified Saviour, and through him are by adoption the children of one common Father. Of course, they are members of the same family, pursue the same interest, walk together in the narrow way to eternal life, are bound to the same final home, and are heirs of the same delightful inheritance beyond the grave. What considerations can awaken a sense of the fraternal relation, or inspire the spirit of fraternal tenderness, if these fail!

But this is not all. Christ has made brotherly love the immediate and great object of the new commandment. 'A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another.' This he said immediately after he had ended the first celebration of the sacred supper. The precept, in itself glorious, derives a peculiar lustre from the time when it was given; and, endeared to us from its own nature, is pre-eminently endeared by the occasion out of which it immediately sprang. Accordingly our Saviour, who chose this solemn, interesting period of his life as the proper season to publish it, seized the occasion also to enforce it upon his followers; and subjoined, 'As I have loved you, that ye also love one another.' What Christian, in the full view of this argument, can fail to exercise the heavenly disposition required by this peculiarly divine precept; especially when he has before his eyes, in these solemn symbols, the transcendent love of his Saviour to him, exhibited in colours of life?

But this is not all. The same glorious Person taught us, at the same time, that the exercise of brotherly love would be, through every age, the standing and decisive proof of our discipleship. 'Hereby,' he added, 'shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.' From the conformity of our character to this precept, from our resemblance to his character, all men, however prejudiced, however hostile to Christianity, would be compelled to perceive the sincerity of our profession, the reality of our religious character, and of course the reality of the religion which we profess. Exactly accordant with this declaration of Christ has been the fact throughout every age of the church. The brotherly love of Christians, whenever it has existed with vigour, and operated with activity, has been to the world the controlling proof of the reality and the heavenly origin of the Christian religion; a proof, without which, it is to be feared, all the other arguments, although completely unanswerable, would have been insufficient to convince, and still more to persuade, mankind. If, then, we love the cause of the Redeemer, and wish to uphold his religion in the world; if we love the souls of men, and wish them to embrace the religion which came down from heaven; if we love the immortal welfare of our fellow creatures, and wish them to become heirs of the happy world, where that welfare is consummated; we shall feel ourselves, on this account also, compelled to cherish, and to exert, this angelic disposition.

Even this is not all. Brotherly love is made in the Scriptures a decisive proof to ourselves, as well as to others, that we are the disciples of Christ. 'We know,' says St John, 'that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.' If, then, we desire peace of mind, a supporting hope of the divine favour, the delight which springs from a consciousness of forgiven sin, and an animating foretaste of glory beyond the grave, we shall be powerfully quickened to fulfill this benevolent command of the Redeemer.

All these considerations are presented to us in the strongest manner by this divine ordinance. At the sacramental table, in the near prospect of his own death, at the very entrance upon those agonies by which the expiation of sin was completed, this delightful precept was given by the Redeemer. Here, therefore, at every season of communion, our Lord may be justly considered as renewing the precept to us, and as pointing to all the affecting considerations by which it is enforced. At the head of his followers HE now sits at every celebration of this ordinance, and, addressing them with infinite tenderness, says, 'A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.'

6. We are bound to appear at the table of Christ with a UNIVERSAL GOOD-WILL TO OUR FELLOW MEN.

We are here presented with a most affecting exhibition of the love of Christ to us, and to others. He loved us, while we were strangers to the covenant of promise, aliens from his church, enemies to his mission and character, 'without hope, and without God in the world.' He loved us with an eternal and unchangeable

love; a love springing only from the benevolence of his nature; a love 'stronger than death,' and triumphing over the grave. He loved us 'not in word, neither in tongue, but in deed, and in truth;' with an efficacious love, productive of the highest beneficence on his part, and of the richest hopes and blessings on ours.

He has required, that the 'same mind be in us, which was also in him;' and that we should 'walk even as he walked.' The love which he has exercised towards us, therefore, we are required to exercise towards our fellow men universally, whether friends or enemies. This love, like his, is to be vigorous, intense, always operative, perpetually productive of relief to the distressed, reformation to the sinful, improvement to the virtuous, instruction to the ignorant, and comfort to all with whom we are concerned. It is to be disinterested, expansive, unceasing, and superior to bigotry, prejudice, resentment, and every other selfish consideration. For the exercise of both these last-mentioned affections, this ordinance furnishes an opportunity singularly happy. The example which it sets before us, the precepts which it irresistibly calls to our minds, and the powerful appeal which it makes to our hearts, in the aptness and energy of its symbols, awaken of course the best affections, wherever they dwell, and open the hands with a divine instinct, wherever they have been trained to the glorious habit of doing good. Here, then, we are to exercise the spirit from which all beneficence springs. Here we are to commence the evangelical purpose of relieving distress, and promoting comfort; to fix the controlling resolution, and to go forth to the divine employment of producing happiness, and effectuating reformation. Here, particularly, is to be begun and advanced the illustrious charity towards 'the household of faith,' so extensively urged in a former Discourse, and destined by the Redeemer to cheer the pilgrimage of his poor, humble, suffering followers, styled by him 'the least of his brethren,' by relieving their wants, multiplying their comforts, and brightening their path to heaven with hope and joy.

V. *Of the motives which should influence us to the celebration of the Lord's supper*, I shall mention the following:—

1. The command of Christ.

The precept, 'This do in remembrance of me,' is possessed of divine authority; of the same authority with that which requires us to 'love the Lord our God, with all the heart.' The same disposition which would prompt us to obey God in any case, would induce us, therefore, to obey him in this. If we reverence our Creator at all—if we regard at all the character and mission of our Redeemer—we shall exhibit this spirit as uniformly, as faithfully, as cheerfully in our obedience to this institution, as in that which we render to any other. In vain, I fear, shall we plead a disposition to obey God in anything, if we disobey him in this; or that we remember the Redeemer with any evangelical regard, if we are indisposed to remember him in an institution so solemn, so affecting, so endearing.

2. The honour of Christ.

Christ has required us to do this in remembrance of him. If, then, we celebrate this ordinance in obedience to his command, we shall celebrate it in remembrance of Christ, with a design to honour him in our hearts, and in the sight of others. When we call to mind who it is to whom we render this honour, what he has done, and what he has suffered, for our sakes; what is the character of those for whom all this was done; and what is the nature, the number, and the magnitude of those blessings which these sufferings have procured for his followers; we cannot fail to perceive, that not authority only, but benevolence also, benevolence operating in the most glorious manner, demands our obedience to this injunction of the Redeemer. Every ingenuous feeling of man is here addressed in the most forcible manner. The authority from which this precept proceeds is the highest. The beneficence which enforces it is unrivalled. Reverence for this authority, and gratitude for this beneficence, combine their obligatory power, to produce in mankind a faithful and cheerful obedience to this precept. If we are not obedient here, our 'neck' must be 'an iron sinew.' If we are not grateful here, well may the Redeemer exclaim, 'The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know; my people doth not consider.'

To bring this subject home to your hearts, behold your Redeemer nailed to the cross. For whom was his body broken? For whom was his blood poured out? Who were the 'lost' beings, whom he came to 'seek and to save,' and for whom 'he gave his life a ransom?' On whose account was he forsaken of his Father? For whom did he give up the ghost, and descend to the grave? Whose sins did he wash away? For whom did he shut the gates of perdition, and open the door of endless life? Those who now are before me are the immortal, guilty, ruined beings for whom all this was done. You are the very sinners whom he came to redeem from the sins of this life, and the sorrows of that which is to come. To you he now proffers all the blessings of his mediation; the forgiveness of sin, the renovation of the soul, the hope, the peace, and the joy which flourish with undecaying beauty in a pious mind, the guidance, the support, and the consolations of his own Spirit; and an interest in his everlasting love. You he wished, he labours, to constitute sons, and 'kings,' and priests to God our Father,' and holds out to your acceptance crowns of immortal glory. Reject him, and you are 'poor, and wretched, and miserable, and blind, and naked, and in want of all things.' Receive him, and 'all things are yours.' Let me now ask you, Are you reluctant to glorify this divine Benefactor? Are your hearts insensible to these obligations, and to the immeasurable love from which they have flowed? Has sin palsied all your affections? Has the icy hand of spiritual death frozen your moral powers, and changed you into moving images of the dead? Does the voice of mercy sound here over a cemetery, and waste itself on the inhabitants of the grave?

Let the hearts of Christians burn within them, while Christ meets them at his table, and converses with them on all the agonies of the cross, on all the wonders of redeeming love, and on all the glories of that happy world, to which he is 'gone before, to prepare a place for' their final residence. Let them listen with transport, while he declares to them, 'if I go, and prepare a place for you; I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am ye may be also;' and let them exclaim, 'Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!'

3. The benefits derived by the church from the celebration of this ordinance, present another powerful motive to the performance of the duty in question.

He who 'loves the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity,' will love his church, the religion which it professes, and the ordinances by which that religion is upheld in the world. Among these ordinances, none has a more direct, a more happy influence upon the church than the Lord's supper. In the preceding Discourse I have mentioned that it was one design of this institution to unite Christians in a known, public, and efficacious bond of union. Here, I then observed, they appear often, actively, publicly as one body, as professors of his religion, as his followers and his friends. Here they exhibit themselves as united in one faith, as having one common interest, and as bound to one final, everlasting home.

Another design, as I observed at that time also, was to edify Christians in the divine life, by improving their views, their affections, and their conduct, with respect to the objects of religion. In both these respects, this ordinance is of incalculable importance to the church.

At the table of Christ chiefly, after their baptism, Christians are seen, and see each other, as a public body, as mutual friends, and as followers of the Lamb. Here mutually they give and receive countenance and resolution, worship together as Christians only, rejoice together, weep together, and universally exercise the Christian graces, invigorated, refined, and exalted by the sympathy of the gospel. Here the social principle of the intelligent nature ascends to the highest pitch of dignity and excellence of which in this world it is capable. Mind here refines, enlarges, and ennobles mind; virtue purifies and elevates virtue; and evangelical friendship not only finds and makes friends, but continually renders them more and more worthy of the name.

In the mean time, the church, as a body, is here most happily prepared for such events, as in the present world it is taught to expect by the word of God. Prosperity it is prepared to receive with moderation, gratitude, and praise. Adversity it is fitted to meet with patience and submission, with serenity and firmness. In every revival of religion it is enabled to exult with thanksgiving; over every decay of this divine influence to mourn and to pray, with sympathetic tenderness. Thus, for all its duties the church finds here a preparation indispensable to the best performance of them, and motives to fidelity in this performance, immense in their importance, and appealing directly to the best affections of the heart.

He who loves the prosperity of the divine kingdom, who seeks to promote the strength and stability of the church, and who feels an evangelical desire to increase these invaluable blessings to his fellow Christians, will find in these considerations a motive more than sufficient to the faithful performance of the duty in question. By the frequent celebration of the Lord's supper every communicant continually beholds the church a compact body, possessed of all the strength, firmness, and energy which result from the cordial union of many in a great and good design. Without this blessing Christians are feeble, because they are solitary; and are easily broken down, because they are destitute of mutual support, counsel, and sympathy. The benefits, which result to wise, or religious men, from walking with others, who are also wise, I have elsewhere displayed. Suffice it here to say, that these benefits are peculiarly found in communion at the table of Christ.

4. Another powerful motive to the performance of this duty, will be found by every Christian in his own personal good.

No exercises of the Christian life are ordinarily more pure, vigorous, and evangelical, than those which are experienced at the sacramental table. The sense which we here feel of our guilt, danger, and helplessness is apt to be vivid, and impressive in an unusual degree. Equally impressive are the views, which we form of forgiving, redeeming, and sanctifying love. Here godly sorrow for sin is powerfully awakened. Here are strongly excited complacency in the divine character, admiration of the riches of divine grace, and gratitude for the glorious interference of Christ in becoming the propitiation of our sins. Here brotherly love is kindled into a flame, and benevolence, warm, generous, and expansive, learns to encircle the whole family of Adam. Here, more perhaps than anywhere else, Christians have 'the same mind, which was also in Christ,' and prepare themselves to 'walk as he walked.' Every evangelical affection here becomes vigorous and active, virtuous resolutions stable, and the purposes of the Christian life exalted.

By the influence of these affections, the views of every good man concerning religious truth become gradually purified; and his willingness to receive, entire, the humbling, painful, doctrines of the gospel, is insensibly increased.

In the prayers particularly, and thanksgivings, which are offered up on this occasion—prayers, rendered by the occasion itself peculiarly humble and sincere; thanksgivings, by the same means, made ardent, unreserved, and elevated—the mind is prone to feel a sublimity of devotion, an evangelical refreshment, a heavenly rapture, not often, it is believed, found elsewhere.

By all these means a Christian is furnished in the celebration of this ordinance, perhaps more frequently than in any other situation, with supporting evidence of his religious character. He finds here the lively, and therefore the distinguishable exercises of a good mind; that disposition, particularly, to obey God, which is the soul of his religion, and without a conviction of which, all things else, commonly considered as evidences of piety, must stand for nothing; and with a rational conviction of which, all these things are chiefly unnecessary. The existence of this disposition he also finds most happily evinced by its increasing strength; the best, the indispensable evidence that it has begun to exist. Multitudes of good men obtain this invaluable blessing here who elsewhere look and sigh for it in vain. There is scarcely a greater discouragement to him who has entertained comfortable hopes of being a religious man, than the regular destitution of these blessings at the sacramental table. Graces and hopes, and comforts, which elsewhere decay, almost always revive here; not, indeed, regularly, at every celebration of this ordinance; but at certain happy seasons, returning so often as at least to prevent the Christian from entire despondence, and usually so as to furnish him with a good degree of resolution in the course of his duty.

How much such beings as we are, need all these benefits, it is hardly necessary to remark. Should any Christian who is present hesitate concerning this subject,

let me request him to remember the sorrows, doubts, and despondencies of the psalmist; a man after God's own heart, a man inspired, a man often furnished with eminent tokens of the divine favour. Let him listen to the complaint of his fellow Christians; and learn from their own mouths their lukewarmness, their sloth, their reluctance to their duty, their 'slowness of heart' to believe, and their general self-condemnation, together with the fears and doubts, and melancholy forebodings springing from these unhappy sources. Let him, finally, remember how often himself has suffered when temptations arrested him, his resolutions became enfeebled, apprehensions multiplied, hope gradually receded from his sight, faith lost its hold on the divine promises, and he appeared to himself as vibrating between earth and heaven, and as a settled inhabitant of neither. If, with these things in full view, he is at a loss concerning the importance of the blessings which I have recited, it will, I am afraid, be difficult, if not impossible, to explain to him their inestimable value.

REMARKS.

From the observations which have been made in these Discourses, I deduce,

1. The wisdom of this institution.

The ends proposed in the institution of the Lord's supper by the Redeemer of mankind are certainly of a most benevolent and glorious nature, and peculiarly worthy of the all-perfect mind. They are the enlargement and rectification of our views concerning the noblest of all subjects, the purification of our affections, and the amendment of our lives. The means by which these ends are accomplished, are equally efficacious and desirable. They are at the same time, simple, intelligible to the humblest capacity, in no respect burdensome, lying within the reach of all men, incapable of being misconstrued without violence, and therefore not easily susceptible of mystical or superstitious perversion. In their own proper, undisguised nature they appeal powerfully to the senses, the imagination, and the heart; and, at the same time enlighten in the happiest manner the understanding. Accordingly, Christians in all ages have regarded this sacrament with the highest veneration, have gone to the celebration with hope, attended it with delight, and left it with improvement in the evangelical character. God has been glorified by it in a peculiar manner. The numbers, virtues, and comforts of his children have been increased: and the religion of the cross has been enabled to triumph over the callous, obdurate, heart.

2. These observations strongly enforce the duty of preparing ourselves for every celebration of this ordinance.

This duty, as every person may easily see, is powerfully urged by almost everything which has been said in these Discourses: By the solemnity of the command —by the nature and design of the institution—by the nature of the disposition with which we are required to attend it—by the numerous and important benefits which it confers—and, peculiarly, by the glorious character of the Saviour by whom it was enjoined.

The only manner in which we can rationally hope to fulfill these duties, or share in these blessings, is the faithful celebration of the ordinance itself. To such a celebration it is ordinarily indispensable that we make ourselves ready for the performance of this duty. He who comes to the sacramental table with a thoughtless, indifferent, worldly spirit, may expect to go from it without profit, and without comfort. Nay, more; as he comes with an unworthy disposition, he is bound to believe that he will 'eat and drink judgment to himself.' The merely external performance of any duty neither promises nor conveys any blessing to the performer. The road to all blessings is obedience, and obedience always has its seat in the heart.

The proper means of preparing ourselves for the Lord's supper, are solemn contemplations on the great subjects of it; the attentive reading of the Scriptures, or other religious books, particularly those parts of them which are employed upon the sacrifice of the cross, and the love of the Redeemer; self-examination; and prayer. 'Let a man examine himself,' says St Paul, 'and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body:' that is, not distinguishing the true nature and design of this ordinance. The solemn contemplation, the diligent reading, which I have recommended, are indispensable means of this discernment, as self-examination is to a knowledge of the views and disposition of our own mind. Prayer, though not the only, is beyond a doubt the best mode of self-examination. In the awful presence of Jehovah, while employed in the confession of our sins, and supplication for his mercy, we cannot avoid feeling our own unworthiness, the reality, multitude, and aggravation of our sins, and the necessity of his grace to give us the victory over them; a candour and an integrity of investigation, not easily attainable in any other situation. With these means, faithfully employed, we may humbly hope for just apprehensions concerning this solemn ordinance, evangelical dispositions in our attendance upon it, and that blessing of God which will make it efficacious to our comfort, peace, and advancement in the divine life.

When the glorious Person, whom God has 'set King upon his holy hill of Zion, comes in to see the guests at his table, how delightful will it be to each of us, my brethren, to be found by him clad in the robe of righteousness, and thus prepared to receive him with the honour which is his due! How delightful to be welcomed by him to his table, and received with smiles of complacency! How distressing, on the contrary, how dreadful, to appear before him 'without a wedding-garment!' Who must not be speechless, when he sternly and awfully demands the cause of this unseemly and irreverent appearance! Who must not be overwhelmed with anguish and dismay, to hear pronounced concerning himself the terrible sentence, 'Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth!'

SERMON CLXII.

THE MEANS OF GRACE.—EXTRAORDINARY MEANS OF GRACE.—THE DISCIPLINE OF THE CHURCH.

Moreover, if thy brother trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault, between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church. But if he shall neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.—MATT. xviii. 15—18.

IN the six preceding Discourses I have considered at length two ordinances of the Christian church, commonly styled sacraments; to wit, Baptism, and the Lord's Supper. I shall now proceed to the consideration of another, and the only remaining ordinance peculiar to that body; to wit, *Christian discipline.*

In examining this subject, I shall endeavour to point out,

I. *The duties to be done,*

II. *The manner in which,*

III. *The ends for which,*

IV. *The persons by whom they are to be done;* and,

V. *The motives to the performance.*

I. The particular duties, to be done in the course of Christian discipline, are,

1. What may be called private remonstrance.

'If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone; if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.' The ground of proceeding here, as stated by our Saviour, is an actual trespass of one member of the church against another. It is a trespass. Εαν δε αμαρτηση εις σε ο αδελφος σου, 'If thy brother sin against thee.' If he commit a serious fault. The mere operations and evidences of those infirmities which are common to good men, as well as others, are no part of this ground, and furnish no warrant for the proceeding. Zealous persons are often ready to construe every such infirmity into a serious transgression, and to swell pence owed to themselves into the value of talents. In this manner they degrade religion into a spirit of captiousness; and, as far as in them lies, employ the authority of the church as an engine to gratify their own unreasonable passions, and to disturb the peace of their neighbours. The same things are also true of persons of a peculiarly exact and rigid character, who often demand, that their fellow Christians should walk by rules formed by themselves; and appear to feel as if themselves had been constituted definite judges concerning the Christian privileges of other men.

It must be a fault actually committed. 'If thy brother trespass against thee;' that is, in reality. It must not be a mere object of suspicion, or belief. It is easy for us to injure a Christian brother by our unjust suspicion, more than he would have injured us, had he committed the very fault of which we suspect him. We are therefore to be assured of the fact, before we take any measures of a disciplinary nature. It will always be mischievous to others, as well as disgraceful and injurious to ourselves, to create faults for them by the indulgence of our own passions and prejudices, as well as to suppose them without ample proof.

When such assurance and such proof have been obtained, the person against whom the trespass is committed is here required to go and tell it to the offending party in a manner absolutely private. No persons are to be witnesses of the interview. Here he is to explain, without communicating his design to any other person, his own views concerning the trespass, and the proper conduct to be adopted by way of reparation. He is bound to see that these views are conformed to the gospel; and that both the temper and the language are such as the gospel requires; meek, gentle, unoffending, calculated not to irritate, or alienate, but to convince, persuade, and conciliate. No strife is permitted by our Saviour to arise here; no provocation, no unkindness. In this manner, it is ever to be remembered, the offending brother will be gained, if gained at all.

If the spirit of the gospel were allowed to operate with its whole efficacy, every debate of this nature would terminate here. Unhappily, such is not always the case. Our Saviour, foreseeing this state of things, has provided for it the best remedy which the human character and circumstances will admit. He has in the text, directed the person against whom the trespass is committed to take, after having failed to obtain reparation, one or two other members of the church, and, with their aid, to renew his efforts for the same desirable purpose of gaining the trespassing brother. These brethren are called in for two purposes. One is, that they may be witnesses of everything which pertains to the existing state of the transaction. The other is, that the weight of their character and the wisdom of their counsels may influence the trespasser, to such future conduct towards his brother as will become his Christian profession. The former of these purposes is directly expressed in the text. The latter is plainly involved in the phraseology, 'and, if he neglect to hear them.' This supposes these brethren to use their advice and persuasion, and of course the weight of their character, for a right and happy termination of the controversy.

From this view of the subject it is obvious that the persons called in for this purpose should possess a character unexceptionable, particularly in the eye of the trespasser; that they should be persons of weight, wisdom, moderation, and gentleness; and sufficiently disinterested to consult the good of both parties with benevolence and impartiality. As these are the men whom a trespasser will hear, if he will hear any man, so the injured brother is plainly bound to call to his aid men of this description, for the adjustment of his controversy. It is hardly necessary to add, that both parties are bound to listen with meekness, candour, and cordiality to the counsels of these brethren.

2. The next step in the progress of ecclesiastical discipline is admonition.

It may be, it sometimes is, the fact, that the trespasser will not listen to private remonstrance in either of these forms. In this case our Saviour directs the injured brother to bring his cause to the church. 'And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church.' I shall hereafter inquire into the meaning of the word church in this place, and shall presume here, that the first application to be made in this place is to the body commonly denoted by the word in our own country. This body is bound to receive, hear, and adjust the cause.

Should the accused person be found guilty of the fault laid to his charge, it becomes the duty of the church solemnly to admonish him of his sin, and the absolute necessity of atoning for it, by making the proper reparation, with the spirit of the gospel.

3. The next step in the process is excommunication.

It is reasonably expected, that any member of a church will listen to the voice of the whole body of his fellow Christians with whom he is in immediate communion. Accordingly, the process of discipline almost always terminates here with admonition. Still there are cases in which, either from an apprehension of being innocent, or, what is probably more frequent, as well as more unhappy, from passion, pride, and obstinacy, the trespasser refuses to hear even the solemn voice of this tribunal. In such cases, the church is directed to withdraw from him all Christian privileges, so far as their own communion is concerned, or their power extends. 'Let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.' These words, as you well know, denoted to a Jew the worst of his fellow men. Among such men the trespasser is henceforth to be accounted by those whom he has refused to hear; and, in my view, by all who consider their system of proceedings as evangelical.

This sentence is commonly spoken of as twofold, the greater excommunication, and the less; the latter not uncommonly termed suspension. The difference between them is this: In the latter, a person is suspended from the privileges of church membership for a period; sometimes, however, an indefinite one; with a hope plainly intimated, that he will ere long return to his duty. In the former, he is absolutely excluded from all the peculiar privileges of the church, without any apparent expectation that he will be reinstated in them again.

This sentence existed among the ancient Jews and the ancient Christians, has been continued in the Greek and Romish churches, and exists among the various Protestant churches, with different degrees of formality and severity. It was in use even among the heathen, and is now one of the most terrible punishments inflicted in Hindostan. Among the Jews, Greeks, and Romanists, and even in the English church, it is followed by terrible consequences, as well as attended by several circumstances, to which the Scriptures, so far as I can perceive, give no countenance. In some cases it has been accompanied by dreadful imprecations, and followed in some by a variety of civil disabilities and sufferings, in themselves unjust and inhuman, and wholly unwarranted by Christ and his apostles. In this country the Scriptures are allowed to control exactly everything relating to this subject. Christ directs in the text, that the person who refuses to hear the church, shall be considered by it as 'an heathen man and a publican.' St Paul directs the church to 'mark them that cause divisions, and avoid them,' Rom. xvi. 17; to 'withdraw from a brother who walks disorderly,' 2 Thess. iii. 6; and to 'reject, after the first and second admonition, a heretic, or a person who creates division among its members,' Titus iii. 10.

In all these directions, nothing is warranted beyond a simple refusal on the part of the church to admit the offending brother to a participation of its peculiar privileges. The crimes are all specified; and, in my opinion, we have no right to add to their number. The punishment is specified; and we have no right to add to its severity. The reason is plain; all the authority which the church possesses it derives solely from Christ, and can exercise no more than is given. It can constitute no new crimes, and form, if I may be allowed the expression, no constructive treasons. It can add no new modes of punishment. Contempt, therefore, exhibited in a bishop's court, an offence wholly of a civil nature, cannot be a proper foundation for this punishment. Nor can imprisonment, or any other infliction of the magistrate, be connected lawfully with excommunication. These and all other things of the like nature, I consider as unhappy relics of preceding and very unhappy times.

St Paul, 1 Cor. v. 12, directs the brethren of that church 'not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner, with such an one, no not to eat.' These words contain an additional punishment to that which is inflicted under the directions quoted above; and require Christians, in the cases specified, not voluntarily to have intercourse with church members excommunicated for these crimes. I say excommunicated for these crimes, because St Paul supposes the persons referred to, to be severally guilty of them. But this cannot be lawfully supposed, until it is proved before the church, the proper tribunal; when, if unrepented of, it is followed of course by a sentence of excommunication. In this decision of St Paul, all such intercourse is plainly forbidden as involves more countenance, and expresses less disapprobation of the offender, than voluntarily eating with him at a common meal. It is, I think, reasonably supposed, that persons excommunicated for other crimes plainly equivalent in degree to those which are here specified, are to be treated in the same manner. The word πορνος, in this text, denotes any incontinent person.

In a preceding Discourse, I considered the relation which persons baptized in their infancy sustain to the church of Christ, and deferred the question concerning

the manner in which they are to be affected by the discipline of the church. On this subject I shall now make a few observations.

(1.) It is evident that such persons cannot be excommunicated.

This is obvious from the fact that the body of which they are members can never be summoned together, to hear their cause, and pass sentence upon them; and from the additional fact, that no part of this body is warranted to act for the whole. This I suppose to be a part, and a wise one, of the ecclesiastical system of the gospel; indispensable, perhaps, to the prosperity of religion, as well as to the peace of mankind.

(2.) The discipline of all such persons during the years of minority is committed supremely to their parents and guardians.

'Now,' says the apostle, 'I say that the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all; but is under tutors and governors, until the time appointed by the father,' Gal. iv. 1, 2. Here the apostle teaches us, that so long as we are children, we are under the absolute control of our parents, even as servants are under that of their masters; and are obliged to obey not only them, but also such tutors and governors as they are pleased to appoint over us. In Col. iii. 20, he commands, 'Children, obey your parents in all things;' and subjoins, 'for this is well-pleasing unto the Lord.' Were the church to interfere directly in the government of persons thus situate, two independent jurisdictions would exist over the same subject, at the same time, and with respect to the same things. These in their exercise could not, from the infirmities of human nature in its best form, fail to clash in many instances. If both jurisdictions are rightful and scriptural, the child would not know which to obey. But the Scriptures have settled this point, by requiring him to obey his parents in all things, and informing him, that this is 'well-pleasing unto the Lord.' Hence I infer, that the direct jurisdiction of the church over the child must be merely nominal, and can exist to no valuable purpose.

(3.) The church possesses an indirect control over the child, by the control which it has over the parents; and this it is bound to exercise in every proper manner.

The parents are members of a particular church, and therefore subject to its discipline. Every church is accordingly bound to require such parents as are members of it, to instruct and govern their children, and to walk before them agreeably to the gospel. The church is bound to see that all this is actually done; and to call to a solemn account all its members who neglect or violate these duties. This is a control which, if duly exercised, cannot fail of being beneficial to the children. Any other must, I think, be of course injurious.

(4.) The several members of a church are, in my view, bound also to reprove and admonish baptized persons, whom they see in the commission of sin.

'Thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour,' said God to the Israelites, 'and not suffer sin upon him;' or, as in the margin, 'that thou bear not sin for him.' This rule appears to have the fullest application to the case in hand. Baptized persons have a peculiar claim on professing Christians for this office of love; and are bound to receive it with humility and reformation.

Ministers ought, in my view, to make it a business of their ministerial office distinctly to unfold to them the nature of their relation to God and his church; and solemnly to enforce on them the duties arising from this relation; particularly the duties of repentance, and faith in the Redeemer, of giving themselves up to God in his covenant, and taking upon themselves openly the character of Christians. This, I apprehend, should be done not only from the desk, but in a regular course of laborious catechetical instruction. The same things should be explicitly and solemnly enjoined from time to time upon their parents; one of whose first duties it is, in my apprehension, to co-operate faithfully with their ministers in teaching and enjoining these things upon their children. Were these things begun as soon as the children were capable of understanding them, and pursued through every succeeding period of their nonage, a fair prospect, as it seems to me, would be opened for the vigorous growth and abundant fruitfulness of this nursery of the church.

Should baptized persons with these advantages conduct themselves frowardly, in a course of open, obstinate iniquity, after they have come to years of discretion, the church may, with the strictest propriety, shut them out from these privileges, until by a penitent and becoming deportment they shall manifest their contrition for their guilty conduct; not, however, without previous and ample admonition. I will farther suggest, that in my own view it is a part of the duty of each church, at their meetings for evangelical conversation and prayer, to summon the baptized persons who are minors to be present at convenient seasons, while the church offers up prayers to God peculiarly for them, and to pray for them particularly at other meetings holden for these purposes.

Were all these things regularly and faithfully done (and they all seem to grow out of the circumstances of persons baptized in their infancy), I cannot help believing that a new face would, in a great measure, be put upon the condition and character of the persons in question. It must be acknowledged, that much less attention is paid to them in modern than in ancient times, at least by churches in general; and less, I think by ourselves, than by our ancestors.

II. *The manner in which discipline is to be conducted, next claims our attention.*

Concerning this subject there can be little debate or doubt. We are abundantly taught by the Scriptures, that private remonstrance and public admonition are ever to be administered with lowliness of mind, with entire candour and moderation, with unbiassed equity, with a spirit of meekness, patience, and forbearance. 'The servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle to all men;' and must here be especially upon his guard against the intrusion of every passion, and the adoption of all improper conduct; because here, as he is obliged to assume some degree of authority, and is at times employed in endeavouring to redress injuries which himself has received, he will be in a peculiar danger of departing from his duty. A false step at the commencement of this process, in private remonstrance, is eminently mischievous; because from this commencement the whole process is apt to derive its character. Yet here such a step is ordinarily to be expected, more than in any subsequent stage of the progress. The remonstrant is often wholly unexperienced in business of this nature; often personally interested; usually in

some degree agitated, and therefore in danger of being off his guard; frequently ignorant of what is precisely his duty; possessed of an authority in a great measure undefined, except by his own discretion; and this discretion less perfect in many cases than could be wished. Thus circumstanced, the best and wisest men are in some danger of acting with impropriety; while others, of an inferior character, are proportionally more exposed. It is ever to be remembered here, that this is the stage of ecclesiastical discipline peculiarly attended with hopes of success. While the subject of remonstrance is concealed from the view of the public, pride, that insidious enemy of all men, even the best, the desire of self-justification, the fear of losing one's character in the view of one's family, friends, and neighbours, and the heat and obstinacy produced in the course of a controversy already advanced, are not here, unless by some unhappy imprudence, roused to any great degree of exertion. If the mind is ever calm and self-possessed, it is at this time. If hope is to be ardently indulged anywhere, it is here. Let the remonstrant, therefore, remember, and let those who accompany him remember also, that here they are either to gain or lose their brother. With an object of this inestimable importance before them, there will ever be reason to hope that the fault will not be theirs.

Here, I beg leave to give it as my own opinion, founded as I trust both on the Scriptures and experience, that private controversies between individuals of the church, arising from supposed personal offences, should, as far as may be, without refusing the right of appeal to the church, be terminated without being brought to its decision. This I take to be the very spirit of the text. It is intended by our Saviour, that the offender should hear and yield to those brethren who accompany the remonstrant. St Paul, also, finding fault with the Corinthian Christians for 'going to law before the unjust, and not before the saints,' says, 'Do ye not know, that the saints shall judge the world; and, if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? If, then, ye have judgment of things pertaining to this life; set them to judge who are least esteemed in the church.' I will not stay to comment on the translation of these verses, although I think it incorrect; because every translation of them will coincide with my own design. It is this: that the controversies between individual Christians, the secular controversies especially, are here directed by St Paul to be brought for decision before other members of this church; and, according to the present version, before those even of little estimation for their attainments in the view of the church. If the Corinthians were to issue their personal controversies in this manner, it is plainly reasonable and proper that ours should be issued in a similar manner. If those who possessed an humble character in the eyes of the Corinthian church, were competent to determine *their* controversies; the superior members of our own churches are certainly competent to determine *ours*.

Experience has, in my view, long since proved, that controversies of this nature are apt to be begun with resentment, and maintained with violence; and to wear, at their commencement, and throughout their progress, the aspect of a common litigation. Of course they are often attended with all the evils of such a litigation, and many more; are carried on with bitterness and animosity, and end in riveted hatred; are the means of impairing Christianity in the parties, of leading them into many and great sins, and of leaving them in a state little fitted for improvement or comfort, of splitting a church into divisions, and of injuring, if not destroying, the usefulness of its minister. At the same time they disturb the peace of a neighbourhood; expose the Christian character to shame, disgust, and reprobation; wound the prosperity of religion; and become a subject of triumph to the worst of its enemies.

Admonition and excommunication should be administered with the same dispositions which have been mentioned as proper accompaniments of private remonstrance; united with a solemnity, firmness, and authority becoming the character of a church. To the dignity of this tribunal, calmness, moderation, and tenderness are indispensable. The wisdom which should preside in it is that 'which is from above, pure, peaceable, gentle, and easily entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.'

Before this tribunal, also, no causes should be permitted to come to trial, of which the subjects are not distinctly specified; together with the time and place at which they have existed; and all the material circumstances by which they were accompanied. All these ought also to be communicated to the person accused a sufficient time before the trial, to give him a full opportunity for preparing his defence.

When a trespasser has been excommunicated, every proper inducement should be holden out to him to return by repentance and reformation. For this end, the minister, and other persons of weight in the church, should take every proper and promising occasion to give him their best counsels and exhortations. As this ought to be done for a heathen and a publican, it will, I presume, be acknowledged to be due to *him*.

Formerly, excommunication was accompanied by many expressions of a spirit not more hostile to the trespasser, than to Christianity. The object of it was cursed in form, and solemnly consigned to perdition. Happily for us, no severities even of form exist in this sentence here, beside those which are plainly authorized by the Scriptures.

III. *The ends for which Christian discipline was instituted, are the following:*

1. The amendment of those who transgress.

For this end, every part of ecclesiastical discipline is calculated, as if it had no other object. The attention paid to it is, however, perfectly justified by its importance. This is no less than the reformation of a lapsed Christian brother. His peace, his Christian character, his worthy participation of Christian privileges, his recovery of the divine approbation, his future usefulness in the present life, the measure of his happiness in the life to come, and even his salvation itself, are all deeply concerned, and oftentimes absolutely involved in these administrations. That these objects are at times accomplished by private remonstrance, and public admonition, will probably not be doubted. With equal certainty are they accomplished by excommunication. This is directly declared by St Paul, 1 Cor. v. 4, 5, 'In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, being gathered together,' in better language, 'Being gathered together in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, I command you to deliver such a one to Satan, for the destruction

of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.'

2. Another end of this discipline is, the purification of the church from unworthy members.

'Tares,' we know, 'are sown' in this world; and will 'grow together with the wheat until the harvest.' So long as they are undistinguishable from the wheat, it is unlawful for us to eradicate them, 'lest we root up the wheat also;' but when they are clearly discovered in the field of Christ, they are to be removed. The rules which are given us for this purpose are perfect, so far as it may be safely intrusted to the prudence of man. As 'a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump,' Christians are required to 'purge out the old leaven,' that the church may become 'a new lump,' pure and unleavened.

3. Another end of this system is, the preclusion of unworthy members from the church.

The church is probably kept pure by preventing unworthy members from uniting themselves with it, more effectually than by excluding them after they are united. Wicked men never love Christian discipline; and are often prevented from attempting to become members of the church, by the fears of falling under its censures. To good men it is only a privilege. Faithful subjects of an earthly government regard its wholesome laws, with all their penalties, and the just execution of them, with all its pains and terrors, as eminent blessings. These laws they so entirely choose to obey, to this administration they intend to be so uniformly subject, as hardly ever to think of their severity, and to feel nothing but their beneficial influence. Whatever apprehension they may at times inspire, such men consider them only as a useful motive to a more uniform and faithful obedience.

Indeed, this subject furnishes a beneficial criterion for the determination of our religious character. If we cordially relish the discipline of Christ's church, and are sincerely desirous to add to other motives those which it furnishes us for diligence, fidelity, and exactness in the Christian life, there is solid reason to hope that we love that which is good, and are therefore real followers of the Redeemer. If, on the other hand, we are impatient of this mild and equitable government, and live in a continual and slavish dread of its terrors, there is but too much reason to conclude, that we love the conduct which this system punishes, disrelish the purity which it requires, and of course have made a profession which is unfounded and insincere.

Ecclesiastical discipline, more than all other means, has contributed to preserve whatever purity has been found in the church of Christ, and in a greater degree prevented it from being crowded by unworthy members. Christians, therefore, cannot fail to regard their discipline as an invaluable blessing.

4. The improvement of Christians is another important end of this institution.

This end has always been promoted, and often in an eminent degree, by a well-directed administration of Christian discipline. From the social nature of man, that which concerns others is instinctively applied to ourselves. From the sins of others we learn not to sin in the same manner. By their negligence we are warned of our own danger, and induced to watch, and strive, and pray, that we enter not into their temptations. By their repentance and return to their duty, we are forcibly admonished of our own daily necessity of reformation. Perhaps there is scarcely a more edifying sight, than a lapsed Christian, ingenuously confessing his sin, acknowledging the justice of his punishment, imploring the forgiveness of God and a re-union to the family of Christ, and re-commencing the Christian life with new amiableness and beauty. Nothing in this world more resembles the joy of angels over a repenting sinner, than the emotions excited in the minds of good men by this solemn transaction.

5. Another end of this institution is to keep the character of the church unblemished in the eye of mankind.

On the character of the church, as it appears to the eyes of the world, depends in a great degree the character of religion itself. In a former Discourse I have shown how much more real and impressive religion seems to the minds of sinners, when beheld in the life of a person who 'adorns the doctrine of God our Saviour,' than when seen only with the eye of speculation. The exemplary and unblamable conduct of a church is proportionally a more convincing and more persuasive source of these impressions. When the church is 'fair as the moon, and beautiful as Tirzah:' she is also 'terrible as an army with banners.' Genuine virtue is an awful object to sinful men. In vain do they labour to shake off their reverence and their dread of this object. It is settled in their minds by the unalterable constitution of God; and is irresistibly forced upon them by their consciences, whenever the object is brought before their eyes. Nothing but furious passion, or absolute profligacy, will prevent any man from entertaining these views. But they are not necessary views only; they are also eminently profitable; as was, I presume, satisfactorily shown in that Discourse. He who is at a loss concerning this truth, may easily satisfy himself, by observing what experience abundantly testifies, that wherever churches either pervert or abandon the discipline instituted by Christ, they themselves become lax, lukewarm, and possessed only of 'a name to live;' and that religion around them hastens towards a final extinction. Wherever this discipline is scripturally maintained, churches are adorned with the beauty of holiness; and religion, usually at least, flourishes among those who are without.

IV. My own views concerning *the persons by whom discipline is to be administered*, will be sufficiently communicated in the following observations.

1. The persons who are to administer private remonstrance are plainly pointed out in the text.

Concerning these, therefore, there can be no debate. Not a little doubt, however, has arisen, in this country, at least, concerning the cases in which such remonstrance is a necessary commencement of ecclesiastical discipline. A multitude of Christians, in our own country, have supposed, that the steps, mentioned in the former part of this Discourse, are indispensable in every case of transgression, whether public or private. Others have believed, that as the case mentioned in the text is a private case merely, and as the discipline involved in it seems applicable to such a case only, it is not to be employed when a transgression is public. The latter of these opinions is, in my view, just. In the nature of the case, a public transgression plainly demands no private interference. 'Them that sin,' says St Paul to Timothy, 'rebuke before all; that others also may

fear,' 1 Tim. v. 20. 'A man that is an heretic,' says the same apostle to Titus, 'after a first and second admonition, reject,' Tit. iii. 10. By 'them that sin,' I understand the apostle to mean, them that sin publicly; and suppose St Paul here to direct a public admonition as the immediate and proper act of discipline for such a transgression. A heretic is a sower of divisions, or the leader of a faction in the church. Such a person Titus was commanded to reject after a first or second admonition, both plainly public; since they were to be both administered by Titus himself, in the character and office of a minister. This is evident also from the reason subjoined in the following verse: 'Knowing that he who is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself.' In other words, Because thou knowest that such a person is subverted, or overturned, and is certainly guilty of sin; being proved to be a sinner, by the known fact that he makes divisions in the church, or heads a party against its peace. It is here, however, to be observed, that two public admonitions are here required to be given to the heretic before his excommunication. As there is no difference between heretics and other public sinners, I should regard this as the proper rule of proceeding in all cases of discipline, which were not commenced with private admonition.

But in this country, there is such a universal persuasion that private remonstrance is indispensable, even where a transgression has been public, as to make it, in my view, expedient to commence the process of discipline in this manner, in most if not all instances. The minds of Christians, generally, are here fully possessed of a conviction that this is a right established by the Scriptures, and whenever it is omitted feel as if all that was right had not been done. Excommunicated persons, therefore, feel satisfied, in every such case, that the judgment of the Christian community is so far on their side, and against the proceedings of the church. This also will ordinarily be the opinion of a considerable part of its members. Hence the censure will be stripped of much of its proper power. The man who is censured will feel himself to be still in a state of controversy with the church; and will therefore be little inclined to reformation or repentance. The church will feel itself weakened, and all its enemies will manifest their hostility by clamouring against its injustice. For these reasons, prudence appears plainly to demand the adoption of private remonstrance as the means of avoiding these evils.

As the administration of this remonstrance will, in such a case, be a duty incumbent alike on all the members of the church, it will be asked, By whom shall this duty be performed? The answer to this question must be given differently, according to the different constitutions of churches. In our own, it ought unquestionably to be performed by persons commissioned by the church. No others will be considered as acting in the case with unquestionable propriety.

2. Admonition and excommunication are to be administered by the pastor, or, when there is no pastor, by the moderator of the church, in conformity to a vote of the church.

Wherever a church is vacant, it will always be expedient that a neighbouring minister should be requested to perform this office.

That these sentences should be the result of a vote of the church, and executed under their authority, is to me completely evident from the Scriptures. This I do not gather from the text, nor from the meaning of the word church, which I am well aware is very various. At the time when the precepts in the text were delivered, the Christian church was not organized. It may therefore be difficult to settle precisely the sense in which our Saviour used the term on this occasion; or to make any satisfactory application of it to the case in hand. On the text therefore I shall not insist.

There is in the Scriptures a single case of discipline recited, and so far as I know, but one, in which the administration was committed wholly to uninspired hands; or perhaps, in better terms, to persons not extraordinarily commissioned to direct ecclesiastical concerns. This is the case of the incestuous person in the church of Corinth. St Paul, in 1 Cor. v. directs the members of that church to assemble together for the purpose of excommunicating this person in the name of Christ. The church accordingly assembled, and excommunicated the man, as we are informed in the second chapter of the Second Epistle. In the sixth verse of this chapter, St Paul says, 'Sufficient to such a man is this punishment, which was inflicted of many;' ὑπο των πλειονων; literally, 'by the majority;' that is, by the majority of the Corinthian church; the persons addressed in this chapter, and throughout these Epistles.

Should it be said, that this sentence was directed by St Paul; I acknowledge it. But the execution of it was committed to the Corinthian church, as a body; and it was accordingly executed by their vote, and ecclesiastical authority. There was here no need of a formal trial. The question concerning the guilt of the man was already settled by abundant evidence. The apostle therefore only taught the Corinthian church their duty in such a case, and required them to perform it. Had he meant to exercise his apostolical authority in a judicial manner, he would have excommunicated the incestuous person by a sentence of his own, as he excommunicated Hymeneus and Alexander, and not have left him to a sentence of the Corinthian church. This is farther illustrated by the fact, that St Paul beseeches, not commands, the Corinthians to restore this excommunicated man; ver. 8, 'Wherefore, I beseech you, that ye would confirm your love towards him.' This request plainly teaches us, that in the view of the apostle, the Corinthian church were possessed of the power by which this restoration was to be accomplished.

What it was proper for the Corinthian church to do in this case, is unquestionably proper to be done by every other church in a similar case. As this is the only scriptural example in which a sentence of excommunication was passed by men not extraordinarily commissioned, it is, I apprehend, a decisive rule of proceeding to all other churches. The peculiar conduct of apostles, and other extraordinarily commissioned persons, must in most cases be very imperfectly applicable as a rule for us. It will be impossible, I apprehend, to show that the powers sometimes necessarily vested in these men, have descended to any men who are now living. My own opinions concerning bishops, in the prelatic sense, have been given in preceding Discourses. Ruling elders are, in my apprehension, scriptural officers of the Christian church; and I cannot but think our defection with respect to these officers

from the practice of the first settlers of New England, an error in ecclesiastical government. But the present occasion will not permit an exhibition of my views concerning this subject at large.

There are many cases in which individuals are dissatisfied, on reasonable grounds, with the judgment of a church. It is perfectly obvious, that in a debate between two members of the same church the parties may, in many respects, stand on unequal ground. One of them may be ignorant, without family connexions, in humble circumstances, and possessed of little or no personal influence. The other may be a person of distinction, opulent, powerfully connected, of superior understanding, and of great personal influence, not only in the church, but also in the country at large. As things are in this world, it is impossible that these persons should possess, in any controversy between them, equal advantages. Beyond all this, the church itself may be one party, and a poor and powerless member the other. In this case also, it is unnecessary to observe, the individual must labour under every supposable disadvantage to which a righteous cause can be subjected. To bring the parties in these or any similar circumstances as near to a state of equality as human affairs will permit, it seems absolutely necessary that every ecclesiastical body should have its tribunal of appeals; a superior judicature established by common consent, and vested with authority to issue finally all those causes which, before a single church, are obviously liable to a partial decision.

Such a tribunal in all the New England states except this, is formed by what is called a select council, that is, a council mutually chosen by the contending parties. This has long appeared to me a judicatory most unhappily constituted. The parties choose, of course, such persons as they suppose most likely to favour themselves. If, therefore, they commit no mistake in the choice, the council may be considered as divided in opinion before it assembles; and as furnishing every reason to believe that it will not be less divided afterward. Its proceedings will frequently be marked with strong partialities, and its decisions, if made at all, will not unfrequently be those of a bare majority. Coming from different parts of the country, it will have no common rules of proceeding. After its decisions, its existence ceases. Its responsibility vanishes with its existence, as does also the sense of its authority. As the members frequently come from a distance, it can have no knowledge concerning those numerous particulars which respect the transactions to be judged of; and the characters, interests, views, and contrivances of those who are immediately concerned. As individuals, these members may in some instances have much weight; and in certain circumstances may by their wisdom and piety do much good. But all this must arise solely from their personal character. As a council, as a judicatory, they can have scarcely any weight at all; for, as they disappear when the trial is ended, they are forgotten in their united character; and, having no permanent existence, are regarded with no habitual respect, and even with no prejudice in their favour. Very often, also, as they were chosen on partial principles, they are led of course to partial decisions; and leave behind them very unhappy opinions concerning ecclesiastical government at large.

In this state a much happier mode has been resorted to for the accomplishment of this object. The tribunal of appeal is here *a consociation*; a standing body, composed of the settled ministers within an associational district, and delegates from the churches in the same district: a body always existing, of acknowledged authority, of great weight, possessed of all the impartiality incident to human affairs, feeling its responsibility as a thing of course, a court of record, having a regular system of precedents, and from being frequently called to business of this nature, skilled to a good degree in the proper modes of proceeding.

The greatest defect in this system, as it seems to me, is the want of a still superior tribunal to receive appeals, in cases where they are obviously necessary. These it is unnecessary for me to particularize. Every person extensively acquainted with ecclesiastical affairs, knows that such cases exist. The only remedy provided by the system of discipline established in this State, for those who feel aggrieved by a consociational judgment, is to introduce a neighbouring consociation as assessors, with that which has given the judgment, at a new hearing of the cause. The provision of this partial, imperfect tribunal of appeals, is a clear proof, that those who formed the system perceived the absolute necessity of some appellate jurisdiction. The judicatory which they have furnished of this nature is perhaps the best which the churches of the State would at that or any succeeding period, have consented to establish. Yet it is easy to see that, were they disposed, they might easily institute one which would be incomparably better.

The only instance found in the Scriptures of an appeal, actually made for the decision of an ecclesiastical debate, is that recorded in the fifteenth chapter of the Acts, and mentioned for another purpose in a former Discourse. A number of the Jews, in the church at Antioch, insisted that the Gentile converts should be circumcised, and be obliged to keep the law of Moses. Paul and Barnabas strenuously controverted this point with them. As no harmonious termination of the debate could be had at Antioch, an appeal was made to the apostles and elders at Jerusalem. But, as I observed in the Discourse mentioned, it was heard and determined by the apostles, elders, and brethren. As this judicatory was formed under the direction of the apostles themselves, it must be admitted as a precedent for succeeding churches; and teaches us, on the one hand, that an appellate jurisdiction is both lawful and necessary in the church; and, on the other, that it is to be composed of both ministers and brethren, necessarily acting at the present time by delegation.

REMARKS.

From this account of Christian discipline, it is evident,

1. That it was intended for churches consisting of Christians.

As this subject was discussed at some length, in the Sermon concerning the character of church members, as exhibited in the Scriptures, I shall dismiss it here, without any farther observations.

2. That it is a system wisely adapted to promote the prosperity of such churches.

All the ends of this discipline are such as Christians can comprehend and feel; while the means are most happily fitted to accomplish them. Private remon-

strance, is most wisely calculated to benefit the trespassing brother; to awaken in him a sense of guilt, danger, and the necessity of repentance and reformation; to preserve his Christian character; and to restore him, before he shall be known by others to have fallen. Of the same tendency is the additional remonstrance by the accompanying brethren, and the subsequent admonition by the church. Of these just and gentle proceedings the final sentence of excommunication is a proper close, and is perfectly fitted to reform an obstinate brother. He who will not be won by the mild measures of tenderness, will never feel either his character or condition, but by dint of distress. Should he continue obstinate in this situation, the church will be freed from a spot on its reputation, an obstacle to its communion, and a nuisance to the religion which it professes. At the same time, the spirit with which every part of this discipline is to be administered, and without which it exists in form only, precludes every reasonable fear of haste, injustice, or severity.

The manner also in which the proper evidence of the offender's disposition is to be obtained, and the prohibition of any farther proceeding where it is unattainable, are strong marks of that wisdom in the Lawgiver, by which it was devised. The same wisdom is conspicuous in the repetition of the several steps of the proceeding, and the protraction of the process in this manner for a considerable length of time. The most desirable opportunity is here furnished to the offender for consideration and amendment; and to the church, for coolness in its inquiries, and justice in its decisions. All the parts of the process are also obvious to a very moderate capacity; such as are easily understood by plain men, and easily applied, whether they are to judge, or to be judged. On the whole, it may be justly observed, that no system of judicial proceedings is so happily calculated to accomplish in the most efficacious manner the purposes for which it is instituted. Eminently profitable, and indispensably necessary, to the Christian church, it is at the same time an illustrious display of wisdom, goodness, and providential care in its Divine Founder.

SERMON CLXIII.

DEATH.

Thou turnest man to destruction, and sayest, Return, ye children of men.—Psalm xc. 3.

In this series of Discourses I have considered the being and character of God; his creation of the heavens and the earth, of angels and men; the primitive state of man; his fall and condemnation; their influence on the moral character of his posterity; and the impossibility of justification by works. I have examined the character and mediation of Christ; and the justification accomplished by his righteousness. I have endeavoured to exhibit the character of the Holy Spirit; his agency in the work of regeneration; the reality, necessity, and nature of that work, together with its antecedents, attendants, consequences, and evidences. I have attempted to explain the divine law, and the principal duties which it requires; together with the foundation, the nature, and the effects of virtue, the true and only obedience to it; and the nature of that inability to obey it, which is an important characteristic of man; and the means of our restoration to obedience. I have also investigated the means of obtaining, and the means of increasing grace; the manner in which, and the persons by whom, they are to be employed. In the course of this investigation, I have endeavoured to explain the constitution of the Christian church; the character and duties of its members and officers; the nature of its sacraments; and the scheme of its discipline.

In the progress of these Discourses I have also stated, and endeavoured to obviate, the principal objections usually brought against that system of theology which I believe to be revealed in the Scriptures.

Thus have I gone through the consideration of the great articles contained in the Scriptural providence of God, as disclosed in the gospel; and conducted man through life, to the last act of that providence with which he is concerned in the present world—the act by which he is removed into eternity.

This great and gloomy event is in the text ascribed directly to the providence of God; and exhibited, not as the result of a natural and necessary decay, nor of a general tendency of things, but of his sovereign pleasure. 'Thou turnest man to destruction, and sayest, Return, ye children of men.'—Thou art the agent in bringing man to death, and the grave; and by thy command returnest him to his original dust. All the natural causes of death, therefore, are only modes and means of its accomplishment by the hand of God.

A multitude of considerations necessarily strike the mind of him who makes this subject the theme of his serious attention. Of this number are,

Its universality,

Its extension through the ages of time,

Its certainty,

Its uncertainty with regard to the time, manner, and circumstances,

The cause by which it is brought to pass; and,

The impossibility of escaping or resisting it—together with many other things deeply solemn, and capable of being eminently useful to mankind.

But it is my design to consider death, on this occasion, merely as a part of the great system of providential dispensations towards the children of men; as the event, by which they are removed out of their present

state of being, as the close of their probation, and their introduction into eternity.

It is manifest that some removal from this world is a necessary part of such a system. A probation involves in its nature a close. It infers a trial at that close, by which the character of the man who has gone through the probation shall be finally settled, as good or evil, as acquitted or condemned. It supposes also a reward suited to his conduct, and intended to recompense it with absolute propriety.

This close, so far as we can understand the subject, must be either painful or pleasant, disgraceful or honourable, according to the conduct of the persons concerned. If their conduct be supposed to have been virtuous, obedient, and pleasing to God, the end of their trial we should naturally expect to be pleasing and honourable, and a proof of his approbation of their character. If their conduct be supposed to have been evil, and displeasing to God, a painful and disgraceful termination of this state of their existence would be rationally expected. The views which he formed of their conduct, we should naturally expect him to express at their removal from the world.

In this world good men are continually surrounded by spiritual enemies, or enemies to their virtue and final welfare. These enemies, it is to be supposed, will on every occasion attempt to lessen their happiness, and increase their sufferings. The close of life furnishes the last opportunity for this purpose. This period, therefore, these enemies must be expected to seize with eagerness, in order to annoy them so far as they are permitted.

The best of men also have sinned often and greatly; and have thus merited great evils at the hand of God. Hence, with the strictest propriety, they may suffer greatly at this, as well as at other seasons. No reason can be assigned why their enemies may not be permitted to disturb them, therefore, in the article of death.

Their own minds also may, for important purposes, be left at this time to the distresses arising from the remembrance of their former sins, and from perplexing thoughts concerning their spiritual condition. Hence various doubts may arise and anxieties be multiplied. 'The terrors of death may encompass them, and the pains of hell' (of *sheol*, or ᾅδης, that is, in plainer language, the fears of what will befall them in the world of departed spirits), may 'lay hold on them.' Especially will all this seem easy of apprehension, if we remember that these things may and will be in the end benefits to them, through the agency of him who is able to bring good out of evil. In this manner may the distresses sometimes suffered by good men at death be sufficiently explained.

Wicked men, on the contrary, are often totally careless concerning all moral and religious subjects, unconcerned about their present or future condition, and indifferent alike to the favour and the frowns of their Maker. This heedless spirit they sometimes carry with them to a dying bed, and under its influence are equally stupid as in the preceding periods of life. On this account it is to be expected that such men should, at times, 'have no bands in their death.' Disease also often weakens their capacity of thinking, and prevents them from coming to any just conclusions concerning their past conduct, their present state, and their future allotments. Frequently too they labour to make a virtue of necessity, to resign themselves quietly to the death which they see they cannot avoid, and to submit to that God whom they now feel themselves unable to resist. This, they frequently mistake for Christian resignation, although totally unlike it in every important characteristic; and, under the influence of this mistake, sometimes leave the world with a degree of composure.

Nor is it unreasonable to believe that these things are the result of a judicial dispensation of God. We know, that he has given up men judicially to 'strong delusion, that they should believe a lie.' In what case can such a dispensation be supposed with more propriety, than in that of gross, long-continued, and obstinate sin, perpetrated by a heart hardening itself in iniquity through life. Such a heart certainly may with propriety be permitted to deceive itself at any time during its probation; and this deception may, for aught that appears, be enhanced by its external enemies. Evil men often deceive and flatter with false hopes their dying companions. No reason can be given why the same mischievous office may not be performed by other evil beings.

To these things it ought to be added, that such men have, in several instances, died in alarm and horror; when, from the pains taken to conceal the circumstances of their death, they may have been supposed to leave the world in peace. There is a general disposition in mankind to think and speak favourably of the dying and the dead. In this solemn case even personal hatred is apt to give way to compassion, and every prejudice to be lost in concern for him who now ceases to be either our enemy, or our rival. Often also we speak favourably of deceased persons from compunctions of conscience, from a design to be thought candid and kind, because they were our relations or friends, or because they were of the same party or sect with ourselves. Frequently we make the case our own; wishing, and under the influence of our wishes believing, that their exit may be hopeful and safe, because we are of a similar character, and may in this case die hopefully also. Infidels, particularly, have often taken great pains to persuade the world that their fellow infidels died with serenity; and, when their last moments have been imbittered by remorse and terror, have concealed this fact with every ingenious and laborious effort. No man can mistake the reason of this conduct. The acknowledgment, that these persons died in fear and anguish, would convince every man that they doubted of the doctrines which they professed to believe; and were afraid that the Scriptures were still of divine origin, and that thus infidelity would receive a wound which could not be healed. Several instances of this nature have been disclosed to the world; and have furnished strong reasons to believe that, if the whole truth were discovered, many more would be found.

These considerations taken together prove beyond debate, that the serenity, whether assumed or pretended, with which wicked men are supposed to die is false and hollow; on the one hand, the mere result of ignorance, or stupidity; on the other, a veil employed to cover either from themselves, or their fellow men, the real state of their minds at death. From this source, therefore, no good can be augured for them; and no support warrantably gained by their impenitent survivors.

With these things premised, I observe,

I. *That death is accomplished by the hand of God.*

'Thou turnest man to destruction, and sayest, Return, ye children of men.' Thus it was threatened to our first parents, and to their posterity. It was threatened and executed as the reward of sin. Its universal execution is, therefore, a decisive proof of the universality of sin.

II. *Death is a direct and strong expression of the views which God entertains concerning the character of man.*

This remarkable event is a part of the providence of God, and the result of an immediate act of him alone; a fact in which his hand is seen, and his pleasure expressed. It is, therefore, a direct expression of the views which he forms of the human character. That we should leave the world in some manner or other may not unnaturally be regarded as a necessary event in the providential system; necessary, not for its own sake, but for the sake of other events, to the existence of which it is indispensable. In this view, it may be considered as no testimony of the approbation or disapprobation of God. In this view, death may be considered merely as an expression of the divine pleasure concerning something beyond the present world; some future purpose, to which our removal is a necessary introduction. But the manner in which we are actually removed, the circumstances which now attend our departure, are plainly unnecessary to the removal itself, and to any allotments which are destined to us beyond the grave.

Were all mankind to leave this world as Enoch and Elijah left it; or were they, without pain or sorrow, to drop these corruptible bodies, and be invested with those which are incorruptible, immortal, and glorious; their exit would be justly considered as a most happy omen, that they were destined to a future state of favour and enjoyment. All men would say, with unanswerable force, that these splendid and auspicious circumstances were indubitable proofs of the divine pleasure; proofs that God regarded us with kindness only, and intended that we should be only prosperous in the coming world. In the same manner, and with the same evidence, we are compelled to conclude, that the gloomy, distressing circumstances with which we are conveyed out of time into eternity, exhibit the anger of God against our race, and forebode a melancholy reception in the world whither we go. The long-continued decays, and the violent diseases with which our removal is accomplished; the wasted strength, the corrupted frame, the livid aspect, the enfeebled understanding, which precede our dissolution; the struggles, the convulsions, the fears, the agonies, with which we give up the ghost; are certainly, to the eye of just consideration, strong intimations of the manner in which God regards our conduct here, and of the treatment which we are to expect from him hereafter. So far as his designs can be learned from this dispensation, no such reception can be expected from him as will support a trembling mind, just ready to enter the regions of future being. On the contrary, 'a fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation,' must naturally alarm every child of Adam, while bidding adieu to the place of his probation.

It is not here intended, that death in any form or circumstances is an expression of the views which God entertains concerning a given individual. It may be true, it undoubtedly is, that death in some instances is so conducted by the providence of God, as to exhibit the manner in which individuals are regarded by him. There is a peace in death, on the one hand, and a horror on the other, sometimes existing, which, when taken in connexion with the preceding life, may be fairly considered as disclosing the favour or the anger of God. But the observations just now made respect death merely as a general dispensation to mankind; as an expression of the views which God forms of our common nature. With this reference, the doctrine here urged will be seen to be just, as well as highly important. He who duly considers it will easily discern that, if he would form rational hopes of future good, he must found them on something entirely different from the natural character, or the usual conduct of man.

Should it be objected, that death is only a necessity of our nature (as ancient philosophers choose to consider it,) and that therefore no such conclusion can be drawn from it; I answer, that our nature itself is not necessary; but might have been changed with infinite ease, by the mere pleasure of God. I answer, also, that none of the actual circumstances of death are at all necessary, any farther than that his pleasure has made them so; for with infinite ease he could remove all men from this world, as he removed Enoch and Elijah.

III. *Death arrests mankind at every age of life.*

This is undoubtedly one of the most mysterious dispensations of Providence with which we are acquainted. God, we certainly know, does nothing without a sufficient reason. But we can allege, we can devise no reason, why children should be created, and close their eyes in death, at the very moment when they first open them upon the light of the living. The agonies of the cradle—agonies suffered by a being incapable of having done good or evil—are wholly inexplicable by man; and leave the serious inquirer in a state of absolute suspense and perplexity. This perplexity is rendered still more distressing, when we reflect on the apparent usefulness of their existence here, both to themselves and others; and the apparent want of any sufficient end for which they were created. It is not intended, that no apparent end of their being exists; but that none satisfactory to the human mind is visible in the circumstances which attend them. The very mysteriousness of the fact is one useful thing; and will contribute to persuade us, that we ought readily to believe other mysteries which are of great importance. He who admits the providence of God, and acknowledges wisdom and goodness to be the source of it all, will see, in this event, abundant reason to determine that the mysteries of the gospel are no objection to its truth or revelation. Mysteries are no more an objection against the gospel, as a work of God, than against creation and providence, as works of the same great Being. That the dispensation in question is a work of God, cannot be doubted. That a revelation from him should resemble his other works, and be mysterious in some such manner as they are mysterious, ought to be pre-supposed. All the works of the same Being ought certainly to be expected to sustain the same general character; and all the works of an infinite Being must, especially as they are formed for purposes boundless in their nature and extent, be incomprehensible by us, who 'are of yesterday, and know (comparatively) nothing.' Our proper business is therefore to trust, where

we cannot know; and in both cases humbly and devoutly to adore.

IV. *Death terminates the probation of man.*

That death ends our probation, so far as this world is concerned, I shall not be expected to prove. That there is no probation beyond the grave, is evident from the fact, that such a state is never mentioned in the Scriptures. Every thing which is said in them concerning futurity, exhibits it only as a state of reward. To this object they conduct us; and then close their communications.

But this is not all, nor even the chief proof of the doctrine. In Eccles. ix. 10, we are informed, that 'there is no work, device, knowledge, nor wisdom, in the world of departed spirits, whither we go.' The work here mentioned is plainly the work of salvation; and this it is declared cannot be done. Hence Solomon exhorts us to do this work 'with our might,' while we are in the present world.

In Acts iii. 21, St Peter says concerning Christ, 'Whom the heaven must receive, until the times of the restitution of all things.' But Christ, we are elsewhere informed, will come a second time to judgment. At this time, then, all things will be restored, which will ever be restored. The present 'heavens and earth will then pass away,' and be succeeded by 'new heavens and a new earth,' in which 'righteousness will dwell' for ever. But we are abundantly assured, that, at this period the everlasting rewards of the righteous and the wicked will commence. There will therefore be no future probation.

In John ix. 4, our Saviour says, 'The night cometh, in which no man can work;' that is, the season, of which death is the beginning, and eternity the continuance. All the probationary work of man, therefore, is ended when death arrives; and will never be resumed.

V. *Death ends the enjoyments of the impenitent.*

'Son,' says Abraham to the rich man, 'remember, that thou in thy life-time receivedst thy good things.' This was said to a man in the future world, immediately after his death; and said by a glorified spirit. It was said to a man humbly and earnestly asking for 'a drop of water' only; the least good of which we can form a conception. It is alleged also as a reason why he must not expect even this little good. What is this reason? It is, that he had received all his good things on this side of the grave. The list of his good things was therefore completed.

Of these enjoyments, some such men have more, and some less. All, however, have very few compared with the necessities of a rational and immortal mind; although each has many, when compared with what he deserves. But whether they be few or many, they all exist in the present world only. Beyond the grave every such man will find eternity destitute of all good to himself.

VI. *Death terminates the sufferings of the righteous.*

'And likewise,' says Abraham to the rich man, 'and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted.' When Lazarus finished his earthly existence, he bade adieu to his last sorrows: all that now remained for him was comfort. The prospect before him was only bright and glorious: the unclouded morning of eternal day. 'God' now began to 'wipe away all tears from his eyes; and the Lamb to feed him, and to lead him to fountains of living water.'

Good men in this world, although never punished according to their deserts, suffer in many instances long and severely. Sometimes they have 'trial of cruel mockings, and scourgings,' sometimes of 'bonds and imprisonments.' They have been 'stoned, sawn asunder, tempted, and slain with the sword.' They have 'wandered about in sheep-skins, and goat-skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented;' and have been compelled to find a refuge 'in deserts, in mountains, in dens, and in caves of the earth.' Even where these dreadful evils of persecution have not been undergone, they have still encountered severe distresses from sickness, pain, poverty, bereavements, melancholy, desertion, and many other calamities incident to our unhappy state. How delightful must be the remembrance to every such sufferer, that these distresses constitute his whole portion of woe. Few things can more effectually contribute to prevent him from fainting, when he is rebuked, or persuade him to 'run with patience the race which is set before him.' Let every Christian, then, bow submissively to the chastisement of his heavenly Father; and sustain himself under every trouble with the full assurance, that his sorrows will soon have passed away for ever.

VII. *The termination of human life is wisely appointed by God.*

Life is long enough for the sinner, and for the saint. Seventy years are a sufficient period to try the character. Were the sinner to continue longer in the world, he would still be equally hopeless, and more guilty. Habits of wickedness, strengthened through so long a period, admit neither of removal, nor of hope. Whither shall we go to find penitence, after this period is passed? The antediluvian world was immensely more wicked than the present, because men lived a thousand years. Their plans of sin were vastly more extensive, their sagacity in pursuing them greatly superior, their opportunities amazingly more numerous, and their hopes of success beyond comparison better founded. In this manner their evil habits became fixed beyond recall; while death was at such a distance as to make the present life seem not a little like an eternal duration. What existed then, would in the like circumstances exist now. Were human life to be equally protracted, mankind would soon become as profligate as they were before the deluge.

That the present life is a sufficient period of probationary existence to the righteous will be readily acknowledged by all men. Every person of this character secures within this period an everlasting inheritance beyond the grave. This is the end for which we live, the only end of real importance. When this end therefore is secured, no good reason can be given for protracting the date of the present life. It cannot be alleged, that the sufferings of it are so few and small, or the blessings so numerous and great, as to render it desirable to those who have become entitled to the heavenly happiness, to lengthen out a weary pilgrimage in the present world. It is no uncommon thing for the righteous themselves to be desirous, with St Paul, 'to depart, that they may be with Christ' in a future and better world; and this notwithstanding all the gloom and terror with which death is arrayed. Plainly, therefore, the present period of human life is well suited

to the circumstances of both saints and sinners, and wisely appointed by God.

From these considerations concerning this solemn subject, I derive the following

REMARKS.

1. It is manifest, that in the circumstances of our departure from this world, there is much room for misjudging concerning the character of those who die.

There are, I acknowledge, instances in which we may estimate this character with a high degree of probability. There are instances in which wicked men strongly exhibit both their wickedness and their awful apprehensions of an approaching retribution, so strongly and so decisively, as to forbid every rational hope, that it will be well with them in a future world. There are other instances in which their stupidity is so entire, and their presumption so gross, as to create necessarily the most unfavourable apprehensions concerning them. There are cases, on the contrary, in which the views of good men are so clear and just, their sentiments so fraught with the spirit of the gospel, and their hopes so bright, rational, and evangelical, as to leave no painful doubt concerning their future destiny. All this, however, is to be considered in a direct and intimate connexion with the preceding lives of the persons in question.

But there are also many more cases, with respect to both classes of men, in which a determination, such as would be satisfactory to a candid mind, is by the circumstances on which it must be founded rendered plainly impossible. Sinners, I mean such as possess the character of impenitents throughout their lives, are, it is to be remembered, often as amiable by nature as any of those who become Christians. They are often as religiously educated, are trained to habits equally desirable, and possess to the eye of the world characters as unimpeachable, and even more agreeable, than many persons who ultimately become penitents. The grace of God descends not unfrequently upon men of originally harsh, violent, rugged, sordid, proud, or unfeeling tempers; upon men erroneously, grossly, narrowly, or not at all, educated; upon men long habituated to many sins; upon men rendered unamiable by an unresisted, pertinacious, and riveted indulgence of these odious dispositions. On the other hand, there is no reason to believe that the young ruler, who came to Christ to inquire 'what good thing he should do, that he might have eternal life,' was sanctified; although we are informed that 'Jesus, beholding him, loved him.' As little reason is there to believe that many others of our race, possessing a character equally amiable, both by nature and habit, are ever renewed by the Spirit of God. Persons of the former class also carry through life, notwithstanding their renovation, notwithstanding the real and important moral change made in them by this event, not a little of their original, unamiable spirit. Their remaining sinfulness will often show itself in an unpromising as well as unhappy manner. Candid and charitable persons who live by their side will, indeed, see many appearances of piety, mingled at times with the operations of this untoward character. But the world at large will discern very few; and persons peculiarly prejudiced will perceive none. When, therefore, such men leave the world it is plain, that, if they should leave it full of hope, and even of exultation, all those who believed nothing concerning their sanctification, and remembered only the unamiable parts of their character, would now regard their hope and exultation as unwarranted by the gospel, and founded only in delusion. Equally evident is it, that those who with less prejudice saw them only at a distance, and marked only the prominent and perhaps the disagreeable parts of their conduct, would entertain many doubts, and very limited hopes, concerning their present character, or future welfare. Those Christians who were intimately connected with them, knowing them better, would indeed judge more favourably. But this judgment would by others be regarded as the result of mere prejudice, and the blind spirit of party.

Those of the latter class would, on the other hand, be regarded with affection and complacency. All their commendable actions, which, it is to be recollected, are usually very pleasing to mankind, because they are chiefly intended to give them pleasure, would now be remembered with peculiar advantage to their character. The prejudice in favour of the dead would operate peculiarly in their favour. The hope of our own final safety, founded on the belief that they were safe, and that we were like them, would render us eager to conclude well concerning them. The wish of all around us, that their future state might be happy, and the silence of all concerning everything which might unsettle this favourable opinion, would give it increased, and often irresistible strength. Thus, when to the judgment of strict scrutiny the case might seem at the best doubtful and distressing, it would be regarded with high hopes, and abundant consolation; since no such scrutiny would be employed.

At the same time, it is ever to be remembered, as I have shown at large in a preceding Discourse, that the scriptural evidences of piety are often not without great difficulty applied to the state of our own minds. Hence multitudes of good men probably experience many doubts and difficulties throughout their lives. Christians who are modest, timid, and easily apprehensive, will therefore naturally and often conclude against themselves. Bold and rash men, on the contrary, nay, even such as are easy and quiet, and always prone to hope well, will at least as often and as naturally conclude in their own favour. An extensive knowledge of sin, and a watchful observation on the part of him who possesses such knowledge of the sins committed by himself, can hardly fail of producing many anxieties on a dying bed. Ignorance and inattention concerning this interesting subject will, to a great extent, have the contrary effect.

From these considerations, and others of a similar nature which cannot now be mentioned, it is evident that this subject must be attended often with great uncertainty; and in very many cases cannot be judged of without extreme danger of error. The reason why it has been here discussed, is a wish to prevent those unfounded and dangerous hopes, and those unnecessary and causeless fears, which bad men on the one hand, and good men on the other, derive from very doubtful appearances attendant on the deaths of others. Let it be remembered, that the Scriptures have nowhere made the circumstances of our decease proofs of our moral character. These they have taught us to look for in the life. 'Every tree,' saith our Saviour, 'is known by its fruits.' He who has lived a life of piety, he who has

actually exercised piety while he lived, will find, however anxious may be his last moments, ample consolation in the future world. He who has not, however peaceful may be his death, will fail of happiness beyond the grave.

2. These observations teach us the immense importance of obtaining the favour of God in the present life.

There is no more affecting proof, that we are altogether in the hands of God, and are entirely disposed of according to his pleasure, than that which is seen in our death. He who removes us from this world, can plainly remove us to any place, and dispose of us in any manner which he chooses. Dreadful would it be beyond expression, should he make us die for ever; and, throughout our future existence, make every succeeding death more distressing than that which went before it. Dreadful would it be, should he make all our future being a state of unceasing death, both to the body and the soul. With what force and propriety has our Saviour required us to 'fear him, who is able to destroy both the soul and the body in hell!'

As this life is the only time of probation to man, the present is the only period in which this mighty evil can be prevented. Seize, therefore, this golden season, and, while it lasts, 'work out your salvation with fear and trembling.' Think what it will be to die for ever. Remember how short life is, how uncertain, by how frail a tenure possessed, and how apt to vanish before we are aware. Feel, that in this short period, if ever, your salvation is to be secured. Remember, that to all the impenitent the first death comes too soon, and is always a dreadful introduction to a second, infinitely more dreadful. If the first death is terrible to you, and to all men, think what it must be to endure these terrors in endless repetition. Soon, I beseech you, call to mind how soon the sun of the longest day goes down. Think how often it is lost in clouds, before it has reached the meridian. Count not upon the evening of life. By him who postpones the business of the day, it will never be done. Awake from the fatal slumbers of sloth, from the deceitful hopes of procrastination, from the benumbing torpor of security in sin. Let nothing stand between you and heaven. What would you not give to purchase this glorious possession. What exchange for it would you receive? How poor must he be, who through this life possessed the world, and throughout his endless existence was in want of all things! How wretched he who wallowed in pleasure here, and languished out eternity in lamentation, mourning, and woe!

3. How poor a portion is that of the wicked.

The portion of the wicked is all received and expended during this little life, and is finally terminated by the grave. Its enjoyments are small, they are few, they are mingled with many woes, they are embittered by many disappointments. Many dangers continually betide men of this character, and many fears beset them. Often they are cut off in the beginning, often in the midst of life, and always before they are ready. On a dying bed they are unable to look back with comfort on anything which they have done; or forward with hope to anything which awaits them. Here their enjoyments bid them a final adieu. All their future being a long and dreary night, with no succeeding day.

With how much wisdom do the righteous choose portion.

'Godliness,' says St Paul, 'is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of the life which is to come.' The nature of the case, and the experience of man, furnish ample proof of the truth of this declaration. A great variety of considerations combine their evidence to prove that a good man is, even in this world, happier than a bad one. External enjoyments may, indeed, be distributed to either, indifferently, in greater or less numbers. There are cases, also, in which either may be peculiarly unhappy. The fair application of the rule is, undoubtedly, to what may be called the average of human life; and, if applied to this object, it will be found unquestionably and universally just.

Enjoyments, it is to be remembered, are what the mind finds or makes them. Plain food is delightful to the palate by which it is relished; while the daintiest viands are lost upon a sickly appetite. The spirit of a good man disposes him to consider, and enables him to receive, all his enjoyments as gifts from the best of all friends; and to exercise continual gratitude to that friend; the most pleasing of all emotions. On this friend, also, he perpetually relies, as perpetually able and inclined to befriend him; as present wherever he is, as knowing whatever he needs, as exercising towards him everlasting loving-kindness, and as having given his own immovable promise, that 'all things shall work together for his good.' This train of considerations, regularly attending his whole course of enjoyments, cannot fail to enhance the value of every blessing in which he shares; and to spread warmth, and light, and life around him in his journey to heaven.

At the same time, he is at peace with himself. He has submitted to God; he has yielded himself to the Redeemer. The war between his inclinations and his conscience, the tumult of his passions and his fears, has in a great measure subsided. To this state of agitation has succeeded the peace of forgiven sin, and an approving conscience. The long night of darkness and storm has retired; and a serene and cheerful morning has arisen upon the world within: a happy presage of perpetual day. A mind at peace with itself, is the only mind at ease; and a mind without ease is ill prepared to enjoy. Whatever good the world gives must be imperfectly tasted by him who is unsatisfied with himself, conscious of his exposure to the anger of God, and terrified by expectations of future woe. An exemption from these evils is the first great step towards sincere happiness, and confers a capacity for enjoyment which, without it, must be for ever unknown. But the present state is far from being a state of enjoyment only. The means of soothing sorrow are at least as necessary to us, as those of enhancing comfort. In this important privilege the superiority of the good man's choice is perhaps still more conspicuous. Peace of mind blunts, in a great measure, all the shafts of adversity. A strong sense of the universal government of God, and of his friendship to the soul, change the very nature of afflictions, and transmute them from curses into blessings. At the same time, the hope of the gospel, always present to the mind of such a man, administers to him the richest consolation in every sorrow, reminds him daily, that in this life only will he be a sufferer, and directs his eye to that world of approaching peace and prosperity, where his afflictions will finally flee away.

In death itself all these privileges will be his. Hope, particularly, and peace, will soothe all the sufferings of a dying bed, and illumine his passage into eternity. Or should he, as is sometimes the case, find fears and sorrows await him at this period, this is his last enemy, and possessed of power over him but for a moment.

Thus the good man goes through the present life, possessed of a happier character and a happier lot than any which can be challenged by bad men. His enjoyments are superior in kind, in number, and in degree. He possesses alleviations of trouble to which no bad man can make any pretensions. Death itself is to him often peaceful, and often filled with hope and consolations: whenever it is not, it is still the termination of all his sorrows.

In the future world the difference is infinite. When the good man resigns his body to the grave, and his spirit to the hands of God who gave it; he enters immediately into 'the joy of his Lord.' Sin and suffering, time and death, hold their dominion over him no more. The dawn of his future being is to him the dawn of everlasting day. In this immense duration, his life will be an uninterrupted progress of virtue, honour, and enjoyment. Fixed for ever in the world of glory, and surrounded by the general assembly of the first-born, a companion of angels, and a child of God, he will look back with ineffable delight on that choice which accomplished the end of his being, and made life and death blessings to him; and will stretch his view forward with transport to joy succeeding joy, and to glory surpassing glory, throughout ages which cannot end.

SERMON CLXIV.

THE IMMEDIATE CONSEQUENCES OF DEATH.

Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return to God who gave it.—Eccles. xii. 7.

In my last Discourse I made several observations concerning death, considered as the last dispensation of providence to man in the present world. The immediate consequences of death furnish the next subject of our investigation.

In the text we are told, that when 'man goeth to his long home, the dust (or body) shall return to the earth,' of which it was formed, and that then also 'the spirit shall return to God who gave it.' In considering this subject, I shall follow the order of discourse here presented to us; and examine those things which immediately after death respect,

I. *The body;*

II. *The soul.*

Under the former of these heads, I observe,

1. That the body is changed into a corpse.

Death is the termination of all the animal functions of our nature. So long as these continue, life, the result of them, diffuses warmth, activity, and beauty throughout our frame. In this state, the body is a useful as well as pleasing habitation for the soul; and a necessary as well as convenient instrument for accomplishing the purposes to which it is destined in the present world. But when these functions cease, life also ceases. The body then becomes cold, motionless, deformed, and useless. The form, which once gave pleasure to all around it, now creates only pain and sorrow. The limbs are stiffened, the face clouded with paleness, the eye closed in darkness, the ear deaf, the voice dumb, and the whole appearance ghastly and dreadful. In the mean time, the spirit deserts its ruined habitation, and wings its way into the unknown vast of being.

2. The body is conveyed to the grave.

Necessity compels the living to remove this decayed frame from their sight. Different nations have pursued different modes of accomplishing this purpose. By some nations the body has been consumed with fire. By others it has been embalmed. By some it has been lodged in tombs properly so called. By some it has been consigned to vaults and caverns; and by most has been buried in the grave. All nations, in whatever manner they have disposed of the remains of their departed friends, have with one consent wished, like Abraham, 'to remove the dead out of their sight.'

In this situation the body becomes the prey of corruption, and the feast of worms. How humiliating an allotment is this to the pride of man! When the conqueror, returned from the slaughter of millions, enters his capital in triumph; when the trumpet of fame proclaims his approach, and the shouts of millions announce his victories; surrounded by the spoils of subjugated nations, and followed by trains of vanquished kings and heroes; how must his haughty spirit be lowered to the dust by the remembrance, that within a few days himself would become the food of a worm, reigning over him with a more absolute control than he ever exercised over his slaves. Yet this will be the real end of all his achievements. To this humble level must descend the tenant of the throne, as well as of the cottage. Here wisdom and folly, learning and ignorance, refinement and vulgarity, will lie down together. Hither moves with an unconscious, but regular step, the beauty that illumines 'the gay assembly's gayest room;' that subdues the heart even of the conqueror himself; and says, 'I sit as queen, and shall see no sorrow.' All these may, and must, ultimately say to corruption, 'Thou art our father, and to the worm, Thou art our mother, and our sister.' But we are not yet at the end of the progress. The next stage in our humiliation is, to be changed into dust. This was our origin; this is our end. The very clods on which we tread, were once, not improbably, parts, to a greater or less extent, of living beings like ourselves. Not a small part of the surface of this world has, in all probability, been

animated and inhabited by human minds; and the remains of man are daily perhaps, as well as insensibly, turned up by the plough and the spade.

II. *The events, which immediately after death concern the soul, are the following:—*

1. At death the soul quits the body, to return to it no more.

At death the animal functions cease, or rather the cessation of them is death itself. Then the flexibility, the power of action, and the consequent usefulness to which they gave birth, are terminated also. The soul, of course, finds the body no longer fitted to be an instrument of its wishes, or its duties. The limbs can no longer convey it from place to place, the tongue communicate its thoughts, nor the hands execute its pleasure. Deprived of all its powers, the body becomes a useless and uncomfortable residence for a being to whose nature activity is essential, and the purposes of whose creation would be frustrated by a longer confinement to so unsuitable a mansion. We cannot wonder, therefore, that the Author of our being should, in his providence, remove the soul from a situation so contradictory in all respects to the design of its existence.

The proof of the fact which I am considering, and of the existence of the soul in a state of separation from the body, has, to a great extent, been necessarily given in a former Discourse, in which I attempted to show, that the soul is not material. To that Discourse I must, therefore, refer my audience for these proofs. It may, however, not be improper briefly to mention some of them on the present occasion.

The first which I shall mention is the text. Here we are informed, that 'the dust,' at death, 'shall return to the earth, as it was; and the spirit shall return to God who gave it.' That the soul and the body are two distinct beings, and that at death one returns to the earth, and the other to God who gave it, are truths declared in this passage in a manner so plain as probably never to have been misapprehended by any man, not embarked in some philosophical controversy.

Secondly: Of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, it is said, accordingly, that they 'gave up the ghost,' or rendered their spirits to God who gave them. In Exodus, God saith, 'I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.'—'God,' our Saviour observes, 'is not the God of the dead, but of the living;' that is, of the spirits of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; living at the time when this declaration was made to Moses. Accordingly this passage is alleged by our Saviour to the Sadducees, as full proof of the ἀνάστασις, or separate existence, of souls beyond the grave.

Of these persons, also, it is said, that 'they were gathered unto their people.' This declaration is commonly, but very erroneously, understood to mean, that their bodies were gathered to the bodies of their kindred; and is supposed to be equivalent to the scriptural phrase, 'They slept with their fathers.' But in this sense it is, in many instances, obviously untrue. Neither Abraham nor Isaac was, in this sense, gathered unto his people. The people of Abraham were all buried either in Padan-Aram, or in Ur, of the Chaldees; while he was buried in the cave of Machpelah in Canaan. Isaac was buried with none of his friends beside his parents; and these could not be styled 'his people.' The people to whom these persons were gathered were the assembly of the blessed.

Thirdly: In conformity to this interpretation, Christ says, concerning Lazarus, that 'he died and was carried by angels to Abraham's bosom:' a complete proof, that Abraham was in existence among the blessed, at the time to which this parable refers.

Fourthly: Christ said to the penitent thief on the cross, 'To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise.' This could not be true, unless the soul of the thief existed in a separate state.

Fifthly: St Paul declares, 2 Cor. v. 6, that 'while we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord;' and subjoins, 'we are confident, I say, willing rather to be absent from the body, and present with the Lord.' Here this apostle teaches us, that Christians can be absent from the body; and that this absence must take place to enable them to be present with the Lord; and that, whenever it does take place, they will be present with the Lord. Christians, therefore, that is, the spirits of Christians, exist in a state separated from the body.

Sixthly: The same apostle, Phil. i. 21—23, says, 'For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.' And again, 'I have a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better.' When the apostle says, 'For me to live is Christ,' he declares, that the present life is to him a source of high enjoyment. But if he did not exist in a separate state, his death would put an end to all his enjoyment; being an absolute termination of his consciousness. If, then, he had the least degree of enjoyment while living, his death, destroying this enjoyment, and supplying no other in its place, would with mathematical certainty be a loss to him. How much greater must this loss be, when, as he informs us, it was Christ to him to live. Can any sober man believe, that St Paul meant to declare death, which, according to the opposite scheme, is merely a temporary annihilation, to be greater good than the happiness indicated by this expressive phraseology?

But the apostle himself has determined this point. He has told us, that the gain of his departure consisted in being with Christ, in a state of happiness totally superior to anything found in the present world. Here, indeed, he enjoyed the presence of his Saviour, in an eminent, perhaps in a singular degree; yet in a manner far inferior to what, he was assured, he should find immediately after death.

Seventhly: St John, when caught up to heaven, 'beheld a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, standing before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palms in their hands,' uniting with the angels in their everlasting song of praise. The apostle asked who these persons were. The interpreting angel informed him, that they were 'those who came out of great tribulation, and had washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore (he adds), are they before the throne of God, and serve him, day and night, in his temple: and he, that sitteth on the throne, shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat; for the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe all tears from their eyes.' It will not be denied, that these were men, and deceased men; nor that the

time referred to in this passage was long antecedent to the resurrection. They were therefore separate spirits; conscious, virtuous, happy beings. It may be said, and truly, that all this passed in vision. But it must be added, and must be admitted by those who say this, that a vision communicated by the Spirit of God exhibits nothing but what is true.

Eighthly: In conformity to this representation of St John, St Paul says, 1 Thess. iv. 14, 'For, if we believe that Jesus died, and rose again, even so them also who sleep in Jesus will God bring with him;' that is, as the sixteenth verse informs us, when he comes to the final judgment. Who are those whom God will bring with Christ at this time? Certainly not the *bodies* of the saints. They will be raised from the grave; and cannot be brought with Christ. The only answer, therefore, is, he will bring with him 'the spirits of just men made perfect.'

Ninthly: Christ informs us, that 'Lazarus died, and was carried by angels to Abraham's bosom; that the 'rich man died; and in hell lift up his eyes, being in torments;' and all this, while the five brethren of the rich man were still living in the present world. Now I ask, whether the *body* of the rich man was at this time in hell; or the *body* of Lazarus carried by angels to Abraham's bosom? These questions can need no answer. The consequence is, therefore, unavoidable. Should an objector say, that this representation is parabolical: he will say it only to escape from an argument which he cannot face. That parables are figurative representations, is acknowledged; but he must be a hardy commentator, who will assert that they exhibit any thing but truth.

I might multiply proofs of this doctrine to a very great extent; for the language of the Scriptures concerning this subject is entirely uniform. But I shall only add one more, of a nature somewhat different from those which have been already alleged. The body of Moses was buried by God 'in a valley in the land of Moab, over against Beth-peor.' Yet Moses appeared on the mount of transfiguration, and conversed with Christ.

With this scheme of interpreting the Scriptures almost all who have professed to believe them have coincided, in every age of the church. Probably no individual has ever thought of finding in them the opposite doctrine, unless when forced to it by a wish to support some other favourite tenet. Dr Priestley has plainly adopted it, because he thought the immateriality of the soul inconsistent with his views concerning the nature of Christ.

There is no more difficulty in supposing the soul of man to be capable of existing in a state of separation from the body, than in supposing any other spirit to be capable of existing without a body. Angels we know are unembodied. In the same state, the spirits of deceased persons may exist, with as little difficulty in the eye of sound philosophy, as angels. Aware of this truth, Dr Priestley has strenuously laboured to disprove the existence of angels also, in my view without the least aid of philosophy, and in direct defiance of revelation. If the Scriptures do not assert the existence of angels, they cannot be said to assert anything; for they do not assert anything with more clearness or precision. If their assertions concerning this subject can be subverted by criticism, there can be no assertions which criticism may not subvert.

2. The soul after death returns immediately to God, to give an account of its conduct in the present life.

This appears to be the plain language of the text, in which the return of the body to the dust, and of the soul to God, are exhibited as co-existing events. That the purpose of its return to God is, that it may give up its account, appears sufficiently plain from the parables of the talents and the pounds. In these, each of the servants is exhibited as summoned to give, and as actually giving, his account to his lord concerning his use or abuse of the privileges intrusted to him, immediately after the close of his stewardship. Nor is there, so far as I have observed, anything in the Scriptures which is at all inconsistent with this scheme of our future destination.

In this account will be unfolded, alike, the state of the thoughts, and that of the external conduct. Of course, the soul will be furnished with a power of recollection, sufficiently capacious to comprehend all that it has done, and will be compelled to declare it without disguise, enhancement, or evasion. Its secret chambers, and all which they contain, or have ever contained, will be laid open to its own eye, as well as to that of its Maker. In this manner, the motives by which it has been governed, and the moral character which it has sustained, during its probation, will be so entirely developed, as to satisfy even itself, that the investigation had been just, as well as complete.

3. The sentence of God will be pronounced in perfect righteousness on all that it has done.

To those who have done the will of God, loved his character, believed in his Son, and turned away from their iniquities, he will say, 'Well done, good and faithful servants, ye have been faithful over a few things; I will make you rulers over many things; enter ye into the joy of your Lord.' Of those, who have refused or neglected to do these things, he will say, 'Take ye the unprofitable servants, and cast them into outer darkness; there shall be weeping, and gnashing of teeth.'

4. In consequence of this sentence the soul will immediately enter upon a state of reward.

When Lazarus died, he was 'carried by angels to Abraham's bosom.' His 'evil things,' or sufferings were all terminated; and he was henceforth 'comforted,' or made happy for ever. When the rich man died, 'he lift up his eyes in ἅδης, being in torments; and is declared to have received all his good things in the present life.

There has been no small debate among divines, and those of great reputation, concerning the places where the dead will reside between their departure from this world, and the final judgment. This subject demands too extensive a consideration to be attempted at the present time. It must be acknowledged, that the language of the Scriptures furnishes a foundation for some difference of opinion concerning it. Several expressions, found in both Testaments, seem to indicate an intermediate place, as well as an intermediate state of existence, between this world, and the final scenes of retribution. After a considerable examination of this subject, and an examination of several able commentators, who have handled it to some extent, I am obliged to confess myself not altogether satisfied; and to say, that hitherto I have found difficulties on both sides. I know of no method in which they can be removed, except a direct recurrence to every scriptural passage

which relates to the subject, a thorough consideration of each, and an attentive comparison of them all. It is undoubtedly true, that the Hebrew שְׁאוֹל, *sheol*, and the Greek ἀδης, commonly rendered *hell*, or the *grave*, in our translation, do not properly signify either; but always the world of departed spirits. As these words have so extensive a signification, and must be interpreted by every passage of Scripture referring to that world, there must be room for considerable difference of opinion.* But, whatever may be true concerning an intermediate place of existence, there can, I apprehend, be no reasonable doubt concerning an intermediate state. St Peter says of the angels that sinned, that God 'cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment.' St Jude, also, declares them to be 'reserved,' in like manner, 'unto the judgment of the great day.' From these declarations it is manifest, that fallen angels have not yet received their final judgment, nor of course their final reward. This, indeed, seems evident from the phraseology used by St Peter, as well as by the declarations of both him and St Jude. The word which is rendered from St Peter, 'cast them down to *hell*,' is in the Greek, ταρταρώσας; literally rendered, 'cast them down to *Tartarus*.' While this phraseology plainly declares a state of punishment; it indicates directly a different state from that which is taught by the word γέεννα; the appropriate name of hell in the Scriptures. After 'the rich man died and was buried,' it is said by our Saviour, 'he lift up his eyes in hell, being in torments;' in the Greek, ἐν τῳ ἀδῃ, 'in *hades* he lift up his eyes, being in torments.' This word also denotes, with sufficient clearness, a different state of suffering from that which is intended by the word γέεννα. In the same parable, Lazarus is declared to be 'carried by angels to Abraham's bosom.' The state in which Lazarus was placed, is denoted elsewhere by the word *paradise*. 'To-day,' said our Saviour to the thief on the cross, 'thou shalt be with me in paradise.' But we know from our Saviour's own declaration, that when he gave up the ghost on the cross, his spirit went, not to hell, but to *hades*, or *sheol*. For in the sixteenth Psalm, he himself says, 'Thou wilt not leave my soul in *sheol*;' rendered both by the Septuagint, and by St Peter (quoting this passage, Acts ii. 27, and referring to it in verse 31), by *hades*, the Greek word, by which *sheol* is always translated both in the Old and New Testament. Thus it is, 'Thou wilt not leave my soul in *hades*,' and in verse 31, 'his soul was not left in *hades*.' The thief, therefore, went to the state which is denoted by this word; and not to that which is denoted by *heaven*, unless this word is supposed to include heaven.

In Heb. xi. 39, 40, St Paul says of the ancient saints, 'And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us, should not be made perfect.' The promise here denotes, I apprehend, the good, or reward, promised to faith and obedience, in its full extent. This good the ancient saints are here declared not to have received in this extensive manner: something better being reserved for Christians under the gospel, in which they are to share, together with those who have gone before them, when they shall be all gathered into the divine kingdom, and the state of perfection shall finally arrive.

In accordance with these observations, Christ informs us, that the righteous will possess 'the kingdom, prepared for them from the foundation of the world;' and the wicked 'depart into the everlasting fire (εἰς τὸ πῦρ τὸ αἰώνιον) prepared for the devil and his angels,' not before but after the general judgment. St John, also, in the 20th and 21st chapters of the Apocalypse, teaches us, that the wicked will be cast into a lake of fire; and that the state of glory destined for the enjoyment of the righteous, and denoted by his vision of the New Jerusalem, will commence after the judgment is finished. These in both instances are the states of existence denoted in scriptural language by the words *heaven* and *hell*.

Still, virtuous men, when they leave this world, go to a state of enjoyment only; and impenitent men to a state of mere suffering. Lazarus was only comforted, after he left this world; and the rich man was only tormented. St Paul informs us, that when good men are 'absent from the body,' they are 'present with the Lord.' The favourable presence of Christ will therefore be afforded to all his followers; and he will begin to exhibit to them, in a glorious manner, the 'everlasting kindness,' with which he has had 'mercy on them.' When the bodies of mankind are re-united to their spirits, there can be no doubt that the happiness of the righteous, and the misery of the wicked, will be rendered more complete. But, antecedently to that event, both the happiness and the misery will be entire and unmingled. The happiness will in no degree be alloyed by suffering: the misery will in no degree be lessened by enjoyment.

REMARKS.

1. From these considerations appears, with strong evidence, the folly of that excessive attention so commonly rendered to our bodies.

Not a small proportion of the care, anxiety, and labour of man is employed upon the body. So far as necessity, decency, and comfort demand these exertions, the demand is certainly reasonable; and will be complied with, when it is in his power, by every wise man. But there are certainly limits to this employment, fixed by revelation, and seen and acknowledged by reason. To take, even in this way, the real 'good of all our labour under the sun,' is plainly included in that 'portion, which God hath given us' of this labour. The allowance is certainly liberal and sufficient. But there are anxieties experienced, there are efforts made, which are productive of no such good. Common sense continually discerns and declares this truth. These anxieties and efforts are also immensely numerous, eager, and painful. It is necessary to have food; it is desirable that that food should be wholesome and pleasant. It is necessary to have clothes; it is desirable that our clothes should be convenient and becoming. But there may be excessive care to gratify the palate, and to adorn the person. I know of no rational objection to that mode of life, regularly demanded by common sense, which, according with the character and circumstances of an individual, is pronounced by the general sense of propriety, to be suited to his station. Yet the whole of life is certainly not to be consumed either in pampering or adorning the person. Our life is the only pe-

* See particularly on this subject Dr Campbell's Sixth Preliminary Dissertation, Part ii. and Peters on Job.

riod of our probation; and during that probation eternal life is to be gained or lost. With such an employment on our hands, it is madness to waste this little period in providing the means of luxury, to pamper our palates and our pride. Would the epicure, while feasting his sight, and smell, and taste, on viands, to collect which, he has perhaps ransacked both the Indies, remember that he is pampering his body merely to make it a more dainty meal for the worms of the dust; it is questionable whether the keenness of his relish would not be blunted, and his solicitude concerning 'what he should eat, and what he should drink,' exchanged for a more becoming anxiety concerning the means by which he might live for ever. Were the monarch on his throne, to adorn whom the South has yielded up its gold, and the East lavished its gems, to recollect, that within a few days he would be wrapped in a shroud, and lodged in the grave; would not all these splendours fade upon his eye, and pall upon his heart? Were the beauty, who swims through the dance, or sparkles in the drawing-room, with the conscious superiority of her charms, and amid the homage of surrounding admirers, to call to mind, that the form which, Narcissus-like, she surveyed in the glass with rapture, must within a few days be chilled by the icy hand of Death, the roses fade from her cheeks, the splendour vanish from her eyes, and all her elegance of form be dissolved in dust; must she not be compelled to believe, that her vanity was misplaced, and worthless; and that she squandered life upon objects equally undeserving and mischievous; and that to acquire beauty of mind, to become lovely in the sight of God, and to merit the esteem of angels throughout eternity, were pursuits infinitely more worthy of rational ambition?

The manner in which God has exhibited his views concerning our bodies is in no measure calculated to raise them in our estimation. He formed them out of earth. He made them so frail, as to be subjected to accident, pain, and disease in ten thousand forms. At death he returns them to earth again. This is their final end. 'Flesh and blood will not inherit the kingdom of God.' How can pride, vanity, or ambition dwell so fondly on a subject so full of frailty and humiliation!

2. By the same considerations we are taught the folly and indecency of pride.

Pride is a passion cherished and fondled in every human bosom. Still it is one of the most dangerous enemies to our true interests. I have formerly exhibited it as the commencing sin of man; the real beginning of human apostasy. From that time to the present, it has been a prime part of our rebellion against God. It is also a principal source of our injurious treatment of each other; mingles with all our love of the world, even with our devotion to pleasure; is unkind, unjust, insincere, impatient of the prosperity of others, jealous, hard-hearted, cruel as the grave, arrogating to itself the blessings of mankind and the prerogatives of God, unbelieving, and obdurate. With these things in view, we shall not wonder to find it in every degree pernicious to ourselves. 'Pride,' says Solomon, 'goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.'

Both the word and works of God furnish innumerable dissuasives from the indulgence of pride; all of them, however, insufficient to overcome this obstinate evil. Among them, few are more happily adapted to this end than the truths which have been mentioned on the present occasion. When we look around with exultation on the advantages which we fancy ourselves to possess over our fellow men, and let loose the pride of wealth, the pride of office, and the pride of influence, the pride of taste, and the pride of reputation; when we turn our eyes upon ourselves, with all the dotage exercised by a fond and foolish parent towards a favourite child, and becoming inflated with the pride of beauty, the pride of talents, or that most odious of all pride, which is customarily styled 'self-righteousness;' we can hardly fail of being humbled and crest-fallen, if we call to mind the end of all our loftiness exhibited in this Discourse. Go to the burying ground, and walk over its dark and solemn recesses. On whom do you tread? 'On the mighty man, and the man of war, the judge, and the prophet, and the prudent and the ancient, the captain of fifty, and the honourable man, and the counsellor, and the cunning artificer, and the eloquent orator.' What are they now? A mass of dust. What have they been? The food of worms. Is it possible that beings destined to this end should be proud? It is possible. You and I are proud, as were once these wretched tenants of the grave; and are destined to the same humble, deplorable end. When, therefore, you contemplate with high self-complacency the advantages of person which you possess, or the endowments of the mind; when you look down from superiority of birth, riches, character, or influence on those below you, and your bosoms swell with the consciousness of distinction; remember your end, and be proud no more. Remember that your gayest attire will soon be exchanged for a winding-sheet, and your most splendid habitations for the grave.

Remember, also, that the pride which you now indulge will in the future world become to you a source of the deepest humiliation. In the grave, the beggar and the slave will lie on the same level with you. But in the future world, every humble child of Adam will become your superior. Unless you renounce your pride, and assume the humility of the gospel, the beggar and the slave, in many instances, will rise to a superiority above you, higher than your mind can conceive; and look down upon you with a contempt and abhorrence which, although you may deserve, you have never been able to feel. You in the mean time will sink to a depth of degradation which your present powers cannot measure; and will feel yourselves lowered to a double depth by seeing those, whom hitherto you have openly despised, elevated to endless dignity and glory. When the day shall arrive, 'which shall burn like an oven, all the proud shall be stubble; and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of Hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.'

3. These considerations ought to remind us how near the solemn events mentioned in this Discourse are to ourselves.

It is a propensity of human nature to believe, that the day of death must be distant, because we wish it to be distant. This propensity is continually strengthened, like others, by indulgence; as is also the wish for its tardy arrival. In this respect we exactly resemble those Israelitish sensualists whose character the prophet Amos describes in this remarkable address,

'Ye that put far away the evil day;' and like those who said concerning the prophecies of Ezekiel, 'The vision that he seeth is for many days to come; and he prophesieth of the times that are far off.' As this propensity is indulged daily, and is checked only by a few peculiarly solemn events; such as our own sicknesses, and the deaths of those who are near to us; as all around us exercise the same disposition; and as the subject is so gloomy, as never to be contemplated without pain, or dismissed without pleasure: most persons rarely think of death at all; and, whenever this unwelcome subject intrudes into their minds, either force it out with violence, or forget it as speedily as they can. Hence so many of mankind, hence so many of us, make apparently little or no preparation for this solemn event.

What palpable folly is manifested in this conduct! Death is not the less near to us because we choose to think it distant; nor the less interesting, because we disregard it; nor the less awful, because we lull our fears of it to sleep. We know that we must die; we know that death will terminate our probation; and are assured, that it will introduce us to the judgment. Wisdom therefore demands, common sense demands, that we should make effectual preparation for death, by preparing ourselves for the judgment. Among the means of accomplishing this work, few are so efficacious as the solemn, habitual, realizing contemplation of these subjects. He who daily revolves in his mind, and laboriously brings home to his heart, death and the judgment, will scarcely fail of very serious exertions to become ready for these affecting scenes.

Probably not a person who is here present will survive seventy years from this day. A great proportion will be in the grave, ascend to the judgment, and enter upon the recompense of reward, within fifty years; not a small number within twenty; some, in all probability, God only knows how many, within ten, five, two, or even one. Where then will be our schemes of pleasure, pride, avarice, and ambition? Where shall we ourselves be? When we open our eyes on the eternal world, and mark the incomprehensible vast which is before us; how strong will the reasons appear which urged us to prepare ourselves for this amazing existence! How immensely desirable will it seem to enter upon boundless being with a complete provision for our comfort throughout its interminable ages; a provision which will fill up every passing year with enjoyment, and leave an ample supply for the countless multitude which are to come!

Think, I beseech you to think, how soon the little time of life will be gone to you; with what a rapid flight, hours, and days, and years hasten over your heads. What is the amount of your past life? A moment. What will be the amount of your life which is yet to come? Another moment. And then you will be summoned to the judgment.

4. How awful must be the final interview.

How awful is the character of Him to whose presence our souls will be summoned! From him we derived our being. By him we are continued in being. On him we are dependent for every blessing and every hope. To him we are accountable for all our conduct. Of that conduct he has been an eye-witness from the beginning. He is the God against whom we have sinned; who infinitely hates sin; and who has recorded all our transgressions in his book. He is our judge: he is our rewarder: his frown is hell: his smile is heaven.

How amazing is the end for which we shall appear at this interview! It is no other than to settle for ever the concerns of the soul. It is to fix our condition throughout the ages of immortality. It is to render an account of all that we have done in the present life, that we may be rewarded according to our works. On this account are suspended endless happiness, and endless misery.

How affecting must be the situation of the soul at this interview! It stands in the presence of God, the Judge of all, alone; without a friend to help, without an advocate to plead its cause; its all depending; itself to be disposed of for ever!

Let me solemnly ask this assembly, Are you prepared for this awful event? Is your account ready? Is it such an account as you are willing to give? Is it such a one as you believe your Judge will accept? Would you be willing to render it this day? Are you willing to hazard your souls upon it—your acceptance—your immortality? Or is it an account which will cover you with shame, agony, and despair? Have you lived hitherto only to do evil, to 'treasure up wrath,' and to enhance your ruin? Is the great work of your life yet to be begun? Will it be still to be begun to-morrow—the next year—in old age—on a dying bed? Has your whole course hitherto been directed, shall it through life be directed, towards perdition; and not a single step taken towards heaven?

SERMON CLXV.

THE REMOTER CONSEQUENCES OF DEATH.—THE RESURRECTION.

For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised.—1 Cor. xv. 16.

IN the preceding Discourse I considered the immediate consequences of death; in this I shall begin an inquiry concerning its remoter consequences. The first of these is the resurrection of the body.

The subject of this chapter is the ἀνάστασις, or *future existence of man.* This word is commonly but often erroneously, rendered resurrection. So far as I have observed, it usually denotes our existence beyond the grave. Its original and literal meaning is, to stand up, or to stand again. As standing is the appropriate pos-

ture of life, consciousness, and activity, and lying down the appropriate posture of the dead, the unconscious, and the inactive, this word is not unnaturally employed to denote the future state of spirits, who are living, conscious, active beings. Many passages of Scripture would have been rendered more intelligible, and the thoughts contained in them more just and impressive, had this word been translated agreeably to its real meaning. This observation will be sufficiently illustrated by a recurrence to that remarkable passage which contains the dispute between our Saviour and the Sadducees, Matt. xxii. 23. 'Then came to him,' says the evangelist, 'the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection:' μὴ εἶναι ἀνάστασιν, that there is no future state, or no future existence of mankind. The objection which they bring to Christ against the doctrine of a future state, is founded upon the Jewish law of marriage, which required that a surviving brother should marry the widow of a brother deceased. In conformity to this law, they declare seven brothers to have married, successively, one wife, who survived them all. They then ask, 'Whose wife shall she be in the resurrection?—ἐν τῇ ἀνάστασει—*in the future state?* They could not suppose that she should be any man's wife in the resurrection: a momentary event; and of such a nature as to forbid even the supposition, that the relations of the present life could be of the least possible importance, or be regarded with the least possible attention, during its transitory existence. Our Saviour answers them, 'In the resurrection,' or, as it should be rendered, 'In the future state, they neither marry nor are given in marriage; but are as the angels of God in heaven. But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God;' or, as it ought to be rendered, 'Have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, concerning the future existence of those who are dead, saying, I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.' This passage, were we at any loss concerning the meaning of the word ἀνάστασις, determines it beyond a dispute. The proof that there is an ἀνάστασις of the dead, alleged by our Saviour, is the declaration of God to Moses, 'I am the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob;' and the irresistible truth, that 'God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.' The consequence, as every one who reads the Bible knows, is, that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, were living at the time when this declaration was made. Those who die, therefore, live after they are dead, and this future life is the ἀνάστασις, concerning which there was so much debate between the Pharisees and Sadducees, which is proved by our Saviour in this passage, and which is universally denoted by this term throughout the New Testament. Nothing is more evident, than that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had not risen from the dead; and that the declaration concerning them is therefore no proof of the resurrection. But it is certain that they were living beings; and therefore this passage is a complete proof that mankind live after death.

The appropriate Greek word for *resurrection* is ἔγερσις, as in Matt. xxvii. 52, 53; 'Many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after his resurrection;' μετὰ τὴν ἔγερσιν αὐτου.

The ἀνάστασις is the thing mentioned as having been denied by some of the Corinthian Christians. See verse 12th of the context. 'How say some among you, that there is no resurrection (no future life, or existence) of the dead?' A person who reads the Epistles to the Corinthians with reference to this object, will easily perceive that there was at least one heretical teacher at the head of the faction in the Corinthian church, who refused submission to the authority of the apostle. This man seems evidently to have been a Jew, and was most probably a Sadducee, as he brought over several members of this church to the great Sadducean error, the denial of a future state. To remove this error from that church, and to prevent its existence ever afterward, was obviously the design of St Paul in writing this chapter. Accordingly, he shows its absurdity in the most triumphant manner, in the first thirty-four verses; and with equal success, elucidates and proves the contrary doctrine. In the remainder of the discourse, he dwells extensively on the nature of the body with which those who are dead will be invested at the final day; declares the change which those who are living at that time will experience, and concludes with a song of triumph over death and *hades*, and a solemn exhortation to Christians steadfastly to abound in the service of God.

I have remarked, that the doctrine denied by some of the Corinthian Christians was, strictly speaking, that of a future existence in another world. As this existence will in fact be connected with the future existence of the body, and therefore with the resurrection, properly so called, St Paul, in order to remove the objections of such as opposed it, and the difficulties and doubts of others, and to disclose the truth concerning this interesting subject, has entered into an extensive discussion concerning the resurrection. The future existence of the soul will in fact be connected with the future existence of the body; to give a just and comprehensive view of the former of these subjects, it was necessary therefore to enter into a particular consideration of the latter. Accordingly, St Paul commences his examination of it in the thirty-fifth verse, by putting an objection against a future state into the mouth of an opponent, derived from apprehended difficulties concerning the future existence of the body. The objection is indeed without weight; as it is merely an expression of the objector's ignorance concerning the subject, and his inability to imagine what kind of body, or by what means any body, can be united to the soul in the future world. Still, it is the objection which probably rises sooner, and in more minds, against the doctrine, than any other which can be alleged. It was therefore suggested by St Paul with the utmost propriety.

In considering this objection the apostle not only removes it, but unfolds also many truths concerning it, of the most edifying and glorious nature. Indeed, this chapter is one of the first specimens of that expansion and sublimity of intellect for which St Paul is distinguished above every other writer. Nothing in heathen antiquity can be found among poets, orators, or philosophers, which in loftiness of conception, or extensiveness of views, deserves to be named in comparison with this discourse. From the very proposition of the subject, the writer begins to ascend; and with an eagle wing rises higher and higher; throughout all his progress, until he lifts himself, and elevates the mind of his reader, to the heavens.

In the text the resurrection of the body is asserted

and proved. The proof alleged is the resurrection of Christ; and the argument may be advantageously exhibited in the following manner. Christ predicted his own resurrection, and actually rose in the manner predicted. He has thus proved both his power to do every thing, and his veracity in all his declarations. But he has declared that he will raise up at the last day all that are in their graves. Thus his own resurrection is a complete proof of the general resurrection of mankind.

This doctrine has, in one manner and another, been opposed by various sorts of men, in most ages of the world. The Sadducees denied all future existence to man. The Athenian philosophers, when Paul preached to them Jesus and the ἀνάστασις, said, 'What will this babbler (this scatterer of words) say?' In modern times, infidels extensively have denied the future existence of both soul and body; and there have not been wanting those who, professing themselves to be Christians, have entertained unwarrantable opinions, and found many difficulties relative to this subject. This opposition, and these difficulties, seem, however, notto be suggested by the intellect, but to spring from the imagination. When we begin to think concerning the separate existence of the soul, we naturally follow our customary course of thought concerning intelligent beings. All these with whom we directly correspond are embodied, and therefore obvious to our senses. We are taught, that souls in a separate state of existence are unembodied, and therefore unsusceptible of form, and visible appearance. Of their places of residence, modes of existence, modes of communication, pursuits, enjoyments, and sufferings, we know almost nothing. This chasm in our knowledge we endeavour to fill up by the aid of imagination; and proceed, almost of course, to form images of such spirits in the world in which they dwell, and of the manner in which they exist, communicate, are busied, enjoy, and suffer. With respect to all these things, however, we find our imagination, after its utmost efforts, unable to satisfy even itself, and much more unable to satisfy the understanding. The world which we thus form, its inhabitants, and their circumstances, are never such as that we can realize their actual existence. Hence we give them up as unreal and visionary; and by a transition exceedingly common, although usually unobserved, we consider the decision, made merely by our fancy, as made in fact by our understanding. Against this decision arguments are often urged in vain. We may be, we usually are, unable to refute such as are advanced in opposition to it; but, finding ourselves unable to conceive in our imagination the state of things urged upon our belief, we hesitate concerning it, and then doubt, and perhaps ultimately deny, its existence.

That this is a just account of the real state of many minds with respect to this subject, I fully believe, from observations which have been actually made to myself; and beg leave to add, that this is far from being the only case in which the imagination is suffered to control the dictates of the understanding. Not only in those familiar instances, where the mind receives strong impressions from the operations of this faculty, is the intellect induced to admit that which is unsupported by evidence; but in numerous others also it is equally influenced, and inclined to refuse its faith to positions abundantly evinced merely because it cannot imagine the manner in which objects involved in those truths can exist. In this way its views concerning subjects pertaining to the future world often receive a very unhappy bias.

Another source of perplexity with regard to the doctrine of the resurrection, has been the question, whether the same body will be raised? A question extensively agitated, with no small ardour and anxiety. All the difficulties which attend this subject are derived, as it appears to me, either from extending our philosophical inquiries beyond the power of the understanding to answer them, as is sometimes done, or from neglecting to settle what we intend by sameness. If the question intends, whether the same atoms which have composed our bodies in the present world, will constitute the body raised at the final day, both reason and revelation answer it in the negative. The whole number of particles which have, at different times, constituted the body of a man, during his progress through life, will undoubtedly be sufficient to constitute many such bodies. St Paul also observes to the objector, in answer to this very question, 'Thou fool; that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die; and that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body which shall be, but bare grain: it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain; but God giveth it a body, as it hath pleased him. So also is the resurrection of the dead.' And again, 'Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.' This scheme of thought he pursues, from the thirty-fourth verse, throughout most of the chapter.

If the same constitution, arrangement, and qualities of the body, be intended by the question; it is equally evident that the same body will not be raised. This is decisively taught us in the last quoted declaration, and in the passage immediately following: 'Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.' It is also clearly shown by the general tenor of the reasoning contained in the whole passage. Reason too decides with absolute certainty, that a constitution which involves in its nature decay and termination, cannot belong to a body destined for the residence of an immortal and ever vigorous mind.

Should it be asked, Whether some of the same particles which are found in our earthly bodies, will not be transferred to those which will be formed at the resurrection; I answer, that this point has not been determined in the Scriptures, and that the determination of it lies beyond the reach of philosophy. Let me add, that the question itself is perfectly nugatory.

That the body will be the same in such a sense as to be known, appears sufficiently evident from the Scriptures. Even departed spirits in their intermediate state appear plainly to be exhibited in the gospel as known to each other. Our Saviour informs us, that 'many shall come from the east, and from the west, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God, with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob.' In order to a complete fulfilment of the intention of this promise, it seems necessary that the persons here spoken of should know these patriarchs. Lazarus, Abraham, and the rich man, are all exhibited in the parable as known to each other. Moses and Elias also were known by the disciples, on the mount of transfiguration, to be Moses and Elias; one of them an embodied, the other an unembodied, spirit. From these facts it is, I think, sufficiently evi-

dent, that mankind will know each other in the future world, and that their bodies will so far be the same, as to become the means of this knowledge.

Against the resurrection itself there is no presumption, and in favour of it a strong one, from analogy. Many works of God naturally and strongly dispose the mind to admit the doctrine without hesitation. In this climate almost the whole vegetable world dies annually under the chilling influence of winter. At the return of spring the face of nature is renewed; and all the plants, shrubs, and trees with which it is adorned are again clothed with verdure, life, and beauty.

In the insect creation we find a direct and striking example of the resurrection itself. Animals of this class begin their existence in the form of worms. After continuing some time in the humble state of being to which they are necessarily confined by their structure, they die, and are gone. In the moment of death they construct for themselves a species of shell, or tomb, in which they may with the strictest propriety be said to be buried. Here they are dissolved into a mass of semi-transparent water, the whole which remains of the previously existing animal, exhibiting to the eye no trace of life, and no promise of a future revival. When the term of its burial approaches to a period, the tomb discloses, and a winged animal comes forth in a nobler form, often exquisitely beautiful, brilliant with the gayest splendour, possessed of new and superior powers, and destined to a more refined and more exalted life. Its food is now the honey of flowers, its field of being, the atmosphere. Here it expatiates at large in the delightful exercise of its faculties, and in the high enjoyment of those sunbeams which were the immediate means of its newly acquired existence.

Could there be a rational, or even a specious, doubt concerning the power of God, and his sufficiency to raise the body from the grave, this change in the world of insects accomplished before our eyes, and for these animals, not less extraordinary than that which we are contemplating is for man, puts an end to every such doubt, and places the possibility of this event beyond debate. In truth this change is nothing less than a glorious type of the resurrection.

Whatever sameness may attend the body at the resurrection, it is clear from the Scriptures that, in many important particulars, it will be greatly changed; so much changed, as to wear in various respects an entirely new character. These I shall now proceed to mention.

1. The body will be raised incorruptible.

'It is sown,' says St Paul, 'in corruption; it is raised in incorruption.'

One of the most striking characteristics of the human body in its present state, is its universal tendency to decay. This tendency appears, and often fatally, in its earliest existence, and at every succeeding stage of its progress. It is, however, most visible and affecting after it has passed the middle point of life. Then decay arrests it in many forms, and with irresistible power; then the limbs gradually stiffen, the faculties lose their vigour, the strength declines, the face becomes overspread with wrinkles, and the head with the locks of age. Health, at the same time, recedes by degrees, even from the firmest constitution; pains multiply, feebleness and languor lay hold on the whole system, and death at length seizes the frame as his prey, and changes it to corruption and to dust.

A mighty and glorious difference will be made in our nature, when the body revives beyond the grave. All the evils and accidents which befall it in the present world will then have lost their power. Hunger, thirst, weakness, declension, death, and corruption are bounded by the tomb. Those who rise to the resurrection of life, 'will hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat.' Firm, enduring, unassailable by distress, and proof against the undermining progress of years, they will, 'like gold tried in the fire, remain bright and indestructible through the endless succession of ages.

2. The body will be raised immortal.

'When this corruptible,' says St Paul, 'shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal immortality.'

Incorruption and immortality are attributes so nearly allied, as not easily to be separated in our discussions. Still they are only kindred attributes, not the same. An incorruptible body, although it cannot perish by decay and dissolution, may yet be annihilated. An immortal body will know no end, either from its own weakness, or from external power. Such God has been pleased to constitute the bodies of his children beyond the grave. Death to them shall be no more. In defiance of time, and superior to injury, the body will 'live with him for ever and ever.'

3. The body will be raised in power.

'It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power,' ver. 43.

In the future world the righteous 'serve God day and night in his temple,' Rev. vii. 15: that is, they serve him without cessation or rest; and need, of course, faculties fitted for the performance of these services; faculties, whose vigour the magnitude of no duty shall overcome, and no continuance of action fatigue, or impair. Originally destined for an existence of this nature, the powers of the body will correspond with the activity of the mind; and will sustain without injury, defect, or decay, and will accomplish with enjoyment growing out of its exertions, every labour which it is required to undergo. Instead of being exhausted or weakened, it seems evident from the Scriptures, that its strength, as well as its other attributes, will, like those of the mind, advance towards a higher and higher perfection throughout the ages of eternity.

4. The body will, at the resurrection, be endued with great activity.

In Luke xx. 36, our Saviour declares that the righteous will in the ἀναστασις, or future state of existence, be ἰσαγγελοι; literally, 'equal to the angels;' but perhaps intended here to denote, 'like the angels;' that is, possessing in a near and kindred degree the attributes which they possess. Accordingly, in the fourth chapter of the Apocalypse, we are taught that the four-and-twenty elders, the representatives of the ancient and modern churches, are placed round about the throne, together with the four living ones, the representatives of the angelic host. The resemblance here exhibited is such as strongly to exemplify this declaration of Christ. Their station is substantially the same; their employments are the same.

The activity of angels is disclosed to us by the Scriptures in many passages, and in language of the greatest force. The ninth chapter of Daniel particularly contains, as I observed in the first Discourse concerning

these glorious intelligences, a remarkable illustration of this subject. Here we are told, that Gabriel received a command in heaven, while Daniel was employed in prayer, to interpret his vision; and that, 'being caused to fly swiftly, he touched Daniel about the time of the evening oblation.' The activity here declared is plainly superior both to conception and calculation; and exceeds that of the sunbeams beyond any proportion perceptible by our minds. Similar to this representation will be the activity of the righteous in the future world.

To recur to the illustration adopted in the former part of this Discourse. We are now, as we are styled in the Scriptures, worms of the dust; slowly and humbly creeping upon the earth, appointed for our habitation. With these reptiles we die, and are lost in the tomb. Like them also we shall revive to a new and nobler existence; and wander freely at our pleasure, through regions shut to us hitherto by an immovable law of our nature, and to our apprehension existing only in argument or fancy.

To *act* is the end of all rational existence, and to act *at pleasure* the necessary concomitant of happy existence. Like Moses and Elias, if we obtain a part in the first resurrection, we may hereafter visit distant worlds, with incomparably more ease than we can now pass from one continent to another; and find the oceans of space by which they are separated merely means of illustrating our activity, and furnishing delightful opportunities of expatiating at our pleasure.

5. As all these attributes, united, are a complete establishment of endless youth; the body at the resurrection will of course be invested with this delightful characteristic.

On this subject it will be unnecessary to , after what has been already said. I shall only observe, that the angels who appeared to Mary and the apostles, after the resurrection of Christ, were, although created many thousand years before, still young; and were regarded by them, at first, as being young men. On them duration makes in this respect no impression. Ages roll their years away, and leave them, as they found them, in the blossom of youth, which shall begin for ever. Such is the character of all the children of God beyond the grave.

6. The body will at the resurrection be arrayed in glory and beauty.

'It is sown in dishonour,' says St Paul, 'it is raised in glory,' verse 43. 'Who shall change our vile body,' says the same apostle, 'and fashion it like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.' In stricter language, 'who shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation, that it may become of the like form with his glorious body, according to the energy, whereby he is able also to subdue all things unto himself.'

On the mount of transfiguration, Christ appeared to Peter, James, and John, in his glorious body; then as we are told by the evangelists, 'his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment became white and glistering.' In Rev. i. 9, we have a more ample exhibition of the same illustrious object; in some respects emblematical, but in all sublime and glorious beyond a parallel. 'And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks, and in the midst of the golden candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. His head and his hair were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire. And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace. And his voice as the sound of many waters. And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword. And his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.' Of the supreme splendour of this appearance how high must our conceptions rise, when we hear the apostle subjoin, 'And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead.' In this wonderful change, St Paul observes, there shall be a display of 'energy,' that is, of power and skill, like that by which he 'subdues all things unto himself.' What a transformation must that be, which this poor frail, perishable body will experience, when the full import of this prediction shall be accomplished! How exceedingly is such a change to be coveted by beings like ourselves; subject as we are to pain and disease, decay and death!

7. The body raised will be a spiritual body.

'It is sown,' says St Paul, 'a natural (or animal) body, it is raised a spiritual body: there is a natural (or animal) body: there is a spiritual body.'

By an animal body, is intended, as you well know, the present body of man; depending for its continuance upon the principle of animal life, the subject of innumerable frailties, and making a regular progress to dissolution.

Of a spiritual body, it is not, perhaps, in our power to form an adequate conception. Some of the ancient fathers supposed it to be a body which, having no need of the animal functions, was preserved in life by the mere inhabitation of the mind. This opinion, I presume, they derive from the phrase only, and not from any scriptural declaration.

In the view of St Paul this subject was plainly of high importance, for he insists on it in a fervent and sublime strain in several of the following verses. After declaring that there is a spiritual body, as well as an animal one, he illustrates the declaration by observing, that 'the first Adam was made a living soul, the last a quickening spirit: that the first was of the earth, earthy; the second, the Lord from heaven; that they who are earthy, are like the earthy Adam, and they who are heavenly, like the heavenly Adam; and that, as we have borne the image of the earthy, so we shall bear the image of the heavenly.' He then declares that 'flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.' Hence he observes, that 'those who are alive' at the sounding of the last trumpet must necessarily undergo a change of the same nature with that which the dead will experience, and which he has described in the preceding part of the chapter. From these observations it may, I think, be asserted, without danger of error,

(1.) That the body raised will not be composed of flesh and blood,

(2.) That it will in its nature possess powers of life, totally superior to those which we now possess; being destined to resemble in this respect 'the quickening spirit,' whose image it will bear.

(3.) That none of its organs will prove temptations to sin as in the present world; but all of them aids to holiness: this circumstance being often, in the Scriptures, the professed distinction between that which is natural or animal, and that which is spiritual.

(4.) That its organs of perception, and of enjoyment also, will possess a far higher and nobler nature than those with which we are now furnished. Like Moses and Elias, the glorified man may be able, without danger of mistake, to direct his way from the highest heavens to the distant regions of the universe.

(5.) That, generally, the attributes of the body will so resemble those of the mind, as to render the epithet, *spiritual*, the proper description of its nature. Like the mind, it may, not without probability, contain inherently the principles of life, and the seeds of immortality.

REMARKS.

1. In this account of the resurrection we have one specimen of the consistency exhibited in the gospel between different parts of the Christian system.

The gospel everywhere discloses to us illustrious things concerning the future happiness and glory of the mind; and at the same time teaches us, that it will be re-united to the body in the future world. The least reflection will convince us, that such bodies as we now possess must be very unsuitable mansions for minds destined to be thus glorious and happy. The mind is prepared to dwell in a palace. Such a body as ours could only become its prison. The uncouthness, the deformity suggested when only so much of the scheme is brought before our eyes, is here delightfully done away. Here we learn, that the body shall be fitted to become the habitation of a sanctified and immortal mind, and prove to it a most useful and delightful companion throughout eternity. Here we learn, that the body will be suited to all the perceptions, labours, enjoyments, and glories of the mind; and that the mind, in the possession of this residence, will become greater, more useful, and more happy. Thus this part of the system is exactly proportioned to the rest, and strongly illustrative of the wisdom and goodness of its Author.

2. The doctrine of the resurrection is a doctrine of revelation only.

Of this doctrine not a trace can be found in all the investigations of philosophy. Paul when declaring it to the Athenian philosophers, was pronounced by them to be a babbler. It was, therefore, a doctrine unknown and unheard-of within the purlieus of their science. No philosopher, to that time, had been so fortunate as to light upon it by accident, nor so ingenious as to derive it from reason. Indeed, it must be acknowledged to lie beyond the reach of reason; and, in its very nature, to be hidden from the most scrutinizing human inquiry. The resurrection itself is an event depending absolutely on the will as well as on the power of God; and what he will choose to do with respect to this subject, no being but himself can determine.

Yet no doctrine devised by philosophy concerning man is so sublime, so delightful, or so fitted to furnish consolation and hope to beings whose life in this world is a moment, and whose end is the grave. To this dark and desolate habitation, man, by the twilight of nature, looks forward in despair, as his final home. All who have gone before him have pointed their feet to its silent chambers, and not one of them returned, to announce that an opening has been discovered from their dreary residence, to some other more lightsome and more desirable region. His own feet daily tread the same melancholy path. As he draws nigh he surveys its prison walls, and sees them unassailable by force, and insurmountable by skill. No lamp illumines the midnight within. No crevice opens to the eye a glimpse of the regions which lie beyond. In absolute despair he calls upon philosophy to cheer his drooping mind; but he calls in vain. She has no consolations for herself; and can, therefore, administer none to him. 'Here,' she coldly and sullenly cries, 'is the end of man. From nothing he sprang: to nothing he returns. All that remains of him is the dust, which here mingles with its native earth.'

At this sullen moment of despair, revelation approaches, and with a command at once awful and delightful, exclaims, 'Lazarus, come forth!' In a moment the earth heaves, the tomb discloses, and a form, bright as the sun, and arrayed in immortality, rises from the earth; and, stretching its wings towards heaven, loses itself from the astonished sight.

3. These considerations teach us, to entertain the highest apprehensions concerning the future glory of the mind.

Of how little value, even in our own view, are these earthly, frail, perishable bodies! Yet what great and delightful things are to be done for them at the resurrection. What, then, must we suppose will be the future allotments of the mind, in its nature imperishable and eternal. The future glory of the body, as revealed in the Scriptures, outruns all the efforts of the human imagination. How 'exceeding abundantly above all that we are able to ask, or think,' will the mind be exalted, adorned, and enraptured, by him, whose glory and delight it is to bless, and who has already enstamped it with his own image, loveliness, and beauty.

4. We learn from these considerations, the true way of providing for the welfare of our bodies.

The human frame is here shown to possess an incalculable value, in the distinction to which it is entitled beyond the grave. If, therefore, we love our bodies, and desire to preserve and cherish them, we shall with the most effectual care secure their revival to all that distinction, and the happiness with which it is connected. This is to be accomplished, not by adorning and pampering them here, in obedience to the calls of pride and luxury; but by seeking effectually the immortal life of those minds by which they are inhabited. The body necessarily follows the destination of the mind. He, therefore, who gains a title to endless life, makes complete provision for the welfare of the whole man. In the Christian system all good is united; our duty and our interest, the well-being of the soul and that of the body, the blessings of time, and those of eternity. He, therefore, who neglects the life of the soul, casts away his present good; he who refuses to do his duty, squanders his all.

SERMON CLXVI.

THE REMOTER CONSEQUENCES OF DEATH.—THE FINAL JUDGMENT.

But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night.—2 PETER iii. 10.

IN the three preceding Discourses I have considered death; its immediate consequences; and the first of its remoter consequences; to wit, the resurrection. I shall now proceed to the consideration of another of these consequences; to wit, the General Judgment.

The day consecrated to this great transaction is in the text styled 'the day of the Lord.' The Christian sabbath is, in the cxviiith Psalm, said to be 'the day which the Lord hath made;' and is called in the first chapter of the Apocalypse, 'the Lord's day.' On that day Christ arose from the dead, finished the work of redemption, and 'rested from his labours, as God did from his.' In honour of this wonderful event, Christ consecrated the first day of the week for ever to himself, as a season of public religious worship to all the nations of men. On this day, he has ever been particularly present with all his followers, and 'commanded the blessing' to descend upon Zion, 'even life for evermore.'

But the day mentioned in the text is his day, in a still higher and more solemn sense. It is selected from all the days of time, as the sabbath from those of the week.

It is the final day; the period of this earthly system; the dying day of this great world; on which its last groans will be heard, its knell sounded through the universe, and its obsequies celebrated with most awful pomp, and supreme as well as melancholy grandeur.

It is the day of universal judgment; on which the personal concerns of angels and of men will be brought to the last trial, before the Judge of the quick and dead, and irreversibly settled for eternity.

It is the day in which the mystery will be finished. All the wonderful and perplexing events of providence towards this world, will at this time be explained to the full conviction of the assembled universe: so that God will appear 'just when he judges, and clear when he condemns.' The secrets of the human heart, the mazes of providence, and the wonders of the divine character, displayed in these events, will be unfolded in such a manner, as to stop every mouth, and murmur, for ever.

It is the day on which the catastrophe of this earthly system will arrive. The plot, immensely great and wonderful, comprising innumerable important scenes and an endless variety of actors, will now be unravelled. The theatre is a world; the duration of the action is time; the actors are all the millions of the race of Adam; the subject is redemption; the hero is the Messiah; the end is the final triumph of virtue, and the irrevocable overthrow of sin. The catastrophe on this day will be completed and disclosed; and all the efforts, windings, and intricacies, find their termination. 'IT IS DONE,' will be proclaimed by the divine herald to the universe, and the curtain will be drawn for ever.

It is the day on which Christ will be glorified. In this world he appeared as a man, humbled, persecuted, suffering, dying, nailed to the cross, and buried in the grave. Now he will descend from heaven 'with the glory of his Father;' and 'will come to be admired by all them that believe,' with wonder and reverence inexpressible. No more the babe of Bethlehem; no more a prisoner before a human judge; no more an expiring victim on the cross; no more a lifeless corpse in the sepulchre: he will sit upon the throne of the universe invested with the sceptre of infinite dominion. He will judge both angels and men, dispose of all nations at his pleasure, and open and shut both heaven and hell. Eternity to all beings will now be suspended on his nod; and life and death, which will know no end, will be conveyed by his voice. All beings will be 'as nothing before him;' and will be justly 'counted unto him as less than nothing and vanity.' He will speak, and it will be done; he will command, and it will stand for ever.

On this day he will glorify his justice in the sight of the universe. He will show, beyond denial, to the consciences of impenitent beings, that their ruin was derived from themselves; that their sin is just as evil and odious, as he has declared it to be in the Scriptures; and that it is equitably 'punished with everlasting destruction from his presence, and the glory of his power.'

On this day he will glorify his kindness in the deliverance of all his followers from guilt and perdition. His compassion to this ruined world, his overflowing mercy to them, who believed in him, chose him as their Saviour, and obeyed his voice, will now be manifested with supreme and eternal splendour. The universe will perceive that he chose them as his own, with perfect propriety; while they with astonishment and rapture will remember 'the love with which he loved them, and gave himself for them,' the tenderness with which he preserved them from temptations and enemies, the affection with which he still bears them on his heart, and the divine promises which, while they lived in the present world, conveyed to them immortal life, and are now to be fulfilled in a manner which no eye hath seen, and no mind conceived.

On this day he will glorify his omniscience. He will show that from the beginning he hath 'searched the hearts, and tried the reins, of all the children of men.' The sins which they have committed, the virtues which they have exercised, the motives by which they have been governed, and the rewards which will constitute an equitable retribution for their various conduct, he

will 'set in the light of his countenance,' as objects intended to be clearly seen are by ourselves placed in the sun-beams. It will then appear, that he 'knew all his works from the beginning;' and is that ocean of knowledge whence innumerable streams have flowed, and will for ever flow, to his intelligent creatures.

On this day he will glorify his immutability. Now he will clearly discover, that he is 'Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.' Truth, the moral immutability of his character, will be found to have been the only language of his word; of his law, his promises, and his threatenings; of the system of redemption, and of the terms on which it is proffered to man. Of course, the universe will distinctly see how wisely his followers, have trusted in him, and how foolishly sinners have refused to believe his declarations.

Finally: On this day he will glorify his power. The most awful and convincing evidence will be furnished, that he 'has the keys of death, and of hades.' Heaven at his command will open all its infinite blessings to the eternal enjoyment of his children, and the doors of hell at his bidding will close on its guilty and miserable inhabitants. 'None will be able to stay his hand,' or dare to 'say unto him, What doest thou?' 'From his face the heavens and the earth will flee away; and at his word, 'new heavens and a new earth, wherein righteousness shall dwell' for ever, will spring up in their stead.

This awful day 'will come as a thief in the night.' A thief comes in the hour of peace and security, when the house is defenceless, and the family buried in sleep. The first noise of his arrival is the sound of his breaking up, or the noise of his ravages. He comes also unexpectedly; he comes only to invade, distress, and destroy. In this unexpected and dreadful manner will the day of the Lord come.

Mankind, according to the representations of St John, will, at the period which precedes the final judgment, be sunk in degeneracy and pollution. The glorious effects of the millennium will have ceased; and the world returned to a degeneracy like that which existed immediately before the deluge. 'The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life,' will have regained their full dominion over the human race. and religion prepared her final flight to her native heaven. Strong in their numbers, their power, and their pride, sunk in sense and profligacy, and burning with intense hatred to God and his children, the nations 'who are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog,' will be 'gathered together to battle' against the Christians remaining in the world; will 'go up on the breadth of the earth; and compass the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city.' Exulting in the fullest confidence of their final extinction, this army of 'scoffers' will exclaim with triumphant insolence, 'Where is the promise of his coming? For, since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.' In this night of stupidity and sin, this season of spiritual slumber, the final day will arrive. In a moment it will burst on the astonished world, break the last sleep with alarm and terror, and strip guilty men of all their beloved enjoyments, and all their fond hopes of future good.

The ancient Christians believed that the declaration in the text would be literally accomplished. Nor is there any proof, that their interpretation was erroneous. There is no improbability, that the sun, which hid its face at the crucifixion of the Redeemer, will again retire from this stupendous scene; or that the moon and stars will 'withdraw their shining,' and leave the world in deep and melancholy darkness. In this case, the morning of the great day will be ushered in, not by the cheerful twilight spread over the mountains, but the awful approach of that intense splendour, surrounded by which the Son of God will descend. A new and terrible light will appear in mid-heaven; and, advancing towards the earth, will diffuse such a morning over all its regions, as the universe has never beheld, and will never behold again.

At this momentous period, the trumpet of God will sound, as it once sounded when the same glorious Person descended upon Mount Sinai; while all the people who were in the camp trembled. At this renewed sound, all nations will tremble, and the earth quake to its utmost shores.

At the same period, the archangel will call to the dead, and awaken them from the long sleep in which they have been buried. The earth and the ocean 'will give up the dead which are in them.' The regions of death, and the world of departed spirits, 'will give up the dead which are in them.' Every grave will open, its dust be reanimated, and living forms be seen rising from its dark chambers, over all the surface of the globe. Those who are still alive, will also undergo, substantially, the same great change which has been before undergone by those who have been dead; and both will be invested with bodies incorruptible, and immortal. The globe will be repeopled in a moment; and the whole family of Adam, with their progenitor at their head, will stand up together.

This vast assembly will be divided into two great classes; the righteous, and the wicked. The former will 'rise to the resurrection of life; and the latter will 'rise to the resurrection of damnation.' The righteous will 'lift up their heads with exultation and transport, and 'behold their redemption drawing nigh.' Their fears will now be ended, their dangers overcome, their enemies subdued, their sins washed away, and their reward be ready to begin its eternal progress. The wicked, on the contrary, will rise with full conviction, that 'in their lifetime they had received all their good things.' Time, the world, the gratifications of pride, avarice, and sensuality, the combinations of evil men, the courage and strength which they have derived from their numbers, their contempt, hatred, and persecution of good men, and all the bright prospects which they have cherished of success in sin, have retired behind them to return no more. The day of enjoyment and hope is past for ever. The day of retribution is come. The Lord of all things, whom they have so often and so obstinately disbelieved, despised, and crucified afresh, is now approaching 'to take vengeance on all them who in this world knew not God, and obeyed not the gospel of his Son.' With supreme dismay and anguish 'they will call to the rocks and mountains to fall on them, and hide them from the wrath of the Lamb.'

This divine Person will now be seen descending from heaven, 'in the glory of his Father,' in his own peculiar glory 'and with all his holy angels.' The Shechinah, in which he so often manifested himself to his ancient church, and in which he ascended after his resurrection, will now surround him with an interchange

of the deepest darkness, and light inaccessible. 'His eyes, as a flame of fire, his countenance as the sun shineth in his strength, and his voice as the sound of many waters,' will fill all virtuous beings with wonder, awe, and delight, and all sinful ones with amazement and horror.

Around him, with supreme veneration and transport, 'the innumerable company of angels' will send 'a shout of triumph to the distant regions of the universe, and the happy millions of the righteous re-echo from this world the joyful acclamation.

To meet him, his faithful followers will be 'caught up' by divine power, and their own instinctive energy; and rise as an immense cloud through the air, to be placed in open distinguished honour at his right hand. They were not ashamed of him in this world; and he will thus gloriously prove that he is not ashamed of them in the day of trial. Here they publicly and steadfastly confessed him before men, as their Saviour. There he will confess them before the universe, as his chosen, faithful, and beloved followers.

When the throne of judgment is set, and the books opened; the wicked will be summoned to his left hand as a public proof of his indignation against their guilty character. To their view as well as to that of the righteous, will rise up in clear remembrance, with unerring discernment, and in the most rapid succession, all the events of their earthly being. The sins of both, the proffers, of mercy made in the gospel, the unbelief and impenitence of the wicked, and the faith and repentance of the righteous, will now be 'set in order before their eyes.' With a clear and comprehensive glance of thought, sinners will behold the vast picture of life drawn only in black, with no bright and luminous strokes to relieve the distressed eye. The righteous, on the contrary, will see their sins washed away in the blood of Christ, their souls sanctified by the Spirit of grace, and their services accepted as 'well done,' because they were rendered with a spirit of sincere obedience, and with faith in the Redeemer.

To the righteous he will then say, 'Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat;' I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me.' To the wicked he will say, 'Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me not in; naked, and ye clothed me not; sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not.'

When the trial is ended, and the final allotments of angels and men are determined, flaming fire from the presence of the Judge will kindle this great world with a universal conflagration. All the works of man; his palaces, towers, and temples; his villages, towns, and cities; his wonderful displays of art, his haughty piles of grandeur, and his vast labours of defence and dominion, will be lighted up in a single blaze, and vanish from the creation.

Nor will the desolation be limited to the works of men. The earth on which they stand; the hills and mountains, the valleys and plains, the lakes, the rivers, and the ocean, will all in a moment become one blazing ruin. The very 'elements' of which they are composed, will 'melt with fervent heat;' and the world itself, so long the seat of sin and sorrow, be finally destroyed.

The visible heavens, in the mean time, will catch the flame. Above, beneath, around, a vast concave of fire will encircle this dissolving globe; and 'with a great noise,' an awful sound filling the universe, both the inferior heavens, and the earth, will 'flee away from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and no place be found for them any more.'

From this scene of destruction, the Judge, together with all his happy followers, the angels who have faithfully ministered to him, and the saints who have loved and believed in him, will ascend to the heaven of heavens, where he will present them before his Father, as his own friends and children, the crown and reward of all his labours, in the work of redemption. By him they will be approved, accepted, and blessed for ever.

The wicked, at the same time, will descend to the regions of woe; and begin and pursue the melancholy journey of their future being in an unceasing course of sin and sorrow for ever.

REMARKS.

1. How rational and harmonious a system of the divine conduct is presented to us in the Scriptures.

This wonderful volume exhibits to us the Former and Ruler of the universe, as self-existent, eternal, independent, omnipresent, and immutable; and as possessed of all power, knowledge, and goodness. This great and wonderful Being, they inform us, in the beginning created with a command the earth and the heavens, and peopled them with angels and men. Of the angels they declare, some fell from their allegiance to the Ruler of all things; and were turned out of heaven into the region of woe: while others, who persevered in their duty, are continued in the glorious possession of that happy world for ever. Man, created perfectly holy, they also teach us, apostatized from this character, and from obedience to his Creator. The proofs of this melancholy event are complete, and exist equally within us, and without.

To deliver him from this evil condition, God, we are farther told, provided wise and ample means of restoration; means most happily suited to the character of man, as a moral agent, and of his Maker, as the moral Governor of the universe. He sent his Son, to atone for human guilt; and his Spirit, by a mysterious agency to renew the human soul. At the same time, and by the inspiration of the same Spirit, he gave his word to enlighten the mind by his instructions, to control it by his precepts, to allure it by his promises, and to alarm it by his threatenings. The conditions of its restoration are there declared to be 'repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ.' No conditions could be more suited to his perfection, or to the character or the wants of man. They are obvious, they are reasonable, they are necessary, they are efficacious. Without them, man could neither be virtuous, useful, nor happy. Towards the attainment of them he has also provided in his word and ordinances, advantages of the most desirable nature.

When the end of this scheme of providence shall arrive, and all the generations of Adam shall be completed, he has appointed a day on which he will in

righteousness judge both angels and men by his beloved Son, whom he has ordained to this mighty office. All their conduct will then be examined, and their endless allotments apportioned to them, severally, 'according to their works. How obvious and perfect a consistency is displayed throughout every part of this scheme! The end proposed is exactly suited to the character given of the Proposer; and is no other than the establishment of an immense kingdom, 'of the increase of whose prosperity and peace, there shall be no termination.' The means adopted for the accomplishment are entirely fitted for this purpose, and are accordant parts of a perfect whole.

Nor is this exhibition less remarkable for its splendour than for its harmony. An immeasurable grandeur, a divine magnificence, invest it everywhere, and write upon all its parts the name of the city seen in vision by Ezekiel, 'Jehovah is here.' In comparison with it, the highest conceptions of philosophy and poetry are the babblings of children. Moses and Isaiah, Paul and John, hold their course among the stars; while Homer and Virgil, Plato and Cicero, creep on the earth beneath them. The opening of this wonderful scheme is the creation of the universe, its progress is constituted by the mediation of the Son of God, and the long train of prophecies with which he was ushered into the world, the establishment of the church, and the host of miracles by which it was preserved and blessed, its extension over the known world by the apostles, its sufferings from antichristian persecution, and its supreme glory and prosperity throughout the millennium, together with all the changes and revolutions of time which have been connected with these illustrious events. Its end is the resurrection of the dead, the judgment of angels and men, the conflagration of the earth and the heavens, and the endless retribution of the righteous and the wicked. For such an exhibition no mind uninspired, could suffice.

2. What an illustrious proof is here furnished of the deity of Christ!

This glorious Person informs us, that 'the Father judgeth no man; but hath committed all judgment unto the Son.' On this awful day the wonderful commission will be executed. On this day the Son will be seated upon the throne of the universe, and hold the sceptre of infinite dominion. On this day he will show that all authority in heaven and in earth' is in his possession; that he 'searches the hearts, and tries the reins' of all intelligent beings, and that their endless destiny is suspended on his pleasure. No other specimen of the divine agency, no other exhibition of the divine character, will in glory and greatness be equal to this; none, I mean, of which the tidings have reached the present world. Omniscience will never be so displayed. There will never be so awful or affecting a display of omnipotence. Wisdom, justice, goodness, and truth will never be so divinely illustrated, as in the allotments of the righteous and the wicked. In a word, the divine character will be glorified here in a manner unrivalled at any preceding period; and Christ, in his own person and office, will appear as God, with such splendour and majesty as were never seen before, and will never be seen again.

3. What different views will at this period be formed of moral things, from those which are usually entertained by men in the present world!

How differently will mankind think concerning their own favourite pursuits in this life. What views will the miser just risen from the grave and fixing his eye with astonishment and terror on the Judge awfully descending through the heavens, form concerning the devotion of his life and labours to the accumulation of gold! What is the value of that gold now? How wonderful will it seem, that he could lose his probation and his soul in the pursuit of money! With what emotions will the ambitious man look back on the power and place for which he bartered his salvation; and on the fraud, slander, and falsehood, with which he depressed his rivals, and elevated himself to distinction! How will the votary of sense roll back his eyes to the scenes of sloth, luxury, and lewdness, to the tables of festivity, drunkenness, and gluttony at which he corrupted his soul, and converted it into a house of pollution, incapable of becoming a habitation of the Holy Spirit! In what manner will the devotee of amusement survey the dance, the song, the party of pleasure, the festival, and the theatre, which allured the mind away from God, and turned the feet out of the path to heaven! With what a change of opinion will the sophist regard the books and the conversation in which he laboured to seduce his fellow men from piety, to withdraw their thoughts from religion, to awaken suspicions of the gospel, and distrust of the Redeemer, to lull them asleep in security and impenitence, and to beget in them a final oblivion of the soul and its welfare, of the judgment and eternity! How will he now regard his ingenuity, his false arguments, his successful struggles against truth, and his triumphs over its friends! How will the soul of the impenitent sinner feel on this occasion, while recalling to its remembrance all its former attempts to support itself in unbelief and hardness of heart! Whither will be fled its mockery at sin; its bold profanations of 'that glorious and fearful name, the Lord its God;' the contempt which it has cast upon its Redeemer, its ridicule of things sacred, and its hatred of religion, and the religious? What apprehensions will it now entertain concerning its former jests, which it gaily uttered upon the Scriptures, the sabbath, and the sanctuary; upon the worship of God, the threatenings of his law, the warnings of his providence, and the invitations of his grace? With what emotions will it call to mind its contempt of heaven, and its disregard of hell!

4. What a mighty change will this event produce in the universe.

Our Saviour has taught us, that 'many who are last will be first,' and that 'many who are first will be last.' On this solemn day the declaration will begin to be wonderfully accomplished. On this day, those who were 'wise men after the flesh,' whose talents astonished mankind, and whose researches entailed on them the admiration and applause of a world, will descend from their envied elevation to contempt and infamy; and see, raised incalculably above them, the lowly, ignorant, and despised Christian, who believed and obeyed that 'preaching of the cross' which in this world they esteemed the most despicable folly. The monarch, who in the present life was served, flattered, and idolized by his courtiers, and regarded by the millions whom he governed only with awe and terror, will here find his power and splendour, the pride of distinction, and the incense of homage, vanished for

ever; and himself depressed lower than was in this world the meanest wretch, who shrunk from his nod, or lived upon his smile; while that very wretch, perhaps, has now cast off all his former attire of debasement and suffering, and risen to distinction and glory inexpressible. Here the hero, the foster-child of fame, the conqueror of realms, the murderer of nations, and the plunderer of a world, will see himself poor beyond the poorest, low beneath the lowest, and despised more than the most despicable; powerless, sunk, and miserable, in a degree outrunning conception. His misery will be mightily enhanced also, by the sight of multitudes whom in this world he trampled in the mire, tortured, butchered, and gave to be food for the fowls of heaven, looking down upon him from a height to which he never raised his imagination, and commencing the possession of dignity and enjoyment to which no limit is prescribed. Generally, 'there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth,' such as this world never saw, when the rich, the splendid, the polished, and the noble, behold the clown, the beggar, and the slave 'sitting down in the kingdom of God, with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and themselves thrust out.'

At the same time it is to be remembered, that these will not be the only disappointments undergone at this awful period. The rich, the learned, and the great will not be condemned because they possess wealth, knowledge, or power; but for the measures by which they acquired these possessions, or the unworthy use which they made of them. Nor will the poor and lowly be accepted on account of their poverty, their ignorance, or their rusticity; but for the disposition which they entertained, and the manner in which they conducted themselves, in these humble circumstances. Wherever this has not been their disposition and their conduct, they too will be rejected. Virtue and sin exist in the heart, and are never necessarily connected with our external condition. Let the rich consider how dreadful a contrast it will be to have been opulent in this world, and to be in want of all things beyond the grave. Let the poor remember how deplorable must be the condition of being poor, despised, and wretched here, merely as a prelude to endless poverty, contempt, and misery in the world to come.

Nor will the changes be less affecting, which will exist among those who, in the present life, were found on the same level. Were we to select a single neighbourhood, and go with our inquiries from house to house, what mighty alterations in their relative condition, what affecting terminations of their former friendly intercourse, would be presented to the eye even of the most expansive charity! In what an affecting manner would the wealth and poverty, the reputation and disgrace, the enjoyment and the suffering, be exchanged! To what a height would those, who here are in the most lowly circumstances, begin in many instances to rise on this awful day! To what a depth those who are the most prosperous begin to fall!

Still more affecting, more full of disappointment and anguish, will be the distinction made in families. There will be instances in which the parents will ascend to glory inexpressible, accompanied sometimes by none, sometimes by one, sometimes by two, sometimes by three, and, it is to be hoped and believed, sometimes by all, their happy offspring. At other times, the parents themselves will be left behind; and with failing eyes and broken hearts will follow their children rising to the heavens, and bidding them an everlasting farewell. Such will be, such in some respects has already been, the separation between Jeroboam and his son Abijah. Brethren and sisters, also, mutually and unspeakably beloved here, and such of them as were devoted to sin, warned, reproved, and borne to heaven on the wings of prayer by those who consecrated themselves to God, will be parted asunder, to meet no more. No longer brothers and sisters, but strangers and aliens; some of them will be vessels of mercy, usefulness, and honour in the house of their Father, and others vessels of wrath in the mansions of woe.

Most distressing of all, husbands and wives, here united in the nearest of all earthly relations, and in the tenderest of all human attachments, will there not unfrequently be seated, 'one on the right hand, and the other on the left. One will ascend with the Judge to the world of glory; the other, lost in the host of evil beings, go down to the regions of despair. One will advance in wisdom, worth, and joy throughout endless ages, the other make a dreadful and melancholy progress in guilt and sorrow for ever.

5. How will sinners be amazed, when they awake out of the grave, and see all these things come to pass!

They will then behold Christ really come to judgment; the day of retribution actually arrived, and the declarations of the Scriptures literally fulfilled. They will see the graves rent asunder, and themselves raised from the dead. They will hear 'the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God.' The rocks around them will be rent, the mountains fall, and the earth heave with its final agonies. Over their heads, the heavens will be filled with the hosts of angels, and the glory of the Messiah. At their side, the righteous, and among them their own beloved friends, their parents, husbands, wives, children, brothers, and sisters will be arrayed in immortal beauty, and 'caught up to meet the Lord in the air.' With what bitterness of soul will they 'call to the hills to fall on them, and to the mountains to cover them from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his majesty!'

6. How delightful and glorious will be the assembly of the righteous on this day!

The endless multitude of the first-born will on this day, 'in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump,' burst the grave, and stand upon their feet; their 'bodies fashioned like unto Christ's glorious body,' and their souls informed with immortal life: their faces 'will shine as the sun, and their raiment be white and glistering.' There are countenances in this world which, when united with fine forms, and composed of superior features, when animated with intelligence, and moulded by peculiar virtue into the clear and strong expression of worth and loveliness, fascinate the eye, and engross the heart. What then must be the appearance of that aspect which is wrought into harmony, beauty, and dignity by the most exquisite workmanship of God, inspired with the intelligence of heaven, and lighted with the beams of angelic excellence; around which virtue plays with immortal radiance; while joy illumines the eye with living splendour, and glory surrounds the head with its crown of stars. In this manner will be arrayed, in this manner adorned, 'a multitude which no man can number, of all nations, kindreds, and tongues.' How delightful, how astonish-

ing must it be, to behold this vast assembly rising from the tomb, throughout every part of the habitable world, and ascending, as by one instinctive impulse, to meet their divine Redeemer, and to be welcomed to the seat of approbation and honour at his right hand! Trace them one step farther. How magnificent, how sublime, how enrapturing must be the prospect of these glorified beings, surrounding, after the judgment is terminated, the Lord of all things; and rising in his train, as a cloud of splendour, to the mansions of eternal joy! This will be that 'manifestation of the sons of God,' so 'earnestly expected,' as St Paul informs us, by 'the whole creation'—the jubilee of the virtuous universe—the dawn of everlasting day.

7. With all these solemn considerations in full view, let me exhort this audience to consider 'what manner of persons they ought to be in all holy conversation and godliness.'

This is the practical use made of the same subject by the apostle Peter, and certainly the best which can be made. Every Christian is most deeply interested in the exhortation. The most powerful of all motives here summon you, my brethren, to the great work of spiritual improvement. Lukewarm indeed must you be, sunk in sloth, and buried in sleep, if you do not feel yourselves roused by these awful things to diligence and vigour in the Christian life. Let me press upon you the indispensable duties of watching, striving, and praying alway. Let me solemnly urge you with 'all diligence to make your calling and election sure;' to resist temptation and to overcome iniquity; to 'fight the good fight, and to keep the faith; that you may finish your course with joy.' 'Look' steadily 'for the blessed hope, and glorious appearing of the great God, even our Saviour Jesus Christ;' that 'when he, who is the believer's life, shall appear, you may all appear with him in glory.'

But there are multitudes in this house whose lives furnish no testimony that they are children of God. How much more deeply still are these persons interested in this exhortation! When the blessed Redeemer of mankind 'came preaching the kingdom of God,' he commanded all men every where to 'repent, and believe the gospel.' A thousand times has he repeated this command to you. Without faith in him, without repentance, without holiness, you cannot 'abide' in this awful day. Remember then, while life lasts, that this is all for which you live. How invaluable is this golden season, this accepted time; in which, if you hasten to the employment, you may 'work out your salvation.' Far downward have you advanced in 'the broad and crooked way which leads to destruction;' but the night of death has not overtaken you. Look upward, and you will see the Sun of righteousness still shines, to illumine your path back to life. Seize the inestimable moment, and flee for your lives, as Lot escaped from the cities of the plain.

To these all-important duties Christ knew that your hearts would be, as you know they are, utterly opposed. That you might overcome this opposition, he has given you all the means of grace, to become, under the blessing of his good Spirit, the means of your salvation. Feel then their immense importance: and seize and employ them with all possible earnestness and anxiety. Let no sabbath pass, until it shall have blessed you. When the sanctuary opens its doors, let your 'souls long, yea, even faint, for the courts of the Lord.' Let no sermon escape, without enlightening your minds, and amending your hearts. Every morning, and every evening, bow your knees in secret, before the Father of all mercies: and send up your cries to heaven for the salvation of your souls. Prize the word of life 'more than the most fine gold,' and relish it 'more than honey, and the honey-comb.' 'Seek for wisdom as for silver, and for understanding as for hidden treasure.'

To rouse yourselves every day to every effort for the attainment of eternal life, keep in perpetual view these amazing events. Of all the astonishing scenes which have been recited, you will be witnesses. *You* will hear the call of the archangel, and rise from the grave. *You* will see the Judge descend, the judgment set, and the books opened. *You* will hear the sentence pronounced on the righteous and on the wicked. *You* will ascend with your glorious Redeemer to the heaven of heavens, or be sent down with evil men and evil angels to the world of perdition.

Does not your heart tremble at this? Is it not moved out of its place? When 'the mountains quake' at the approach of their Creator, and 'the hills melt; and the earth is burned at his presence; the world, and all that is therein; who can stand before his indignation; who abide in the fierceness of his anger?' What emotions will then be felt by every impenitent sinner! With what agonies will he sigh for the return of the accepted time! With what delirious ecstasy would his heart heave, to hear another day of grace, another opportunity of repentance, proclaimed by his Judge! But no day of grace will ever return to him. No voice of mercy will again announce the birth of a Saviour. The doors of heaven will be opened no more. The smiles of a forgiving God will never dawn on the regions of sin and sorrow. Season will hasten after season, and age roll on after age, the melancholy round of darkness and despair, and not a beam of hope glimmer through the cheerless void, to revive the wearied and dying eye. 'Oh, that ye were wise, that ye understood these things, that ye would consider your latter end!'

SERMON CLXVII.

REMOTER CONSEQUENCES OF DEATH.—PUNISHMENT OF THE WICKED.—ITS DURATION.

And these shall go away into everlasting punishment.—Matt. xxv. 46.

In the last Discourse I gave an account of the final judgment, and of the sentences pronounced upon the righteous and the wicked. The next subjects of consideration are their future allotments. I shall first con-

sider that of the wicked. This subject naturally divides itself into two parts; its nature and its duration. The latter of these will be the subject of discourse at the present time.

In the text it is asserted, that impenitent sinners shall 'go away into everlasting punishment.' Christians have very generally regarded this declaration of Christ as intending, in the strict sense, a punishment without end. But there have been multitudes of persons styling themselves Christians, particularly in modern times, who have decided otherwise; and insisted, either that there will be no punishment beyond the grave, or that it will be temporary. In support of this opinion, and in opposition to that which has been generally received, they have advanced various arguments and objections, which they professedly consider as having great weight, and to which apparently they yield their own assent. A teacher of systematical theology seems obliged therefore to examine this subject, to meet such objections and arguments, and either to refute them, or to acknowledge that he is unable to answer them.

As the abettors of this scheme blend their objections and their direct arguments together, and as they are too numerous to be examined in every instance separately in a single sermon, I shall not feel myself obliged to discriminate very solicitously in this respect; but shall take the liberty to follow in some measure the path which my opposers have trodden.

Before I begin the investigation of this subject I shall make a few observations, for the purpose of removing, or, if that cannot be done, of lessening a prejudice (the strongest, perhaps, cherished by the human mind) against the doctrine in question. The subject is immeasurably awful, and beyond all others affecting. Few persons can behold it in near vision with a steady eye. The very preacher who teaches the doctrine to others, cannot but know, unless certainly assured of his own salvation (a case undoubtedly very rare) that he may at that very time be alleging arguments which are to affect himself, and to evince his own final destruction, as well as that of others. If his heart is not made of stone, he cannot contemplate the subject, as it respects his fellow men, without overwhelming amazement. The destiny of one immortal mind is an object whose importance no finite thought can conceive, no number estimate. How vast must be this object, when the number of such minds becomes so great as to reach the lowest limit to which the most enlarged charity will be compelled to extend it! How entirely overwhelmed must he be who contemplates it, when he remembers, and beholds a melancholy experience verify, the declaration of our Saviour, that 'wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be who go in thereat!'

At the same time, the subject is unquestionably perplexing as well as distressing. There are, I know, persons who speak concerning it with an air of cool self-complacency, as being, in their view, easy of investigation, and free from embarrassment. I am inclined, perhaps uncharitably, to give them little credit for candour, clearness of intellect, or soundness of character; and greatly doubt whether the doctrine has been investigated by them, either to such an extent, or with such a spirit, as might furnish them with just views of its nature. There are others who discourse of it in the desk in the phraseology, the style, and the utterance belonging to vehement eloquence; such as we often find attached to a powerful strain of invective, or vigorous controversy. Something may here be allowed for the strong impulses of ardent minds; something to the influence, unhappy as it may be deemed, of controversial feelings; and something to mistaken apprehensions of duty. In this manner we may in some measure excuse, but cannot justify, this unfortunate conduct. Were such persons to remember, that they may at this very time be pronouncing the final doom of their own parents, brothers, sisters, wives, children, and even of themselves, I cannot but believe that their mode of address would be essentially changed, would lose all its violence and exaggeration, and would become deeply humble, solemn, and affectionate. Every preacher ought to remember, that the latter of these modes of addressing a congregation on this subject, is incomparably better fitted to produce the best effects on those who hear him; while the former will usually terminate in awakening mere horror concerning the subject, and mere disgust at the preacher.

But painful and perplexing as this subject is, it is often exhibited in the word of God. Whatever doctrines he has declared concerning it are true, and unfold with absolute certainty a part of the future destiny of man. They cannot, therefore, fail of being supremely interesting to us. To know and to feel their proper import may be the very means of turning our feet into the path of life. To disbelieve them, or to be ignorant of them, can on the other hand be of no possible use to us, and may easily prove fatally injurious. Were there no escape from this dreadful allotment published to us during our probation, we might, indeed, as well remain in ignorance of the evils to which we were advancing. But, as a knowledge of our danger may prove the most effectual means of our escape, the importance of gaining this knowledge cannot be measured.

The punishment of the wicked is, as you well know, often asserted in the Scriptures to be 'everlasting,' to 'endure for ever,' and 'for ever and ever.' The objectors whom I have mentioned insist that all the words and phrases of this nature denote a limited duration, and are never used to signify an absolute eternity. The meaning of all language is to be learned only from those who use it. If the manner in which they understand it is clearly discoverable from their writings, we may by critical attention become possessed of its meaning; if not, we are left without a remedy. Let us, therefore, in the present case have recourse to the writers of the New Testament, the only persons from whom we can expect to derive explicit views concerning the subject in hand, that we may, if possible, determine this point in a satisfactory manner. It is to be observed, then,

1. That the words and phrases which have been either mentioned or alluded to, appear to be used in the Scriptures to denote the longest period of which the subject mentioned in each case is capable.

In one instance the word, 'for ever,' seems to signify merely a long period. 'One generation passeth away, and another cometh, but the earth abideth for ever.' If the destruction of this world mentioned in the Scriptures denotes the annihilation of its atoms, as well as the ruin of its form and structure, then the earth can be said to abide for ever with a limited meaning only; to wit, that it will endure for a long time, compared

with a period of a human generation. But if the elements are to survive this destruction, and become the materials of 'the new earth, wherein righteousness shall dwell,' then the term is used in a literal sense, and denotes an endless duration.

In such other cases, as I have observed, this word is employed to denote the longest period of which the subject united with it is capable. Thus 'a servant for ever,' is a servant during the longest period in which he can be a servant; that is, during his life. 'An ordinance for ever,' is an ordinance continuing through the longest time in which it can be an ordinance; that is, throughout the whole continuance of the dispensation of which it is a part; *viz.* the Mosaic dispensation.

In the same manner, 'the everlasting hills,' and 'the everlasting mountains,' denote hills and mountains enduring throughout the longest possible period which is predicable of them; to wit, while the earth endures.

It will be observed, that I have here mentioned the English words and phrases, and not the corresponding ones of the original languages. The reason of this is, that, so far as I know, the original words are acknowledged on all hands to be correctly translated.

But if these words, when applied in the continuance of things in the future world, are used in this manner, they unquestionably denote an absolute eternity. For with respect to these things such a duration will then evidently be possible.

2. The phrase, εις τους αιωνας των αιωνων, commonly rendered '*for ever and ever*,' is used, if I mistake not, *eighteen times* in the New Testament! In fifteen instances it is applied to the continuance of the glory, perfections, government, and praise of God. In one, Rev. xxii. 5, it is said of the righteous in the future world, that 'they shall reign for ever and ever.' In one of the remaining two, it is said of the impenitent, that is, of those among them who worship the beast and his image, that 'the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever.' In the remaining instances, it is said of the devil, who deceived the nations, of the beast, and of the false prophet, that, 'In the lake of fire and brimstone, they shall be tormented, day and night, for ever and ever.'

Now let me ask whether a man, even of moderate understanding, could be supposed to write with scrupulous integrity a System of Theology, and employ this phrase sixteen times to denote an absolute eternity, and twice to denote that which was infinitely different; while these were the only instances in which the phrase was applied to a given subject, and that of immeasurable importance to those for whom he wrote? But if such a man cannot be supposed thus to use language, nor vindicate it when used in this manner, can such conduct be attributed safely to the Spirit of God?

3. In the text the Greek word, αιωνιος, is applied to the future happiness of the righteous, and to the future misery of the wicked.

On this application I have two remarks to make:

The first is: that it is applied to both these subjects in exactly the same manner; without any mark, or hint, of a distinction in the use of the word. Plainly, therefore, we are not warranted to suppose any such distinction, unless we are taught it elsewhere in the Scriptures.

It is to be remarked farther, that the same word is generally, and, so far as I have observed, always, applied in the same manner, without any appearance of an intentional distinction.

My second remark is this: that the word is employed in the text to denote a duration which commences after what we commonly intend by time is ended. If, then, a limitation is not found elsewhere, we shall be unwarranted, since it is used here in the absolute manner, to believe, that the duration which it expresses will have any limits. The longest duration which will then be possible, the longest which may be predicated of the enjoyments of the righteous, and the sufferings of the wicked, will certainly be eternal.

4. The terms in which the sufferings of the impenitent are spoken of in other passages of Scripture, leave, so far as I can discern, no hope of their termination.

The following examples will sufficiently illustrate this observation. In the Second Epistle of St Peter, it is said of the wicked, 'that they will utterly perish in their own corruption.' It cannot be denied, that the destruction spoken of in this passage is declared to be absolute and must be either annihilation, or eternal woe. But annihilation cannot be that long-continued suffering to which the abettors of the doctrine here opposed acknowledge the wicked to be consigned in the text.

In Mark ix. 43, the immediate means of suffering to the impenitent are styled by our Saviour, 'the fire that never shall be quenched.'

In several passages of the Scripture, particularly in the text; Dan. xii. 2; Matt. iii. 12; Matt. xiii. 36, &c., the happiness of the righteous and the sufferings of the wicked are exhibited to us in what may be called a parallel manner; and yet no intimation is given, that the duration of the one will not be equally extended with that of the other.

In Mark xiv. 21, our Saviour says, 'Woe to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed. Good were it for that man, that he had never been born.' If Judas should be miserable through any limited duration, however long, and should afterwards be happy through the eternity which would lie beyond it, this position must, with mathematical evidence, be seen to be untrue.

In Luke xvi. 25, the rich man is informed by Abraham, that 'in his lifetime he had received his good things; as Lazarus had likewise received his evil things.' Lazarus had received all his evil things. The rich man must clearly, I think, be considered as having received all his good things. Especially will this be evident, when we remember that the declaration is made as a conclusive reason why he could not receive a single drop of water, the only good thing for which he asked.

In Psalm l. which seems plainly to be an account of the last Judgment, we have, in the 22nd verse, subjoined to this account, the following awful monition, 'Now consider this, ye that forget God; lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver.'

In Matt. xviii. 23, &c., we have the parable of the servant who owed ten thousand talents, and had nothing to pay. This servant his lord ultimately commanded to be thrown into prison, and there confined until he should pay the debt. How evident is it that this man could never pay the debt, and therefore must for ever remain in prison.

In John iii. 26, our Saviour says, 'He that believeth

not the Son, shall not see life.' I can conceive of no language which could more effectually cut off every hope of the impenitent, than this.

In Rev. xxi. 27, it is said, 'There shall in no wise enter into it,' that is, into the heavenly city, 'any thing that defileth, or that worketh abomination, or that maketh a lie; but they who are written in the Lamb's book of life.' According to the declaration of Scripture, all impenitent sinners are defilers. They all work that which is abominable in the sight of God; and in this character, as they have not repented, nor believed in the Redeemer, nor ceased to sin, they will all appear before their Judge; and therefore will 'in no wise' be permitted to enter the heavenly city.

To these passages might be added, as every one who reads his Bible knows, a multitude of others declaring the same doctrine in the same unambiguous manner. But if these do not produce conviction, it will, I am afraid, be vainly expected, not only from any which are found in the Scriptures, but from any which language can express.

To all this, however, it is farther objected, that God cannot justly punish the sins of men, who are finite beings, with an infinite, or endless, punishment. To this it is usually replied, that although men are finite beings, yet as their obligation to obedience is great in proportion to the greatness and excellency of God, it is of course infinite. To violate infinite obligation it is farther said, is plainly an infinite evil; and therefore a finite being may commit a crime infinitely heinous, and deserving infinite punishment. The same conclusion is also drawn, by much the same course of reasoning, from the tendency of sin to oppose the designs and glory of God, and the supreme good of his creation.

It is not my design to deny this doctrine, nor to scrutinize the arguments by which it is usually supported. It is, however, but just to observe, that neither the doctrine nor the arguments have appeared so satisfactory to the minds of others, as they seem to have done to those by whom they have been alleged. We know nothing of infinity, but the fact, that certain things are infinite. The nature of infinity we do not comprehend at all, nor form a conception of what this phraseology means. It hardly needs to be observed, that where we have no conceptions we can form no comparisons, and therefore can make no propositions, the truth of which can be perceived by our minds. Concerning the fact, that something is infinite, we may with sufficient ease argue, to some extent, successfully. Concerning the nature of infinity, I discern no manner in which such minds as ours can argue at all. But in our discussions concerning infinity, we are prone insensibly to blend these two things together; and often are amused with words only, when we suppose ourselves to be employed about ideas. Hence have arisen the perplexity and the want of satisfaction which have attended inquiries concerning this subject. I shall, therefore, not insist on these arguments, nor on the conclusion to which they conduct us; but proceed to other considerations which lie more within our reach.

1. God may justly punish sin so long as it exists; and it may exist for ever.

He who sins through this life may evidently sin through another such period, and another, and another, without end. That while we continue to sin, God may justly punish us, if he can justly punish us at all, is equally evident. No reason can be given, why sin may not be punished at any future time, with as much justice and propriety as at the present. That it may be justly punished at the present time, cannot be denied, any more than that it is in fact punished.

2. The Scriptures teach us, that sinners who die in impenitence will not cease to sin throughout eternity.

The supposition that their sufferings in the future world will be complete, involves in it as a consequence that they will continue to sin. If they were to become penitent and virtuous, they would of course possess many enjoyments, and those of a very important nature. Our Saviour, speaking to St John concerning those who in the future world are excluded from heaven, says, Rev. xxii. 15, 'Without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.' It will not be questioned, that this is an account of sinners. It cannot be questioned, that it is an account of their existing character in the future world.

'Do therefore,' says Solomon, Eccl. ix. 10, 'what thy hand findeth to do with thy might: for there is no work, device, knowledge, nor wisdom, in the world of spirits, whither thou goest.'—'Wisdom, in the language of Solomon, denotes virtue, or the religion of the heart. 'Work' here intends the work of salvation; the work in which virtue is assumed, and increased. There is, then, in that world, no work of salvation, no assumption of virtue. Of course, those who go into that world in the character of sinners, still continue to sin. They may therefore be punished with the same justice as in the present world; and the Scriptures declare in the text, and many other passages, that they are punished.

3. These things are all said and done after the close of the present dispensation; and after the commencement of that dispensation which in the Scriptures is represented as eternal and unchangeable.

There is no hint given us, either in the Old or New Testament, that the dispensation which will commence after the judgment will ever change. On the contrary, so far as it is mentioned at all, it is always spoken of as enduring and immutable. In Heb. xii. 26—28, St Paul says, 'Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. Wherefore, we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.' From this passage it is evident that the things which are not shaken will remain steadfast and immovable. But were there nothing explicitly declared concerning this subject, the very silence of the Scriptures forbids a rational belief of any such alteration, since the belief rests on nothing but a mere hypothesis, gratuitously adopted.

It is farther objected, that the benevolence of God is irreconcilable with the idea of endless punishment. Were I to determine, *a priori*, what conduct the benevolence of God would prompt him to pursue, I should not hesitate to say, that he would never permit either natural or moral evil to exist in the universe. Perfect benevolence, I should without a doubt conclude, would produce nothing but virtue and enjoyment. Very remote however, from this scheme is the actual state of

the world which we inhabit. Sin has here reigned from the beginning; and sorrow, the proper reward of sin, has been multiplied unceasingly throughout every habitable part of the earth. It is certain, therefore, that to permit the existence of sin, and to punish it with suffering, and that suffering often so excruciating as to terminate our present life, are things consistent with the benevolence of God. No reason can be given, why he who does these things here, in a state of trial, may not do the same things, to a much greater extent, in a state of retribution. When man undertakes to determine what it is proper or improper for his Maker to do, in the government of the world, he ought to remember that 'as the heavens are high above the earth, so are his ways above our ways, and his thoughts above our thoughts.'

It is farther said, that the punishment of the future world is merely disciplinary. This opinion certainly cannot be founded upon scriptural testimony. When the gospel was written, the fallen angels had been suffering punishment at least four thousand years. Yet we find them no less hostile to their Creator, and actuated by no less malice against his intelligent creatures, than at the first. Men of all succeeding ages are by Christ and his apostles warned against their falsehood and seduction, because in every age they would be false and seductive. At the judgment day, to which they are 'reserved under chains and darkness,' they will be consigned to the fire, which was prepared for them. Of course, their punishment will to that time have had no good effect upon their character. The punishment of the future world therefore is not exhibited in the Scriptures as disciplinary.

Again it is objected, that endless punishment is unnecessary. This cannot be said with propriety, unless we know the whole state of the divine government, and all the necessities of those who are governed. The wants of the universe are such, as to be supplied by far other means than we should devise. It is impossible for us to determine how great, how numerous, or how useful the consequences may be, which will flow from the punishment of the impenitent. God, speaking by the prophet Isaiah, in a passage which our Saviour applies to the future state of the wicked, says, 'They,' that is, righteous beings, 'shall go forth, and look upon the carcases of the men who have transgressed against me; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh.' This abhorrence may, for aught that appears, have a powerful, perhaps an indispensable, efficacy to preserve virtuous beings throughout the universe in a course of endless obedience. The measures necessary in a moral government reaching through immensity and eternity, cannot be contrived by such beings as we are.

I know of but one objection more which appears to demand a particular answer. This is derived from the gospel. Here, in various passages and forms, it is said, that 'Christ died for all.' The meaning of these declarations I formerly explained, and, if I mistake not, sufficiently, when considering the extent of the atonement. I shall therefore only observe at this time, that with the strictest propriety and truth, Christ may be said to have 'died for all,' if he has made a sufficient atonement for all; although some should choose not to accept the proffer of an interest in it, and should therefore never enjoy the blessings which it provides.

To these objections and arguments are customarily added several passages of Scripture, construed by the objectors in such a manner as they judge to be favourable to their own scheme. These have been often shown to be vainly alleged for this purpose; nor are they, so far as I perceive, articles on which the objectors very seriously rely. I shall, therefore, refer those of my audience who wish to see these texts particularly considered, to formal treatises written on the subject, and to respectable commentaries on the Scriptures, and shall conclude this Discourse with the following

REMARK.

That the considerations presented in this Discourse strongly exhibit the folly of hazarding the soul upon the doctrines of Universalism.

The peculiar evil of the doctrine which I have opposed in this Discourse is this—those who embrace it are prone, almost of course, to feel that they are in some good degree safe, while continuing in a state of impenitence and unbelief. The heart relishes sin, and disrelishes reformation. Hence it devises various modes of quieting its fears concerning the anger of God, and securing itself from future woe. To forsake its iniquities is, according to its own views, to strip itself of all real good; and therefore does not enter into its plans, nor become any part of its conduct. Still it cannot bear the thought of being punished for its sins. In this situation it contrives various schemes, by which it hopes on the one hand to enjoy the pleasures of sin, and on the other to escape punishment. For this purpose some persons become atheists, and deny the very existence of God. Others become deists, and deny his word and character. Others, who acknowledge the revelation of the Scriptures, reject the atonement of Christ; and others, the necessity and reality of regeneration by the Spirit of God; merely that they may neither be obliged to confess nor to feel themselves so sinful as to need these things. Some determine that they shall be safe on account of the natural amiableness of their dispositions; some on account of the abundance of their good works, their uprightness towards men, their zealous attendance on the external duties of religion, the fervid state of their imagination and their feelings with respect to religious subjects, or their correct and abundant conversation about religious doctrines. Others still adopt, for the same purpose, the scheme of Universalism; to something very like which, in substance, all the other schemes which I have mentioned directly tend; whether perceived by those who embrace them, or not perceived. Of those who embrace this scheme, some admit that the impenitent will be punished for a season. Others deny that they will be punished at all. Some hold, that Christ has in the complete sense expiated the sins of all men; while others consider the impenitent as expiating their own sins by sufferings limited in their duration. In all these different schemes, it is obvious that not a single contrivance is adopted to make men virtuous. This evidently is no part of their designs. On the contrary, every one is calculated only to foster the love of sinning, and provide safety for the sinner.

But how suspicious is this design in its very nature! Is there to the eye of common sense even a remote probability that God will love sin, or prosper sinners? Do the Scriptures furnish a single hint which in the remotest manner, even countenances such an opinion? Do they not, on the contrary, hold out the most terrible alarms to every impenitent transgressor? Would it

not break the heart of every such transgressor in this house, if God were audibly to declare to him, 'Thou shalt go away into everlasting punishment? Trust not, then, your souls, your eternal safety, to the doctrines of Universalism. Launch not into the ocean of eternity upon this plank. Flee to Christ, the ark in which you will be secured from every danger. Waste not your probation in seeking 'refuges of lies,' in 'making covenants with death, and agreements with hell.' Remember, that God hath said, 'Your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand.' Remember, that Christ himself has told you, that 'he who believeth on the Son, hath everlasting life; and that 'he who believeth not the Son, shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.'

SERMON CLXVIII.

THE REMOTER CONSEQUENCES OF DEATH.—THE PUNISHMENT OF THE WICKED.—ITS NATURE.

But these, as natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed,—shall utterly perish in their own corruption.—2 PET. ii. 12.

IN the preceding Discourse, I considered the duration of future punishment. I shall now make some observations concerning its nature.

That this punishment will be intense and dreadful, is declared in the words which I have chosen for the theme of this Discourse. In the same language it is declared to be hopeless. Those who 'utterly perish,' and who know that this is their destiny, as pronounced by God himself, can entertain no hope of a change in their circumstances for the better. They are 'judged according to the deeds done in the body;' or, in other words, during the time of their probation. But their probation is ended; and the foundation on which the judgment rests completed. Nothing remains for them, therefore, but a reward measured out to them according to their works. This reward, as the reason of man has in all ages believed, and as the Scriptures peremptorily decide, will be only punishment.

The punishment of impenitent sinners may be considered,

As it will proceed immediately from God; and,

As it will spring from themselves.

On the punishment of sinners, as immediately inflicted by the hand of God, it is to be observed, that it is described to us in the Scriptures in general terms, and those chiefly, if not wholly, figurative. One reason why such language is employed, is obvious and sufficient. A state of existence, so different from any thing with which we are acquainted in the present world, cannot be directly described by words denoting only such things as are within our reach, and expressing only such ideas as we have been able to form. It is therefore necessarily exhibited to us in phraseology, not used according to its simple or literal meaning, but employed in the way of simile and allusion. Even in this manner, however, it is so employed as to convey to us the most terrible images which have ever been presented to the human mind; and such as in all ages have, more than any others, awakened alarm and anguish in the heart of man.

It is also called, Death.

Death, as was observed in a former Discourse, is the most distressing of all the evils suffered in the present world, and is accordingly made by every nation the last infliction of penal justice, for crimes committed against human government. It is surrounded with gloom and terror; it is replete with agony; and probably creates more anxiety in the minds of our race, than all the other calamities which exist in this suffering world.

What then must it be to die for ever?—to suffer the pangs of death to-day, only as a prelude to suffering them to-morrow? What must it be to die from morning till night, and from night till morning?—to die through days, and years, and centuries; and thus to spend eternity in dying?

It is presented to us as the sufferance of the wrath of God.

The anger even of a human being is often productive of the most terrible effects, which are ever visible in the present world. The earthquake, the volcano, the famine, and the pestilence have wasted the world less, and produced in it far less misery, than conquerors alone. But, if the rage of such limited, feeble, perishing beings, as we are can produce such dreadful sufferings, what must be the effects of the anger of HIM, 'before whom all nations are as nothing;' 'who looketh on the earth, and it trembleth; who toucheth the hills, and they smoke;' who possesses all the means of infliction, and can make every faculty the seat, and every pore the avenue, of pain and sorrow! 'A fire,' saith this great and awful Being, 'is kindled in mine anger, and shall burn unto the lowest hell; and shall consume the earth, with her increase; and shall set on fire the foundations of the mountains.'

It is called darkness, and the mist and the blackness of darkness; and sometimes the shadow of death; that is, a gloom resembling the deep midnight of the grave.

If the inhabitants of this world were to continue here for ever, and the light of the sun, moon, and stars were to be finally extinguished; if darkness such as that which covered Egypt were to brood upon the surface of the whole earth; how forlorn, solitary, and desolate

would be the situation of mankind! How much alone, how bewildered, how hopeless, how lost should we feel! How would every bosom heave with unavailing sighs, how would every heart waste with fruitless longings to see once more the delightful beams of the life-giving sun!

God is the sun of the moral universe. Where he sheds the light of his countenance, light, and life, and warmth, and comfort descend upon the creatures whom he has made. Whenever he hides his face, they are overspread with 'darkness, and the shadow of death, where there is no order, and the light is as darkness.' In the future world, eternal darkness, and its consequence, eternal solitude, will become the dreary and melancholy lot of all the children of perdition; a darkness, lengthening onward from age to age, and terminated by no succeeding day.

It is often styled fire; a furnace of fire; a lake of fire and brimstone; the fire prepared for the devil and his angels.

The power of this element to distress and destroy, needs no illustration; as the peculiar strength of these images demands no enhancement. How dreadful must be the situation of those who are destined to dwell in a furnace for ever! How terrible must be the fire prepared to punish the devil and his angels; the worst of all beings, the peculiar enemies of God, and the intelligent universe! You will remember, that I have mentioned all these as figurative representations. Remember, also, that on this account they are not the less awful; and particularly remember, that in a more awful language still, God himself is declared to be 'a consuming fire' to impenitent sinners.

The sufferings of the impenitent, as they will spring from themselves, are I apprehend declared with sufficient certainty in the phraseology of the text. 'They shall utterly perish in their own corruption.' This word, and its immediate connexions, are used in the English Bible eighty-three times, and in forty-eight of these denote moral corruption. In all the remaining instances they denote, obviously, the corruptible nature of the human body, and of those earthly objects by which we are surrounded. These two seem to be the only senses in which the words of this description are used at all. That the term in the text is not employed in this sense, is too evident to require any illustration. The passage therefore may be fairly considered as declaring, that the moral character of sinners will in itself, and in its effects, constitute much of their misery in the future world. It ought to be observed, that the text, literally rendered, is, 'They shall be utterly corrupted in their own corruption.'

The only objection against this doctrine with which I am acquainted, is, that sin, being the delight of sinners, cannot with propriety be said to be their punishment. This objection, I acknowledge, is plausible; and when it was first proposed to me appeared to have much weight. A little reflection, however, convinced me that its weight lay only in the words in which it is expressed. It is no uncommon thing in the present world to see persons delight in that which, in itself and its immediate effects, is seen by themselves to be continually injurious, and even fatal to their well-being. The gambler sees, that his favourite employment produces every day gloom, discontent, moroseness, poverty, and the contempt of those around him. Far from being insensible to these evils, he feels them deeply; and is daily rendered by them more and more unhappy. The same things are substantially true of the drunkard, and of the thief. The envious man also is daily corroded by his envy in such a manner as to make him eminently wretched. Yet he still continues to exercise envy. A rebellious child, wounded almost unceasingly by a sense of his filial impiety, as well as made miserable by the general reprobation, still continues in his rebellion. Christ says, Prov. viii. 36, 'All they that hate me love death.' This passage directly teaches us, that that which in itself and in its consequences produces misery, may still be loved by mankind. The complete proof, however, of the soundness of the doctrine, and, by consequence, of the unsoundness of the objection, will be found in the consideration of the subject itself. To this therefore I shall immediately proceed; and observe,

1. That sinful desires will in the future world be exceedingly powerful, and wholly unrestrained.

That such desires will be exceedingly powerful in the future world, is rationally argued from many considerations. It is plainly a part of the very nature of sin to increase its dominion over the mind, wherever it is the predominant character. Sinners who do not reform, always grow worse and worse in the present world. Every indulgence of every sinful passion increases its strength. After a little time, the indulgence becomes a habit; and every sinful habit increases its vigour in him who is not renewed, to the end of life.

There is not a reason to believe that these desires are at all diminished in the world to come. When Satan was cast out of heaven, he manifested his intense hatred to God, and his vehement malice towards mankind, by seducing our first parents, and destroying a world. St Peter informs us, that since that time, 'as a roaring lion he goeth about, seeking whom he may devour.' St John also declares, that the same malignant being 'deceiveth the whole world.' What a dreadful image of furious and insatiable malice is presented to us, when this evil being is exhibited as a lion, roaring with rage and hunger, and going about to devour, not the carcases of beasts, but minds rational and immortal! How restlessly must that fraud and malice labour, to which the deception of a whole world is attributed!

From these considerations it is plain that the evil desires of this fallen spirit are not diminished by his sufferings. It is reasonably believed, that other evil beings will in this respect sustain the same character; and that their desires also, instead of undergoing any diminution, will only increase in strength.

When I say that sinful desires are unrestrained in the future world, I mean not to be understood in the absolute sense. God will undoubtedly restrain evil beings within such bounds as he thinks proper. They themselves also will undoubtedly become restraints to each other in the exercise of their opposing powers and passions. But I mean, that a great part of those restraints which exist in the present world will be taken away. The impenitent inhabitants of the future world will be under no restraint from hope; for in that world hope will never exist. They will be under no restraint from the desire of esteem; for they will have no companions whose esteem they can desire. They will be under no restraint from the Spirit of God. This di-

vinely glorious Person, beneath whose influence moral life, beauty, and loveliness, spontaneously spring up throughout the universe, will shed no influence on the world of perdition.

2. Sinful desires will in the future world be ungratified.

Particularly, they will be ungratified, as they respect God. All the wishes of the impenitent which respect God, are aimed against his glory, the accomplishment of his pleasure, and the prosperity of his kingdom. But they will be wholly ineffectual. His character will be seen, and known, and felt, even by themselves, to be free from all imputations; and they will discern with irresistible evidence, that his pleasure will be certainly and universally accomplished.

The wishes of the impenitent, which respect virtuous beings, will be equally ungratified. Against them also their hatred will be directed with intense vehemence; against them their envy will rankle without cessation or limits. Still the objects of their hatred will be seen fixed in the possession of virtue, glory, and happiness, which will know neither interruption nor end. That such will be the feelings of the sinner beyond the grave, we are assured, because such is the very nature of sin; because men in this world, who give themselves up to sin, exhibit just such feelings; and because the inhabitants of that world are entirely given up to sin. How dreadful must be the rankings of eternal malice! What a mass of woe must exist in the pinings of immortal envy!

Nor will the desires of the impenitent be any more gratified, as they respect each other. They may indeed, they undoubtedly will, produce much misery for each other. Their success in this malignant employment will not, however, terminate in their relief, or their comfort; but merely in disappointment, bitterness, and woe. Malice and revenge in the present world are often efficacious in producing suffering in the objects of them; but, instead of yielding enjoyment to those by whom they are exercised, they frequently effectuate nothing but the deepest mortification. It will not be doubted that in the future world the same things will be more universally as well as more dreadfully realized.

As little gratification will attend those desires which immediately respect themselves. Sinners in this world ardently wish to be respected and loved. Pride, the predominating passion of a wicked heart, prompts that heart to covet distinction and applause, with an intenseness of desire which the proud man cannot justify even to himself. The Scriptures teach us, that this passion was originally, and is still, the controlling, miserable character of fallen angels. Suffering therefore does not extinguish it in the world of perdition. On the contrary, we have every reason to believe that it is unceasing, ardent, and eternal. How dreadfully must a proud mind be stung with anguish, when it sees itself, and knows that others see it, to be base, despicable, and loathsome beyond expression; and when it discerns with absolute certainty that this will be its eternal character!

What deplorable sufferings spring from vehement desires ungratified, our experience in the present world amply discovers.

3. Sin in the world of misery will be viewed as it is.

We are taught in the Scriptures, that at the general judgment, the end of which is to show that God is 'just when he judges, and clear when he condemns,' 'every mouth will be stopped.' Accordingly, the excellence of his character, the equity of his law, the wisdom of his government, and the goodness exercised in the work of redemption, will all be manifested in such a manner as to compel every conscience to say, Amen. Every conscience will, therefore, be forced to confess the odiousness of that sin which is a violation of them all, and of the sinner by whom they have been violated.

It may perhaps be asked, Why, if such will be the views of the sinner concerning himself, he does not renounce his sins? This question may be fairly answered by another: Why do not sinners forsake their sins in the present world, particularly when under the influence of strong convictions? Conscience often pronounces to the sinner, that he is a guilty, odious being, deserving the anger of God, and justly condemned by the sentence of his law. Yet multitudes who are the subjects of this conviction still continue impenitent, and become worse and worse, more hardened in sin, and more alienated from their Maker. It will not be questioned, that the drunkard, the thief, and the adulterer, believe at times that they are subjects of gross criminality; and that, in spite of this belief, they still continue to be drunkards, adulterers, and thieves. As little can it be questioned, that there is in the moral nature of a sinful mind no tendency towards repentance or reformation. These 'good gifts,' like every other, 'are from above; and come down from the Father of lights.'

4. The impenitent, in the future world, will be the subjects of extreme remorse of conscience.

The character of every such man, being seen by himself as it is, will of course be loathed, abhorred, and despised. His folly and his guilt in violating the divine law and rejecting the divine mercy, in dishonouring God, disbelieving the Redeemer, and resisting the Holy Ghost, in contemning the means of grace, and disregarding the warnings of Providence, will in a particular manner prey upon his heart, and exhibit him to himself as weak and wicked beyond expression. All his sinful conduct he will loathe, as base and abominable. But his abuses of the divine character, his ungrateful and injurious treatment of the Saviour, and of the mercy of God manifested in the work of redemption, will overwhelm him with self-condemnation, and pierce his soul with the anguish of self-reproach.

5. Impenitent sinners will in the future world become means of extreme suffering to each other.

In the present world sinners often love each other. The sources of this affection are the following:

(1.) Natural affection.

On this it will be unnecessary to expatiate.

(2.) Connexions growing out of common interests.

These are often strong, and sometimes lasting. Out of them, those who are concerned derive many enjoyments.

(3.) Mistaken views of each other's character.

Ignorance, concealment, and a desire to be agreeable, hide many of the defects and many of the vices found in a sinful character. At the same time, the wish to gain esteem, confidence, and kind offices, induces those who are the subjects of this character to exhibit a pleasing temper, and commendable conduct. In this manner, the whole impression that is made is

more agreeable than that which would be derived from a thorough knowledge of the entire character.

(4.) Natural amiableness.

By this, I intend native sweetness of disposition, tenderness, generosity, sincerity, and integrity.

(5.) The numerous restraints which sinners experience from the Spirit and providence of God.

These not only prevent the sinner from appearing, but from being so bad as he would be otherwise; as we have frequent opportunities to observe even here, when such restraints are taken away. Many a man who in humble life has been mild, gentle, and reasonable in his conduct, has become, after being raised to absolute power, a villain black with every species of crime. Even Nero was regarded before he assumed the purple as a hopeful prince. For these and some other reasons, sinful men are often considered in the present world both by those who are virtuous, and by each other, with much respect and affection. In the future world their situation will in all these particulars be mightily changed. There no natural affection will exist, to prevent the full operation of evil desires. On the contrary, those who have lived together in habits of attachment and intimacy will see and feel that they were mutually tempters and seducers here; sources to each other of sin, and means of each other's destruction. At the same time none will have favours to bestow, nor a native amiableness of character to invite esteem or love. Nor will any restraint operate so as to prevent the heart from emptying out all its wickedness in the open day.

Contempt therefore, deceit, and hatred will occupy the whole soul, and dictate all the conduct. The dreadful effects of these passions, their proper, genuine effects, we often behold in the present world, in slander, oppression, wounds, and murders, and in the terrible ravages of tyranny and war. In what manner these evil dispositions will be manifested in a state of being of which we can form no adequate conception, it is beyond our power to determine. But that their whole strength may be there completely disclosed, and disclosed in such a manner as to produce all the misery capable of being derived from this source, cannot be questioned. The rage which here persecutes an enemy to the grave, and laments that it cannot follow him into the invisible world, may there pursue him through eternity.

6. From these considerations it is evident that there can be no confidence in the regions of misery.

The wretched inhabitants of these regions will know all around them to be enemies and deceivers. Amid the vast multitude, not an individual will be found possessed either of natural affection, or benevolence, or sincerity. Selfishness, supreme and absolute, repels everything, and attracts nothing.

This probably will be one of the most painful and wearisome among all the ingredients of future woe. A rational mind instinctively looks to some object on which it may rest in its journey through the vast of duration. How oppressive must it be to such a mind, to roam in its thoughts through immensity, and to wander down the vale of eternity, and find no friend, no being on whom this affection may be placed.

God is the natural, supreme, and ultimate object of reliance to his intelligent creatures; a never-failing, all-sufficient stay; a friend that cannot deceive; a rock that cannot be moved. 'Blessed,' unspeakably blessed, 'is the man who trusteth in his Lord, and whose hope the Lord is.' All virtuous beings, also, in their different situations and capacities, are proper objects of confidence; safe, amiable, and valuable friends. Among sinful beings, parents, and other near relatives, are usually trusted with safety and comfort, and sweeten the bitterness of life by inviting and meriting the reliance of those with whom they are intimately connected. Few, indeed, very few of the human race, are here either so sinful or so unhappy as not to find some object to whom they may communicate their calamities with the hope of relief, and the assurance of pity.

But the miserable inhabitants of hell have no God, no Saviour, no virtuous friends, no parents, no relations, before whom they may spread their calamities with the hope of being heard, or in whose hearts or hands they may find a refuge from the bitterness of woe. In each other they can place no confidence; since they will know, that at all times and in all things they will be only despised, hated, and deceived.

Thus, while the inhabitant of that melancholy world looks around him, when he casts his eyes abroad through the universe, he will be forced to perceive that it contains no friend to him. In the midst of millions he is alone; and is sure of being loathed, rejected, and shunned by every being in the creation of God. Not a sigh can he breathe, not a tear can he shed, not a sorrow can he unfold, not a prayer can he utter, with a hope of being befriended, heard, or regarded. In addition to all this, if he extend his view through eternity, he will find, as he passes onward from day to day, and from age to age, no change for the better. All around him will be gloom and solitude: all before him will be desolation, anguish, and despair.

This awful subject, and these terrible considerations concerning it, are full of instruction, admonition, and reproof. The time will, however, only permit me to make the following

REMARKS.

1. How great an evil is sin!

All the sufferings which have been mentioned in this Discourse are either the rewards, the attendants, or the consequences of sin. The rewards of sin express with absolute exactness the just views which the unerring eye of Omniscience forms concerning this dreadful attribute of intelligent creatures. The attendants and consequences of sin exhibit its nature directly, and display immediately its turpitude to our eyes. In the former case, we have the most decisive proof of its malignity, because it is impossible that God should in any degree mistake the true nature of this subject. In the latter case, we have what may, without very great violence, be called an experimental view of the same malignity. The evidence in the former case ought to produce entire conviction in every mind. The impression in the latter case cannot easily fail deeply to affect the heart. The evils attendant and consequent upon sin, which impregnate the fountain, and flow out in the streams have been here very summarily presented to your view. They have not been exaggerated. On the contrary, the exhibition is lame and feeble compared with the fact. Even the world which we inhabit, furnished as it is with innumerable blessings, has long realized a great part of what I have declared. The

earth has 'groaned and travailed in pain' under the mighty pressure of sin, from the apostasy to the present hour. Every breeze has been loaded with the sighs, every hill has echoed the groans, of suffering mankind. The heart has been wrung with anguish from the cradle to the grave. Lewdness has changed the world into a lazar-house of corruption; and anticipated the work of death and the grave. Deceit and fraud have mocked human expectation, tortured confidence, and hurried their miserable victims in millions to beggary, despair, and death. Rage and revenge have plunged the midnight dagger in the unsuspecting bosom of the neighbour and the friend, and in their sanguinary progress have multiplied widows and orphans, childless parents, and hopeless mourners, without number, and without end. Ambition has turned the earth into a stall of butchery and blood, and covered its surface with the bones of men; while tyranny like the Nubian blast, has spread decay and death through the unhappy millions found in its course, withered the last remains of comfort and hope, and converted provinces and kingdoms into scenes of desolation and woe. What, then, we naturally ask, will be the ravages of the same spirit, when goaded on by passions and armed with powers so superior to those which have existed on this side of the grave? What must be the ravages of sin unrestrained, of sin hopeless, of sin eternal! How evidently would it, if permitted, change any world into a hell!

2. How ought these considerations to alarm every person in this assembly!

There is in this house a considerable number of individuals who hope that they are Christians; but not one of them knows that this is his true character. Some doubts still remain in every breast. But where so much is at hazard, however small that hazard may seem, what efforts can be too great to be made for our escape! With these awful scenes full in view, how much alive, how much awake, how ardent, how incessant ought every Christian to be in his exertions, in his struggles to 'flee from the wrath to come,' and to 'lay hold on eternal life!' Were these considerations present to the minds of all religious professors, in such a manner as their importance loudly demands, how much more fervent would be their prayers; how much more vigorous their labours; how much more exemplary their lives!

There are others in this assembly, who, in their own view, as well as that of others, have no claim to the character or to the hopes of Christians. Of these, the number, it is to be feared, is not small. To these what shall I say? Plainly I can say nothing which, with the remotest probability, can be expected to move them, if they are not roused to anxious attention and the most distressing alarm by the awful things which have been said in this Discourse—by the knell of impenitence which they have now heard. It is the knell of eternal death; of millions for ever dying, and buried in an eternal grave. Who of you intends to be reckoned with these miserable beings? Which of you does not tremble at the bare thought of meeting the anger of God—of being destroyed alway—of dying day by day for ever? Which of you does not shrink with horror from the apprehension of sustaining this dreadful character of absolute turpitude, of becoming a mere mass of sin; an eternal enemy of God, and of every intelligent being; of being known by others, and of knowing himself, to be only guilty, odious, and despicable, throughout endless ages? Which of you is not overwhelmed with amazement at the bare thought of being united with such companions as have been here described; of living for ever in the midst of fiends, and fiendlike men; being tossed and convulsed by furious passions; rankling with envy, malice, and rage; hating truth and righteousness; putrid with deceit; forming no plan, pursuing no purpose, but to dishonour God, and ruin each other? Do not your 'hearts die within you, and become as stone,' at the thought of inhabiting that world, 'whose light is as darkness,' and which is overspread with 'the shadow of death;' of feeling out your melancholy path through an endless solitude, through the regions of 'lamentation, mourning, and woe;' alone in the midst of multitudes—without a friend, without a comfort, without a hope?

To these questions there can be no answer, without a denial of our nature. Let me, then, in the name of him with whose commission I stand before you, and by whose authority I speak, this day solemnly warn you, that the only way in which you can escape these immeasurable evils is to yield yourselves to him in the faith, repentance, and holiness of the gospel. Let me solemnly remind you, that 'he who believeth, shall be saved, and he who believeth not, shall be damned.'

SERMON CLXIX.

THE REMOTER CONSEQUENCES OF DEATH.—THE REWARDS OF THE RIGHTEOUS.—THE NEW CREATION.

Nevertheless, we, according to his promise, look for new heavens, and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.—2 Peter iii. 13.

In the two preceding Discourses I considered the duration and nature of the punishment destined to impenitent sinners in the future world. The next subject of discussion is the *rewards* which will hereafter be given to the *penitent*. This subject I propose to examine in the present Discourse generally. Hereafter I

intend to make it the theme of a more particular discussion.

In the tenth verse of the context, St Peter informs us, that 'the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burnt up.' In the text, he goes on to inform us farther, that notwithstanding this mighty revolution, so alarming, and apparently so fatal, to the happiness and the hopes of good men, those hopes shall still not be disappointed. 'Nevertheless,' he adds, 'we,' that is, we, the apostles of our Lord and Saviour, and all persons of piety, who are instructed by us, and understand the Scriptures of the Old Testament, 'look, according to his promise, for new heavens, and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.' The promise here referred to, seems to be that which was made to Abraham, Gen. xvi. 8. Here, God established his covenant with this patriarch, and with his seed after him, for an everlasting covenant; and promised to them the land of Canaan for an everlasting possession. The seed of Abraham, we are taught by St Paul, are of two descriptions; the natural, and the spiritual. To the natural seed, or his lineal descendants, Canaan was promised in the literal sense. To his spiritual descendants the promise was given in a figurative sense only; and in this sense only was the possession promised everlasting. To those who were 'Jews outwardly,' and whose 'circumcision is outward in the flesh,' was promised the typical, earthly Canaan. The antitype, the heavenly Canaan, was promised to those only, who were 'Jews inwardly; whose circumcision was that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter, whose praise is not of men, but of God.'

This promise was afterwards often repeated, both in the same terms, and in others more explicit. It is often mentioned in the Psalms, particularly in the seventy-second and eighty-ninth; and often by the prophets. The prophet Isaiah adopts in two instances the very language here used by St Peter. 'Behold,' says God, speaking by this prophet 'I create new heavens, and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into my mind. But be ye glad, and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and my people a joy;' chapter lxv. 17, 18. And, again, chapter lxvi. 22, 'For as the new heavens and the new earth which I will make shall remain before me, saith the Lord; so shall your seed, and your name remain.' In the first of these passages, the declaration, 'Behold, I create new heavens, and a new earth,' appears to be used figuratively, and to be so explained in the succeeding verse, where it is obviously interpreted to mean the restoration of holiness to the endless multitude of the first-born, by the Spirit of God, through the redemption of Christ. Even in this case however it may with propriety be considered as including all that pertains to this mighty work; and to involve not only the renovation of the mind, but also its succeeding progress in higher and higher attainments of virtue throughout endless duration. This is the more probable, because in the latter passage there is a plain reference to the former, indicating that the new heavens and the new earth, mentioned in both, are the same; and because the phrase in the latter passage is used in the literal sense, and has evidently the same signification as in the text.

'Heavens and earth,' in Jewish phraseology, as I have observed elsewhere, denoted the *universe*. In the present case, however, the words appear to be used with a meaning less extended, as well as in the tenth and twelfth verses; where it is declared, that that which is intended by both terms shall be consumed, dissolved, and pass away. This astonishing event, we are taught, will take place at the final judgment; and we have no hint in the Scriptures, that the judgment will involve any other beings beside angels and men. The new creation here mentioned, is also exhibited as the future residence of angels and men. Other intelligent beings, therefore, and the worlds which they inhabit, may be regarded as concerned in this wonderful production only in a mediate and remoter sense. But in whatever manner we extend or limit the phrase, it is clear from the tenth and twelfth verses, that a part of the creation will be destroyed; and from the text, that a new part, sufficiently great to be styled new heavens, and a new earth, will be created in its stead.

In the text St Peter teaches us, that the things shaken and removed by the conflagration are destroyed, to make way for a new heaven, and a new earth. The same truth we are taught by St John, in the twenty-first chapter of Revelation, 'And I saw a new heaven, and a new earth;' that is, after the general judgment; 'for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away: and he that sat on the throne said, Behold, I make all things new; and he said, Write, for these words are true and faithful.' From these declarations it is obvious, that such a change will hereafter take place in the creation of God, as will in the proper sense verify this prediction. The first heaven and the first earth will pass away; and a new heaven and a new earth will occupy their place in the universe. When these are called new, it is plainly meant, that they shall be essentially changed in their form, character, and circumstances. All things in that part of the universe denoted by these words, and not improbably in the universe at large, will, at least in a qualified sense, become new also.

On this wonderful subject how easily is the imagination lost! Every solemn emotion of the mind is, almost of course, awakened and engrossed by the fall of a kingdom, or empire. The bare recital of such a termination of human greatness, instinctively prompts the sigh of commiseration, and the thrill of awe; and we pause in intense and bewildered thought, while we bend over the tomb of departed glory. An eclipse of the moon, and still more of the sun, fixes the eyes of half mankind in astonishment and terror; and millions shudder with the most apprehensive forebodings, while the last beams of the glorious luminary are withdrawing from the sight. What, then, must be the emotions which will crowd upon the soul at the departure of a world; when its funeral fires shall be kindled by the breath of the Son of God, its knell sounded by the last trumpet, and the voice of the archangel, and its obsequies celebrated with immense and melancholy grandeur by the assembled universe? How would our hearts die within us, to see the stars falling from heaven, the moon changed into blood, the light of the sun expire, and the heavens themselves flee away from the face of him that sitteth on the throne!

At the creation of this world, 'the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy. The minds of these glorious intelligences beheld with amazement and rapture the formless mass rise into being, at the command of the Creator, the new-born light wander over its desolate surface, the dry land heave, the ocean expand immeasurably, verdure clothe the world, life inhabit it, the lights of heaven rejoice to begin their course, and man, awaking into existence, commence his first song of wonder, gratitude, and praise. How will this astonishment and rapture be enhanced, when they and we behold the new heavens and the new earth called into being by the same voice, worlds destined to be the immortal residence of truth and peace, of virtue, glory, and joy, fresh from the hand of the Creator, blooming with vernal, undecaying life, and brightening beneath the dawn of everlasting day! With what transport will the virtuous universe exclaim at this divine era, 'Worthy art thou, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power; for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created!'

It will not be doubted, that such a mighty change in the kingdom of Jehovah is effectuated for reasons of the highest import, and will be followed by consequences sufficiently great, permanent, and desirable, to justify so amazing a transaction. This interesting subject I shall attempt to illustrate, in the following manner:

1. The system of the divine dispensations towards this world will, at the time specified, come to an end.

This world was created to become the scene of one great system of dispensations toward the race of Adam; the scene of their existence and their trial, of their holiness, or their sin, and their penitence and reformation, or their impenitence and obduracy. It was intended also to be a theatre of a mysterious and wonderful scheme of providence. The first rebellion in the divine kingdom commenced in heaven; the second existed here. The first was perpetrated by the highest, the second by the lowest order of intelligent creatures. These two are with high probability the only instances in which the Ruler of all things has been disobeyed by his rational subjects. The Scriptures give us no hint of any other conduct of the same nature; and no beings are exhibited in them as condemned at the final day, or sent down to the world of perdition, beside fallen angels, and fallen men. As, therefore, these are often mentioned as fallen creatures, and these only, it is rationally argued, that no other beings of this character have existed.

The Scriptures appear to speak of other worlds under the name 'heaven,' beside the heaven of saints and angels. Thus the phrase, 'heaven of heavens,' obviously denotes a heaven among, as well as above, other heavens. 'Heavenly places,' language several times used in the New Testament, may not unnaturally denote, that in the illimitable expansion called heaven, there are various worlds inhabited by intelligent beings. All these are, it would seem from the Scriptures, in some manner or other, and in a degree not unimportant interested in the mediation of Christ; in such a degree, as to be united by it in one vast, harmonious, and happy society. Christ is said to be 'head over all things to the church.' The Father is also said to 'reconcile all things by him unto himself, whether they be things upon the earth, or things in heaven' (ἐν τοις ουρανοις, 'in the heavens'). Col. i. 20. It is also declared, that Christ 'ascended far above all heavens, that he might fill all things' (ὑπερανω παντων των ουρανων, far above all the heavens'). Of God the Father it is also declared, that it is his purpose 'to gather together (or, re-unite), under one head in Christ, all things, both those which are in the heavens,* and those which are upon the earth, even in him.'

From these passages it is, I think, reasonably concluded, that other worlds, beside the supreme heaven, are denoted by this phraseology; that all these worlds, will ultimately find an interest, and an important one, in the mediation of the Redeemer—will be gathered under one head in him—be filled by him with his fulness—and be brought by him into a nearer union with God the Father.

Should these things be admitted, it will be evident that in this world there exists a singular and astonishing system of providence; a system of mediation between God and his revolted creatures: of grace and forgiveness on his part, and of faith, repentance, and new obedience on theirs. This system, never found elsewhere, is accomplished here; and, at the time referred to is by the text, taken in its relation with the context, declared to be finished.

Particularly, the mediatorial kingdom set up in this world, and extending over all things in the universe, is at this time brought to a termination. Christ, the Ruler in it, 'having put down all (opposing) rule, authority, and power,' will now 'deliver up this kingdom to God, even the Father, that God may be all in all.

At this time, also, all the race of Adam will have existed, and finished the part allotted to them. The whole number, both of the good and of the evil, will have been completed.

Sin will have appeared in every permitted form, and have been perpetrated in every mode in which it can exist without ultimate injury to the divine kingdom.

Virtue also will have been exhibited in all those diversities of beauty and loveliness, which can furnish a proper foundation for the endlessly various rewards destined to exist in the future world.

Grace will have been displayed towards every proper object, the endless multitude of the first-born will have been gathered in, and the glorious register of immortality, contained in the 'Lamb's book of life,' will have been written out, to the last line.

The final trial also will be ended, the final sentence pronounced, and the final allotments of the righteous and the wicked settled for ever.

The purposes for which this world was made will herefore have all been accomplished; and for such a world there will be no more use in the divine kingdom. No longer necessary, and of too humble and deformed a nature to be a proper part of the future system, it will be blotted out from among the works of God. In its place, new heavens and a new earth will rise into being, destined to be the eternal habitation of righteousness, and suited to a new and superior system of dispensations.

II. *This wonderful work will be brought into existence by means of the mediation of Christ.*

'In my Father's house,' saith the Saviour, 'are many mansions. I go to prepare a place for you. And, if I

* Greek.

go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.' And again: 'Father, I will, that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me; and the glory which thou hast given me have I given them, that they may be one, even as we are one.'

From these passages, it is evident, that the state of glory in the future world is given to Christ as a proper consequence, or, in what I deem more correct language, the proper reward of his mediation. It is a state of things which otherwise would not have existed. On his obedience is it founded, and to reward that obedience was it created. To his followers it is a gift made by his bounty. 'The glory which thou hast given me, have I given them.'

That it will be the proper reward of Christ's mediation: such a reward as infinite wisdom pronounces to be a suitable recompense for such obedience, of such a person, will, I presume, not be questioned.

Had Adam passed through his trial with perfect obedience, both he and his posterity would, undoubtedly, have enjoyed a happy immortality in the present world. But, if it would have been proper that God should communicate such a mass of enjoyment as a reward of the obedience of the 'first Adam, who is of the earth, earthy;' what must be the nature of a proper reward for the obedience of the 'second Adam,' who is 'the Lord from heaven;' an obedience infinitely meritorious, and deserving therefore the highest recompense which is possible? 'All things are yours,' says St Paul; 'whether things present, or things to come; and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's.' All things are yours, because ye are Christ's, and because Christ is God's.

III. *It is evident, that this will be the final state of the universe.*

To what has been already said concerning this subject, I shall add a few observations.

It is not conceivable that any other state can with propriety succeed that which is instituted to reward the Son of God, for the most wonderful of all labours and sufferings. No other obedience can come after his, without infinite disadvantage; and no state of things be established as a reward of such obedience, without an incomprehensible diminution of happiness and glory. Such an inversion of the dictates of wisdom, such an anticlimax of order and beauty, cannot be supposed. Indeed, no other obedience but his can be supposed materially to affect the divine kingdom in any extensive manner; while that of Christ will be easily conceived to extend its influence through eternity and immensity; to change, in any supposable degree, the whole creation of God; and to become the foundation of every possible improvement in prosperity and splendour.

Accordant with this scheme are all the representations of Scripture which pertain to the subject. 'Who created all things' says St Paul, 'by Jesus Christ; to the intent that now unto principalities and powers, in the heavenly places, might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God,' Eph. iii. 10. Here the dispensations of God to the church, founded on the mediation of Christ, and existing only through this mediation, are exhibited as being essential to the end for which all things were created. Plainly therefore all things are essentially affected by Christ's mediation. Here also it is declared, that the 'intent,' or purpose, for which God created all things, was to display, by means of these dispensations, 'his manifold wisdom to principalities and powers in the heavenly places;' that is, the world where they dwell, and the worlds where, from time to time they are employed. The knowledge of these glorious persons, therefore, concerning the divine wisdom, and its displays, will be supremely derived from this source; and their understanding will be chiefly employed in learning the nature and the endless consequences of this mediation. By means of their knowledge of this subject also will their virtues be principally quickened and ennobled, and their happiness rendered exquisite, intense, and complete.

Thus the mediation of Christ will affect the universe in such a manner, throughout immensity and eternity, as to render it a widely different thing from what it otherwise would have been. The dispensations of God will be widely different; the character of its virtuous inhabitants will be different; their knowledge, virtue, glory, and happiness will be wonderfully superior; more exalted, more refined, more perfect. Plainly, therefore, this state of things will be final. In accordance with this view of the subject, it is said, that the righteous 'shall live and reign with Christ for ever and ever;' that 'there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying, neither any more pain:' that the life which the righteous enjoy, is 'everlasting;' that 'nothing shall be able to separate them from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord; and that 'all things,' both present and future, 'are theirs.' Hence God styles himself 'their God;' and declares them to be 'his people.'

That a final state is an eternal one, will not be questioned by any man who reads and believes the Scriptures. Whatever blessings, then, the righteous may obtain in the future world, all these blessings will continue for ever.

IV. *It will be an unchangeable state.*

Sin, under the system of dispensations preceding the judgment, will have had its whole course and its whole effect upon the universe, so far as a state of trial is concerned; and will never more exist, except in a state of punishment, and as an awful example to virtuous beings. The righteous will have passed through the same period of trial; and will have 'washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.' They will begin the endless state of reward with a fixed character of holiness, or virtue; and will never more return to sin. Every day, hour, and moment, as they move on in the progress of endless duration, they will in the most exact sense, 'love the Lord their God with all their heart, and with all their soul, and with all their strength, and with all their understanding; and they will love each other as themselves.' Every external duty also to which this disposition prompts, or which the pleasure of God directs, they will perform without failure, and without defect; and will thus be 'spirits of men' absolutely 'just,' made absolutely 'perfect.'

All the circumstances and consequences connected with this character will possess the same immutable nature. These virtuous beings will begin the possession of happiness and glory, to continue only happy and glorious for ever. Death, and sorrow, and crying, and

pain will be no more; and the last tear will have been wiped away by the divine hand from every eye. The good found will be always complete; the vessel always full, and the contents free from every mixture. Loss, danger, and fear will be alike unknown. The immense of duration will be an unclouded, everlasting day.

It is not, however, here intended, that this state will in the absolute sense be uniform: the Scriptures teach us, that it will be perpetually improving. Diminution it will never know; increase and enhancement it will experience without end.

V. *It will be a state in the proper sense new to the universe.*

The heaven of heavens, particularly, will in many respects become new.

A great part of its inhabitants will be 'the general assembly and church of the first-born.' These are all recovered and restored sinners. Originally, no rational beings were subjects of virtue and happiness, beside those 'who kept their first estate.' No others were objects of the eternal favour of God. Endless woe is the proper desert of sin, and persistency in endless turpitude is probably an essential part of its nature. To see a sinner then, especially to see a multitude of sinners which no man can number, recovered from their apostasy, restored to holiness, justified, accepted, made inhabitants of heaven, walking in the light of that happy world, and mingling with angels in their communion, their enjoyments, and their praise, will, of all events in the providential system, be to the virtuous universe the most unexpected, surprising, and delightful. 'There is joy in heaven,' saith our Saviour, 'over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety-and-nine just persons, who need no repentance.' What then will be the gratulation, the transport, the songs of triumph, when the penitence, not of an individual only, but of innumerable millions, shall be announced to this benevolent world? With what ecstasy will every bosom heave, when, not the tidings of this restoration are rehearsed, but the happy beings themselves who have experienced it have actually arrived, are presented before the throne of God, and begin the everlasting song, 'Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God, even his Father, unto him be glory and dominion for ever and ever, Amen!'

The universe also (for the first time since the apostasy of angels) will be at peace. To this period rebellion will have existed, and war been carried on in the kingdom of Jehovah. But after the entrance of the righteous into heaven, all these evils will be settled in uninterrupted quiet. Animosity, contention, and confusion will no more invade the regions of virtue, nor disturb the harmony of their inhabitants. 'And I saw a new heaven, and a new earth,' says St John; 'for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away, and there was no more sea.' The sea is chosen by the prophetical writers as an image of those violences which are so prevalent and so universal here, and to which its own restless agitations bear so strong a resemblance. These, it is here asserted, will exist no more. In the future world of enjoyment no cloud will overcast the sky, no tempest will rage, no billows will roll. Peace, divine and eternal, will breathe her balmy influence through every bosom, and hush the voice of contention for ever.

At the same time the mediatorial kingdom will be terminated, and all the immediate purposes of this wonderful system accomplished. His chosen ones will be all gathered. Not one of them, however poor, will be prevented from arriving in this glorious kingdom. Every one will see his infirmities, sins, and dangers vanished for ever.

At this era, God in a new sense will be 'all in all.' In other words, his perfections will be manifested with a clearness and splendour before unknown.

Particularly, the former dispensations of his providence will be unfolded to the contemplation and comprehension of virtuous beings. These dispensations, it will be remembered, were merely means, adopted for the promotion of ends to be accomplished in the future world. The fitness of their adoption for these purposes, as well as the wisdom of their Author, cannot therefore be thoroughly understood, until the ends for which they exist shall take place. At this era they will begin to be clearly disclosed. All of them will now appear to have been necessary, wise, and good; and will show, beyond a doubt, that he who selected them was 'wonderful in counsel, excellent in working, wise in heart, and mighty in strength.'

The beauty, glory, and happiness of virtuous beings will also be only a new and illustrious manifestation of the perfections of God. Their bodies and their minds will be his workmanship; archetypes of those infinitely various forms of beauty, glory, and loveliness which, like the colours of light in the sun, shone and mingled with immortal splendour in the uncreated mind. Their virtues will be only unceasing emanations of his excellence; their enjoyments only perennial streams, flowing from the eternal fountain of good.

In them all, also, he will live, and breathe, and move. The animating principle, a vernal warmth, an ethereal fire, imperceptible in itself, but gloriously visible in its effects, will spread without intermission through the virtuous universe, and quicken all things which it contains. The air, the trees, the streams, the fruits, will all be informed with life. This divine principle in the glorified bodies of the blessed will warm the heart, kindle the eye, and play around the aspect, with youth and immortality. The soul it will invigorate with energy, which knows no decay; will glow in its affections, and supply it with strength to form vast conceptions, and to model plans and purposes for eternity. All things will be full of life; and the life in all things will be God.

Finally: A new system of dispensations will here commence, incomparably more glorious than anything and everything which has before existed. Christ is the light of heaven, as well as of earth. In this divine Person the Godhead will shine without a cloud, and be seen face to face. The splendour will be all intelligence and enjoyment, and the warmth, life and love. The happy millions will bask for ever in the benevolent beams; and, with the eagle's eye fixed on the divine luminary, will rise on eagle's wings with a perpetually invigorated flight, nearer and nearer to the Sun of righteousness for ever.

SERMON CLXX.

THE REMOTER CONSEQUENCES OF DEATH.—THE HAPPINESS OF HEAVEN.

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven, saying, Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.—Rev. xxi. 1—3.

In the preceding Discourse I endeavoured to give a summary view of the new creation, or the 'new heavens and the new earth,' mentioned in the beginning of the text. In this I propose to consider briefly, the particular state of the redeemed in their future existence, for whom, principally, the Scriptures exhibit the glorious state of the universe, which was the subject of the preceding Discourse, as being accomplished. For them, particularly, heaven is formed and furnished, to be their everlasting residence. 'In my Father's house,' said our Saviour, 'are many mansions; I go to prepare a place for you.'—'Come, ye blessed of my Father,' will the Judge say to the righteous at the final day, 'inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.' To complete this world of glory, to adorn it with unrivalled beauty, to store it with the richest blessings, to fill it with the most proper inhabitants, and to reign over it with peculiar displays of his perfection for ever, is, I think, sufficiently exhibited in the Scriptures as the *end* especially proposed by the Creator in all his antecedent dispensations. That heaven was created to become the residence of those by whom it will be inhabited, and to become the theatre of those glorious dispensations which will constitute the eternal providence of God towards them, will not, I suppose, be questioned. It has been shown, that the display of the divine wisdom 'to principalities and powers in the heavenly places,' by means of the church, was the 'intent' for which God 'created all things by Jesus Christ.' It will not be doubted, that this display will be chiefly made in the heavenly world, rather than in this; and more extensively and perfectly during the endless progress of future ages, than during the momentary continuance of time. For the same end existed the work of redemption. For this end also mankind are born, angels employed as 'ministering spirits, to minister to them who are the heirs of salvation;' the revolutions of time finished, the judgment set, the world consumed by fire, and the new heavens and the new earth created, as the eternal habitation of righteousness. Of course, this state is sufficiently glorious to justify these amazing labours, and the existence of that wonderful train of events which they accomplish. The first heaven and the first earth were intended to be the theatre of temporary scenes; and, when these are finished, are declared in the text to pass away. The new heaven and the new earth are destined to eternal purposes, and are therefore formed to endure for ever.

The two last chapters of the Apocalypse are a discourse written chiefly on this great subject. No descriptive writing in the possession of mankind can be compared with this in sublimity and splendour. The most beautiful and the most magnificent objects which were ever presented to the imagination of man are here selected with unrivalled skill, and combined with supreme felicity. Every stroke is the strong, masterly effort of a great mind, filled with the immense grandeur of the subject, and giving vent to the wonders and glories of inspiration; everywhere invigorated with that conciseness which is so characteristic of the Scriptures, and especially of their sublimest effusions. It is equally distinguished for the particularity of imagery and phraseology which is indispensable to all vivid, powerful impressions. Little and ordinary things, nay, such as may be styled great, but are yet possessed of secondary splendour, are here forgotten, or purposely left to be supplied by the mind of the reader; while the writer employs himself in exhibiting those only which are eminently important, intensely beautiful, or gloriously majestic.

This discourse of St John may perhaps with equal propriety be considered as a description of a place, which, with its appendages, is denominated 'the heaven of heavens,' or 'the new Jerusalem;' or of the state of things existing in that delightful region; as an account of the future character and happiness of the church; or the divine residence where it will dwell, and its happiness be enjoyed. It is of little consequence, therefore, in which manner the discourse is understood.

Of this discourse the text is the introduction, and contains several interesting declarations concerning its illustrious subject. The writer commences his observations by informing us, that after the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, he saw a new heaven and a new earth brought into existence; the same which St Peter declares to be expected by himself and his fellow Christians after the conflagration. In these happy regions, he also informs us, tumult and confusion would never find a place; 'There was no more sea.' Then, he announces to us, he saw the 'holy city, New Jerusalem,' a magnificent emblem of the future state and residence of the redeemed, 'coming down from God out of heaven.' This city 'was prepared as a bride adorned for her husband;' or, in other words, ornamented with every variety and degree of beauty and splendour. A great voice from heaven proclaimed, that this was 'the tabernacle,' or peculiar dwelling-place 'of God;' that it should henceforth exist with men through all succeeding ages of duration; and that

'God would henceforth dwell with them, and be their God, and that they should be his people.' In other words, the voice declared, that the covenant made with Abraham, and afterwards repeatedly promulged to the church, should now be fulfilled in all its import, and to the utmost extent of the blessing conveyed in these memorable words, 'I will be your God, and ye shall be my people.'

Soon after, St John was carried by an angel, in the spirit, to a great and high mountain; where, at leisure, he surveyed the same illustrious object, and beheld in distinct vision, and contemplated separately the wonderful parts of this astonishing structure, and all its magnificent appendages. His description of these he concludes with this remarkable declaration: 'And there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie; but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.' For the redeemed, then, heaven is formed and constituted; and all its blessings unite to complete their happy state in the future world.

The observations which I propose to make concerning this interesting subject, I shall arrange under the following heads:—

I. *The residence;*

II. *The character;*

III. *The employments;* and,

IV. *The enjoyments of the redeemed.*

In the first place, *the residence of these happy beings claims our particular attention.*

No man, it is presumed, ever read the history of our first parents, contained in the second chapter of Genesis, without being deeply interested in their state, as well as their character. The paradise allotted to them, as their proper residence, has in a high degree engaged the attention and awakened the delight of every reader. Its trees and fruits, its fields arrayed in verdure and adorned with flowers, the life which breathed in its winds, and flowed in its rivers, the serenity of its sky, and the splendour of its sunshine, together with the immortality which gilded and burnished all its beautiful scenes, have filled the heart with rapture, and awakened the most romantic visions of the imagination. The poets of the West, and still more those of the East, have, down to the present hour, kindled at the thought of this scene of beauty and fragrance; and the very name of Eden has met the eye as a gem in the verse which it adorned. Nay, it has been transferred by God himself to the world of glory, and become one of the appropriate designations of heaven. 'To him that overcometh,' saith our Saviour, 'I will give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.'

If the earthly paradise has been so delightful to the human mind; if the human heart has ever sighed over the loss of this happy residence; it must certainly be a more delightful, as well as a more rational employment, to contemplate a paradise wonderfully superior both in its nature and duration. Peculiarly will this employment be proper, consolatory, and edifying to him who, feeling himself a pilgrim and a stranger in the present world, looks for a permanent residence beyond the grave; 'a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.'

The heavenly paradise is formed for eternity; and will in every respect deserve to continue through this immense duration. It is intended to be the scene in which the infinitely glorious obedience of Christ will find its reward; and will itself be a proper part of that reward, and one honourable testimony of his Father's complacency in that divine work. 'The marriage supper of the Lamb,' the great festival of the universe, is now to be holden; and the house of God will be adorned with all the beauty and splendour which can become this great day, and the character of this wonderful Person. The prayer of Christ for his followers, contained in these remarkable words, 'And the glory which thou hast given me, I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me; that they may be made perfect in one. Father, I will, that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me.' This prayer will now begin to be fulfilled in its proper import. All the redeemed will now be gathered in this happy place; and the perfect union between them and the Saviour will commence. They will begin to 'behold his glory,' and to possess 'the glory which he has given them.' That 'manifestation of the sons of God' will now be made, which 'the whole creation' has earnestly and anxiously expected to this time. This is the period in which all things will begin to be theirs: the things of this world, by an instructive and delightful recollection; the things of that which is to come, by exquisite and unlimited enjoyment. Of course, whatever material beauty, greatness, and glory can furnish, whatever their luminous minds can understand or enjoy of this nature, will now begin to be lavished on them with a bounty becoming the character of God.

Perfectly correspondent with these views of the subject, is the description of the New Jerusalem, contained in this discourse of St John. The foundations of the heavenly city are garnished with all manner of precious stones. Its dimensions are wonderfully great. Its wall is of jasper. Its buildings are of pure and pellucid gold; its gates are pearls; its watchmen are angels. The throne of God and the Lamb is in the midst of it. Out of this throne proceeds the river of life, and on its banks stands the tree of life, yielding the various fruits of immortality. No temple is found here. No night overcasts the sky. No moon shines. No sun arises. 'The Lord God Almighty, and the Lamb, are the temple' of this divine residence; the sun which shines with the splendour of everlasting day.

Into these mansions, 'there shall in no wise enter anything that defileth, or that worketh abomination, or that maketh a lie.' There will be nothing to deceive, nothing to pollute, nothing to awaken disgust or abhorrence. Every sin and every sinner will be finally excluded. Rebellion will have spent its force, the iron rod of oppression will be broken; the trumpet will have blown its final blast; the last shout of battle will have expired; 'destructions' will have 'come to a perpetual end.' Tumult, suspense, and fear will be no more. The minds of these happy inhabitants will never more be assailed by temptation. No lusts will rankle within—no enemies will seduce without.

Private separate interests will be felt, and known no more. The universal good will allure every eye, engross every heart, and move every hand. Peace, therefore, 'not in word, nor in tongue, but in deed, and in truth;' the peace of minds, the harmony of

views, the unison of affections, will spread over all the millions who inhabit this land of promise; and diffuse a universal and eternal serenity within and without the soul.

Here also all things will live. Death and sorrow, disease and pain, crying and tears, will have fled for ever. There will be nothing to destroy, nothing to impair, nothing to lament. Everything will live; and not merely live, but grow, and flourish, and bloom, without interruption. Life, in a sublime and superior sense, life vernal and immortal, will impregnate the streams and trees, the leaves and fruits, and animate the bodies and minds of the firstborn. A glorious antitype will be found here of the wheel seen by Ezekiel in the vision of the cherubim. One spirit, you will remember, one life, informed both; for the spirit of life was in the wheels, as well as in the cherubim.

As all things in heaven will be informed with life, so they will become universally means of joy. The present world is justly styled 'a vale of tears.' Distress awaits us here in a thousand forms. Within us it dwells, without it assails. We are sinners, are the subjects of ungratified desire, disappointment, discontent, reproaches of conscience, and distressing apprehensions concerning the anger of God. At the same time, our frail bodies are subjected to the evils of hunger and thirst, of cold and heat, of weariness and languor, of sickness and pain, of decay and death. Our friends and families are in want, pain, and sorrow; they sicken and die; their sins disgrace them, and wound us; and awaken excruciating apprehensions concerning their destiny beyond the grave. War also frequently spreads wide the miseries of dismay, plunder, slaughter, and devastation. To beings habituated to a state of existence so extensively formed of these distressing materials, how welcome must be the change which transports them from this world to heaven! When 'the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to' the celestial 'Zion with songs, everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.' Heaven is created to be the residence of happiness. Everything which it contains will be beauty, grandeur, and glory to the eye, harmony to the ear, and rapture to the heart; rapture which admits no mixture, and knows no termination.

II. *The character of the righteous in the future world, may be illustrated in the following manner:*

They are beings composed of body and mind. Their bodies I have described in the Discourse on the resurrection; and shall only add here, that they will be means of increasing essentially both the power and the enjoyment of their minds; so that they will be happier after the re-union of these two great constituents of their existence than before. In the present world our bodies are full of imperfection, possessed of obtuse faculties, furnishing us information with difficulty, and in parts and parcels, sluggish in their nature, and heavy in all their movements. By disease also and accident their own powers are impaired, and with them those of the mind. Even when these evils do not exist, age brings on certain decay, weakens every power, and blunts every perception.

But in the world of glory the body, as was formerly observed, will become a spiritual body; possessed of a perfection corresponding altogether with that of the mind. By means of it the mind will perceive more clearly, enjoy more exquisitely, and act more usefully, than it would do if disembodied.

It is not here intended, that minds need, in the metaphysical sense, the possession of bodies to complete their happiness; or that saints hereafter will enjoy a felicity superior to that of angels. It is only intended, that this is one way in which God is pleased to make happiness perfect; and that saints themselves will be in a state of higher perfection than if they were unembodied. Of this, it is apprehended, the evidence is entire in the great fact, that Christ will reign for ever in his own glorified body; for it will not be supposed that his human nature will by this fact be rendered less glorious.

The redeemed are also just men made perfect. The word 'perfect' is differently understood. It may be proper, therefore, to observe, that I intend by it, not a state of existence which admits of no accession to the powers of the mind, its attainments, or its enjoyments. The infinite mind only is perfect in this sense. I intend that state in which the mind will be the subject neither of fault nor error, neither of decay nor weariness; in which there will be nothing to lessen its usefulness, or impair its enjoyment; in which it will be entirely approved by itself, and entirely loved by its Maker; in which it will fill a station and act a part in the divine kingdom altogether necessary, desirable, and honourable, and will perform these things perfectly, and better than they would be performed by any other being whatever. This, if I mistake not, is the perfection of angels, and the perfection of those who are declared by Christ to be ἰσάγγελοι, 'equal (or like) to angels.' Both will, however, improve in their attainments, and in their attributes also, for ever.

They are redeemed. They have all been apostates, rebels, and outcasts; and were once 'children of wrath,' because they were 'children of disobedience.' They were all therefore condemned by the law of God; and, had they been left to themselves, must have perished for ever. Every one of them, also, 'was turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God;' was renewed by the divine goodness, and the mysterious influence of the Spirit of grace. Every one of them was once 'lost' to the virtuous universe, and has again been 'found.'

Thus they are a new order of beings in the divine kingdom; beings restored from endless sin to endless holiness, and raised from absolute perdition to immortal life. How amazing the change, how immense the deliverance! So amazing, so literally immense, that eternity will scarcely be sufficient to unfold 'the height, the length, and the breadth' of this unexampled dispensation.

In this character the Redeemer will behold them for ever, as the peculiar reward of his mediation, the trophies of his cross, and the gems in his crown of glory. Throughout the ages of heaven he will look on every one as an immortal mind, to save which from endless turpitude and ruin, he shed his own most precious blood; as a mind, recovered by himself to the divine kingdom, reinstamped by his Spirit with the image of God, and thus furnished with an indefeasible title to eternal glory.

They are adopted children of God. The relation expressed in these terms is neither fanciful, nor figurative; but real, acknowledged by God, and inestimably important. In the covenant of grace he was pleased to

promise, that he would be 'their God,' and that they should be 'his people;' that he would be 'a Father to them;' and that they should be 'his sons and daughters.' This covenant he will now completely fulfil, this relation he will now consummate, in the sight of the universe. He will acknowledge them as 'heirs of God, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ' to his kingdom and glory; to 'an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away;' an inheritance 'eternal in the heavens;' 'a kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world.' 'Christ,' says St Paul, Heb. ii. 11, 'is not ashamed to call them brethren.'—'God,' says the same apostle, Heb. xi. 16, 'is not ashamed to be called their God.'

They are brethren to each other. In this character they will behold each other as made of one blood and as sprung from the same loins, as redeemed from sin and misery by the death of the Son of God, as renewed by the same Spirit of truth, as fellow members of the same church, as fellow travellers in the same journey towards heaven, as ruined by the same apostasy, recovered by the same mercy, and heirs of the same glorious inheritance. How many bonds of endearment and union are here presented to our view! How intimate are these relations! How important in their nature! What sources of attachment! What indissoluble ligaments do they form for the heart! What intense endearment must they awaken! What delightful offices of love must they inspire!

They are also companions of angels. 'Ye are come,' says St Paul, with the anticipating spirit of prophecy, 'Ye are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem; and to an innumerable company of angels.'—'and round about the throne,' says St John, 'were four and twenty seats, and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold. And before the throne, there was a sea of glass, like unto crystal. And in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four living ones, full of eyes, both before and behind.' In this passage the same station is allotted to the representatives of the church, and the representatives of the angelic host.

Throughout every part of the same book, angels and glorified saints are exhibited as dwelling together in the same glorious mansions, occupied in the same employments, and united in the same praise. When the four living ones cry, 'Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty! who wast, and who art, and who art to come; the four and twenty elders fall down before him that sitteth on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever; and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power; for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are, and were created.'

The angel interpreter also, whom St John, astonished and bewildered by the vision of the New Jerusalem, attempted to worship, replied to him in these remarkable words: 'See thou do it not. I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them who keep the sayings of this book.' No words could more completely evince the truth of the doctrine under consideration.

Angels, as I have formerly shown, are the first of all created beings in worth, dignity, and glory. To be the companions of these exalted intelligences, these most favoured creatures of God, must plainly be a privilege which words will in vain labour to describe, and imagination to conceive.

Finally: They are kings and priests unto God. In the Discourse just now alluded to, I have exhibited, very imperfectly indeed, the dignity and glory of the stations which angels occupy in the divine kingdom. The saints, who will hereafter be their companions, will occupy similar stations. The name *priest*, in this declaration, indicates the distinguished *purity* of their character; and teaches us, that their thoughts, affections, and purposes, will be an unceasing and eternal offering of sweet incense in the sanctuary of heaven. The name *king*, denotes their distinguished *honour*; and informs us, that they will hereafter be elevated to princely employments and peculiar dignities in the empire of Jehovah. 'To him that overcometh,' says our Saviour, 'will I grant to sit with me on my throne; even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne,' Rev. iii. 21. 'They shall reign,' said the interpreting angel to John, when describing the future happiness of the righteous, 'they shall reign for ever and ever.'

REMARKS.

1. These considerations illustrate in the strongest manner the goodness of God.

The blessings which have been summarily mentioned in this Discourse, are all created and bestowed, by the infinite hand, and contrived by the infinite mind. They are the best of all blessings; immeasurable in their value, in their multitude numberless, in their duration eternal. To give such blessings as these to any beings, even the greatest and most excellent, would be an exertion of bounty which could not fail to claim our high admiration. Here they are given to the humblest class of intelligent creatures; a great part of whom have held their earthly course along the line which forms the lowest limit of moral agency, and during their residence in this world have always travelled along the verge of animal nature. Nor is this all: they are given to apostates excommunicated by themselves from the assembly of virtuous beings, voluntary aliens from the divine kingdom, useless to their Creator, and nuisances to his creation.

Why are they given at all? To this question no answer can be returned, but that they are the mere overflowings of unlimited goodness. Why, above all, are they given to such beings as have been here described? To give in this glorious manner to those who are possessed of the highest created worth, between whose character and rewards there is a perceptible degree of congruity, evidences a bountiful disposition, whose extent and excellence are plainly incomprehensible. But our conceptions of the glory of this disposition are mightily enhanced when we behold these blessings flowing in uninterrupted and eternal streams to beings who have forfeited all good, and who were destined to drink the cup of bitterness for ever. 'Oh give thanks unto the Lord,' said David, 'for he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever! Who remembered us in our low estate, and hath redeemed us from our enemies; for his mercy endureth for ever! Oh give thanks unto the God of heaven, for his mercy endureth for ever.'

2. These considerations very forcibly impress upon the mind the glory of Christ in the work of redemption.

When we read those passages of Scripture in which the future happiness of the righteous is exhibited, we are struck with astonishment at the strength and splendour of the exhibition. I do not remember that in all the conversations which I have heard concerning this subject, a single individual has, in any instance, given me reason to suppose that he considered the scriptural declarations concerning it as intended to be fulfilled in the strict sense. Numerous as they are, and uniform as their tenor is, they appear, so far as I have observed, universally to be regarded as pictures intentionally overdrawn; as poetical efforts, beautiful indeed, and sublime in an eminent degree; but rendered by the imagination of the writer, bold, fervid, and hyperbolical, in such a manner as not to be received without many limitations. With this general view of the subject, I am persuaded, most persons rest satisfied; and thus regard heaven as a state somewhat happier than that of Eden; but substantially the same with that which mankind would have enjoyed, had their progenitor continued steadfast in his obedience. But with these conceptions every person who pleases may see there is no accordance in the Scriptures.

What has given birth to such conceptions appears to me plainly to be the apprehension, universally diffused, that these wonderful blessings cannot with propriety be dispensed to such beings as men are, even in their best estate.

The righteous, as well as the wicked, are in the Scriptures said to be 'rewarded according to their works.' The wicked, it will be remembered, are rewarded for their works, as well as according to them. But this cannot be said of the righteous, unless in a very humble and very remote sense. The righteous are saved from perdition, and rewarded with eternal life, solely on account of the obedience of Christ. Their own works are merely the proportional measures of their reward. All are alike interested in the righteousness of Christ, and are therefore alike entitled to a reward. But there is a real and considerable difference in the degrees of excellence which they severally obtain and exhibit; and this difference we are taught by the Scriptures, as reason would naturally teach us, will become the foundation of a difference in their future allotments. Christians, I believe universally, are sufficiently ready to admit that their escape from hell, and their admission to heaven, are blessings owed wholly to the obedience of Christ, and in no sense merited by themselves. Still, I suspect that few of them ask what that heaven is; that degree of happiness which will be the proper consequence of Christ's obedience, and a suitable reward for its transcendent worth. Had Adam obeyed, his posterity would have inherited a happy immortality. Few Christians, I am persuaded, ever inquire concerning the nature and blessings of this happy immortality, or of that which will suitably reward the obedience of the second Adam. Thus, considering heaven merely as a happy immortality, acknowledging themselves to be admitted to it on account of Christ's righteousness, and yet supposing, that the kind and degree of happiness will, in some indefinite manner or other, be suited to the nature and value of their own obedience, they think that heaven, so far at least as themselves are concerned, must be a state of comparatively moderate enjoyment. Without supposing themselves therefore to disbelieve, and without disbelieving in fact, the truth of revelation, without calling in question intentionally, or perceptibly to themselves, any passage of Scripture, they suffer not a little of that which is revealed concerning the glory of heaven to stand for nothing.

To this mode of thinking the humility of good men powerfully contributes. They cannot realize, that themselves, stained as they are with guilt, nor that any men, were they even perfect, can be admitted to such enjoyments as those which are unfolded in the promises of the gospel. The distance between the reward and the character of the recipient is too great, the change is too absolute and wonderful to be admitted into the mind. 'Is it possible,' will a man of this character instinctively ask, 'that such a one as I should inherit enjoyments of this transcendent nature.'

To the same current of thought that so frequently quoted text has probably contributed not a little, although in an indirect manner: 'Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.' It would seem that most of those who have quoted this text, have made a full stop at the conclusion of the verse. Had they proceeded to the very next words, they would have found them the following: 'But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit.' Whatever may be the things which are here declared to have been unseen, unheard, and unimagined, St Paul informs us, that they are revealed to us by the Spirit of God; and, since the time of this revelation, are therefore not unknown to us, unless through our negligence. Still, I believe this text has put a kind of negative in the minds of very many Christians upon most of their inquiries concerning the heavenly state. Under the influence of this declaration they seem to have supposed that the Bible must of course be silent concerning this subject; and to have wandered over the passages where it is mentioned, without stopping to ask what was their meaning. In their meditations on the future felicity of the righteous, they seem to have drawn up this conclusion, that it is something indefinitely and indescribably great indeed, but left for their imaginations to form as well as they can, and their hearts to hope; rather than something to an important degree unfolded in the word of God.

To me all this appears unhappy. No reason, it is presumed, can be given why in this, any more than in other cases, we should limit the word of God by our own views; and interpret its declarations according to the dictates either of our feelings or our philosophy. It is undoubtedly to be admitted, that the rewards of the righteous in the future state are wonderfully disproportioned to any worth of which they can boast. But this ought to occasion no surprise, when we remember that 'the reward is not of debt, but of grace; that we are not only justified, but glorified also, solely on account of the obedience of the Redeemer. If this consideration be kept in view, we cannot, I think, hesitate to admit, that all which is declared in the gospel concerning this subject may be strictly just without exaggeration. St Paul has certainly removed every difficulty which might have hung upon it, and every perplexity with which our considerations of it are attended. 'He,' says this apostle, triumphantly discussing it in the

eighth chapter of Romans, 'He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?' The righteous, the virtue which constitutes their character, and the happiness to which it is entitled, are all given to Christ in the covenant of redemption, because 'he made his soul an offering for sin.' They are 'the seed which,' it is promised, 'should prolong their days;' or be happy for ever. In them he sees the fruit of 'the travail of his soul, and is satisfied therewith.' Here 'the gracious purpose of Jehovah prospers in his hands' * perfectly and for ever.

When we consider the subject in this manner, the difficulties which seem to attend it vanish. He who believes that, in consequence of the obedience of Adam, his posterity would have enjoyed immortal life in a paradisiacal world, cannot rationally doubt that, in consequence of the obedience of Christ, his followers will enjoy all the blessings promised in the heaven of the Scriptures. He will cease to be surprised when he hears the Saviour say, 'Father, I will, that they whom thou hast given me be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory. And the glory, which thou gavest me, have I given them:' or to hear him say, 'He that overcometh shall inherit all things:' or to hear him say, 'To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.' He will no more wonder to find St Paul declaring to the Corinthians, 'All things are yours: whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come, all are yours.' However strange this sublime declaration may seem, its mysteriousness will cease to perplex him, when he reads and considers the following verse, 'and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's.'

But, while these magnificent promises are thus explained by the mediation of Christ, they in return reflect the highest glory on that wonderful work. With what splendour and excellence must that obedience appear to the eye of God, which his wisdom thinks it proper to reward with the creation of 'new heavens and a new earth,' the everlasting residence of righteousness, truth, happiness, and glory, with all the magnificence and all the enjoyments of the New Jerusalem; with the endless multitude of the first-born given to him as his everlasting possession, arrayed in the splendour of knowledge and virtue, quickened by the smile of infinite complacency, and elevated to the summit of created glory! Even this is not all. 'Of the increase of his government and peace,' that is, of the glory of his providence, and the prosperity of his subjects, 'there shall be no end.' All things here, fair, great, and exalted, at first will soften, refine, and harmonize with ever-improving beauty, enlarge with perpetually increasing grandeur, and rise with a sublimity ascending for ever. With this prospect in full view, who will not exclaim, How great, how good, how glorious must he be, of whose wisdom and excellence all these things are only the proper reward!

* Isa. liii. 10, 11. Lowth.

SERMON CLXXI.

THE REMOTER CONSEQUENCES OF DEATH.—THE HAPPINESS OF HEAVEN.

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven, saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.—REV. xxi. 1—3.

IN the preceding Discourse, derived from these words, I proposed to consider,

I. *The residence;*

II. *The character;*

III. *The employments;* and

IV. *The enjoyments of the redeemed.*

The two first of these I examined in that Discourse. The two last I shall now make the subject of consideration.

Heaven is exhibited in the Scriptures as a world of joy and praise. The account here given is both rational and sublime. Still, if I mistake not, it is often made the foundation of views concerning heaven which are erroneous and unhappy. Unless I am deceived, it is a very common opinion, that to receive enjoyment, and to praise the Author of it, constitute chiefly, if not wholly, the state of existence allotted to the righteous in the future world. This opinion I suppose, indeed, to exist indefinitely and loosely, and without any known decision of the mind, either that such will be the fact, or that such is its own opinion. Yet I suspect that if many persons, and those not of inferior understanding, were to be asked, In what the happiness of heaven consists? the two particulars above mentioned would make up their answer. This I suspect, because I find these objects mentioned alone, almost always, when heaven becomes the theme of discourse.

To praise God for the perfections of his nature is unquestionably an universal and eternal duty, as well as a delightful employment of intelligent creatures. Far be it from me to undervalue the importance or the excellence of this duty. To receive enjoyment also is unquestionably one great end for which intelligent creatures are made, and an end clearly worthy of their Maker. But the mode in which this enjoyment is attained, and the means of its accomplishment, are con-

siderations of peculiar moment both to the views which we form of the celestial happiness, and to the nature of the happiness itself.

The state of existence in heaven is not exhibited in the Scriptures as a state of mere recipiency, if I may be allowed the term, or of mere quiescent enjoyment. Glorified spirits are not, as I believe, mere vessels, into which happiness is poured by the divine hand; and do not merely enjoy what is thus communicated. On the contrary, they are the most active of all beings in the creation of God; the most laborious; and the most unremitting in their exertions. Out of this activity their happiness in a great measure springs.

Christ has taught us, that 'it is more blessed to give, than to receive;' that is, to communicate good to others, than to receive it from their hands. This great principle I have endeavoured to illustrate variously, in several of these Discourses; particularly in those on the end for which man was created; on the foundation of virtue; and on the influence of virtue upon personal happiness. In these Discourses it was, I flatter myself, clearly proved, that to do good is to possess a higher and happier state of being than that of merely receiving. If then the state of the blessed is a state of mere recipiency, it is plainly and wonderfully inferior to such a state as we can see with certainty might easily exist: for nothing is more clear, than that a world might be created, and filled with inhabitants, whose employment it would be to do good.

Again: Angels are the present inhabitants of heaven. Of all beings they are the most active; as I have endeavoured to show, when discoursing concerning their character. The present state of heaven therefore is a state of the most active and unwearied exertion. It cannot be believed that, when this glorious world is so far changed as with propriety to be styled a new heaven, its inhabitants will be sunk from a higher to an inconceivably lower state of being.

If the observations which have been already made are allowed to be just, it must be clearly perceived, that the enjoyments of the righteous will rise to such a degree out of their employments, and that these objects will be so necessarily, so frequently, and so extensively blended together, as to render a distinct consideration of them both difficult and useless. I shall therefore blend my observations concerning them under the following heads:

1. It will be one employment of the righteous in the future world to study the works, and learn the character of God.

It will not be denied, that this is the proper employment of the intellect possessed by rational beings; the purpose for which it was created. The end here proposed is the knowledge of God. The means by which it is accomplished are the study of his works. These, whether material or immaterial, all existed originally in the uncreated mind; and are all merely various means of displaying infinite power, wisdom, and goodness.

Matter, however insignificant it may seem as a collection of atoms, assumes a very different character when endued with its peculiar powers, arranged in an immense system, and operating to great and glorious purposes. In this view, it becomes capable of exhibiting the greatness and glory of Jehovah in a manner exceedingly sublime and wonderful. Accordingly, the divine writers, particularly the psalmist, often make the objects constituting this part of the creation the themes of their wonder and praise.

In the material kingdom, particularly, we see beauty displayed in millions of forms and varieties; and novelty in every transition from object to object. Grandeur also and sublimity engross the imagination in the mountain and the ocean, the tempest and the volcano, the sun, the moon, and the host of heaven. When we lift up our thoughts, by the aid of astronomy, to the solar system, and contemplate the sun as a vast central world, encircled by a host of other worlds, with their innumerable inhabitants; when we consider the universe as filled with suns, surrounded by similar worlds; still more, if we regard all these as arranged into one vast harmonious system, suspended from the throne of God, and amid all their apparent wanderings and mazes, moving for ever with perfect order round the heaven of heavens; we can want no proofs that the material creation is sufficiently magnificent to become a most useful object of investigation to any created mind, however capacious, however dignified, however sublime may be its powers of conception.

But the material creation is capable of becoming a still more interesting object of contemplation. It is a vast storehouse of means, all fitted, all operating, to the production of the best ends. In this world we daily see it the means of life, comfort, and usefulness, of instruction and warning, of admiration, gratitude, and praise, to ourselves. In other words, it is, probably in a far higher degree, the means of excellence and enjoyment to their respective inhabitants; such as are capable of enlarging any mind with both physical and moral science, in a manner which ages of ages will not enable us to comprehend. Above all, when we remember that God is the grandeur which everywhere spreads, the sublimity which rises, the beauty which glows, the life which animates, the wisdom which astonishes, and the goodness which provides, sustains, and rejoices, we shall see this field of contemplation and intelligence not only exalted, immense, and endlessly improving, but literally divine.

The world of minds is, however, a far more august and glorious field of such contemplation. Minds are as much superior to matter, as thought and volition are superior to extension and solidity; and are the end for which matter was formed. The material creation is a sumptuous palace. Minds are its inhabitants; without which the mansion, with all its furniture, would be empty, solitary, and useless.

In the world of minds all the sources of admiration and enjoyment are found in still higher degrees. They are endlessly diversified in thought, purpose, and action; and hence furnish to the eye novelty, presented to its view in an eternal succession. Minds are also intensely and divinely beautiful. Virtue, the beauty of the mind, derives this peculiar character from the gentle, serene, and sweet affections; and is of all attributes incomparably the most delightful. In a single mind it is capable of diversities incomprehensible by us. What then must be its varieties in the whole intelligent creation! All these, it must be remembered, are varieties of beauty only; as light in all its different colours is still the same glorious element.

At the same time, minds are the noblest specimens of created greatness. This is especially seen in mag-

nanimous affections, elevated sentiments, sublime conceptions, and the exalted actions to which they give birth. Even in the present world we are not absolute strangers to these illustrious objects. Heaven is the native country of all that is beautiful and magnificent. Virtue here exists in every beautiful, every noble form. Whatever is trifling, little, and low is here precluded for ever. Here are seen and studied the beauty of the cherub, the dignity of the seraph, and the greatness of the archangel. Here also the Messiah presents, in a manner capable of being understood by sanctified minds, the excellence and glory of Jehovah, the effulgence of the Sun of righteousness, reflected, softened, and brought down to the comprehension of a limited understanding. All these objects, it is to be remembered, are seen in heaven by minds invested with new powers of discernment, and with an equally new as well as intense delight in the contemplation of the objects themselves.

The providence of God will become a still more glorious field of knowledge to the righteous in the future world.

The providence of God is the end for which the creation exists. Creation is merely a collection of means; immensely magnificent indeed, an astonishing display of contrivance, a sublime proof of almighty agency, but by itself inexplicable, and useless. In providence, worlds do not barely exist, but operate to desirable purposes, and become the means of created wisdom, virtue, and happiness. In providence minds do not barely possess being; but understand, design, act, love, and enjoy. Here the reasons are found why such beings have existed in such places, times, and circumstances, and were endued with such powers and faculties. Here also is seen the government of God, exerted over them, and the wisdom and goodness employed in his various dispensations. Providence therefore is the fairest and best display of infinite perfection.

In this world we are children standing on the bank of a mighty river. Casting our eyes upward and downward, along the channel, we discern the various windings of its current; and perceive that it is now visible, now obscure, and now entirely hidden from our view. But, being far removed from the fountain whence it springs, and from the ocean into which it is emptied, we are unable to form any conceptions of the beauty, usefulness, or grandeur of its progress. Lost in perplexity and ignorance we gaze, wonder, and despond. In this situation a messenger from heaven comes to our relief, with authentic information of its nature, its course, and its end; conducts us backward to the fountains, and leads us forward to the ocean.

This river is the earthly system of providence: the Bible is the celestial messenger: and heaven is the ocean in which all preceding dispensations find their end.

In that glorious world, no revelation will be needed to illumine the thoughts of its inhabitants concerning the Divine administration. While they were here below, they thought as children, they spake as children, and they reasoned as children; but now they have become men, and have left behind them all their childish imperfections. Once they 'knew in part;' now they 'know even as they also are known.' Possessed of superior vision, the eye will here, with a direct and undeceiving survey, trace from the beginning the glorious dispensations of its Creator towards the various inhabitants of his boundless empire; will see them rise from little fountains, and, enlarging by continual additions, become mighty rivers. In all their progress they will see good, both moral and natural, produced without intermission, and increasing without end; while the glory of the uncreated mind, dawning on the original darkness with a beautiful lustre, 'shines' perpetually 'more and more unto the perfect day.'

Here God will be seen as he is. Here also he will, in a sense, be all that is seen. In his presence created glory will fade, and be forgotten.

In heaven the mysteries of the present world will be finished. Every being and event will appear to have been known and chosen from the beginning, and to have been a proper part of a perfect system. It will be seen, that nothing was defective, and nothing superfluous; that sparrows fell to the ground, and that the hairs of our heads were numbered, according to the dictates of infinite wisdom. In a word, reasons of sufficient importance will be disclosed, why everything was as it has actually been; and why the universe was not formed of different materials, or conducted in a different manner.

In the intelligent kingdom, particularly, will these delightful things be eminently visible. The knowledge, virtues, and actions of saints and angels will be the fairest images, the brightest copies, of supreme perfection; a resemblance which, through age succeeding age, will become more beautiful, more lovely, more divine. With the improvement of their excellence will his providence towards them exactly correspond; and, as their character becomes more exalted, his dispensations will assume a continually increasing splendour. The character of a great and wise prince is most effectually learned from the wisdom of his laws, the arrangement of his officers and their employments, the magnificence of his court, the mildness and equity of his government, and the high honour voluntarily rendered to him by all his subjects. Thus the character of Jehovah will be seen in the glory of his residence, the dignity and virtue of those who surround his throne, the wisdom of their destination, offices, and employments, their reverence for his perfections, their devotion to his service, the rewards which they receive from his hand, and particularly in the characteristical nature of his government, by which all things will improve, refine, and brighten for ever.

This knowledge of the righteous in heaven will be extensively acquired by contemplation. For this employment they will be most happily fitted by the superior vigour of their minds, by the vastness of the field opened to their view, by the delightful nature of the objects which it contains, and by the endless opportunities furnished for it in the progress of duration.

What they will acquire from this source, their mutual communications will mightly enlarge. The different generations of the righteous, will unfold to each other those providential dispensations of God to his church of which they have severally been witnesses; their own difficulties and temptations; their faith and hope; their perseverance and triumph; together with all the manifestations of mercy, which they received in the present world. 'Into these things, angels' also will 'desire to look:' for they will discern by means of 'the church the manifold wisdom of God.' From them will men, in their turn, learn with transport the dispensations of God in the heavenly world throughout all its past ages

In this manner will the eye behold the events of all preceding periods, brought together from every part of the universe, concentrated in one luminous point, and formed into an image, intense, exact, and beautiful beyond imagination.

Christ is the light of heaven, as well as of the present world. He has taught us, that he will 'feed his followers, and lead them to living fountains of waters.' He will furnish them with that knowledge which is the true food of the mind, and to slake their thirst for improvement, will lead them to the fountains of eternal wisdom, from which they shall drink for ever. The perfections and pleasures of the uncreated mind he will eternally unfold; and direct them, throughout all the ages of heaven, in the paths of truth, virtue, and enjoyment. The instructor will be their Saviour. The disciples will be those whom he has redeemed from perdition with his own precious blood. Think what must be the instructions of such a Teacher, what the improvement of such disciples.

It ought to be added, that in heaven, testimony will completely assume its proper character. Safe from error and incapable of deceit, perfectly exact and completely adequate, it will command assent equally with demonstration. Distrust, the wall of partition between intelligent beings, will be finally broken down; and confidence, unmingled and unalloyed, will resume its place. What a history will this testimony unfold! It will be the history of virtuous minds, of angels, of the Redeemer, of Jehovah; of his boundless wisdom and beneficence; of their virtue and salvation!

2. Another employment of the righteous will be to glorify God.

Under the preceding head it has been observed, that in the natural and moral creation, and in the system of providence, God will, in a sense, be all that will be known; and that the intelligence, virtue, and enjoyment of the heavenly world will be an immense and endlessly varied display of divine perfection. It was also observed, that God will be seen as he is.

With these views of his character, the heavenly inhabitants will render to him supreme and unmingled reverence. He will appear in his proper character, infinitely great and majestic, but divested of all those terrors, amid which he has so often manifested himself in the present world. He will no longer have 'his way in the whirlwind, and in the storm,' nor be surrounded by a flame of devouring fire. These were manifestations made to sinners; and will never be repeated in the heavenly world. That 'fear of the Lord which is wisdom,' that 'fear of the Lord which is a fountain of life,' will rise spontaneously and delightfully in every mind, when it fixes its eye on the greatness and purity of Jehovah, at once infinitely awful and lovely: while the 'fear,' which 'bringeth into bondage,' will by 'perfect love be cast out' for ever. This reverence is a delightful and exalted emotion, an ennobling exercise of piety, and the proper regard of a virtuous creature towards the majesty and purity of his Creator.

They will also render to God supreme admiration.

In all the works of creation and providence it will be their everlasting employment to trace, with a scrutinizing eye, the manifestations of divine wisdom. This attribute they will find exhibited in the endless multitude of beings and events, their attributes and their operations, the fitness of each to its place and purpose, their perfection as parts of a mighty whole, the symmetry with which they are arranged, the skill with which they are directed, the greatness and glory of the end to which all are destined, and the perfection of the manner in which it is accomplished. The field of study is immense, the investigation will be eternal; and at every step their admiration will rise higher and higher, without end.

Another exercise of these happy beings towards their Creator will be supreme love.

Their benevolence towards God will be supreme, as being the sum of all existence, compared with which the creatures whom he has made are nothing. To his glory, and the prosperity of his designs, their good-will will occupy 'all the heart, and all the soul, and all the strength, and all the understanding.' They will regard him with unlimited complacency, as the being in whom exists and operates, and shines, whatever consummate virtue can approve and love. They will render to him intense and unmingled gratitude, as the source of boundless good to a boundless multitude of beings; good felt by each in his own bosom, with astonishment and rapture.

Equally entire will be the confidence exercised by the celestial inhabitants towards the Author of their blessings.

'The truth of God, will there be seen to be 'as the great mountains;' and 'his word for ever settled in heaven.' The soul will rest on the faithfulness of its Maker as 'the Rock of ages,' and on the mercy of its Redeemer, as 'the corner stone laid in Zion; the sure foundation, tried, and precious.' The object will be perfect, the confidence will be entire.

In a former Discourse concerning the nature of evangelical faith, or confidence, I have remarked, that there seems not to be, in the nature of things, any science, properly so called, of the character of spirits, beside that which is possessed by the infinite mind. It is the prerogative of Omniscience to look directly upon the hearts of spiritual beings, and to see the nature of their thoughts as they exist. Created minds learn the character of each other by experience. When they uniformly speak truth, they are believed to be characteristically sincere. When they uniformly exhibit faithfulness, they become characteristically objects of confidence. In the same manner they learn the character of the Creator.

The mysteries which in this world have perplexed their views concerning the dispensations and character of God, will there be finished by a complete disclosure of their nature, tendencies, and ends. It will there be clearly discerned, that in every case God proposed and accomplished that which was fittest to be done; that which, in the possession of clear, unprejudiced, unerring views, their own minds pronounce to be worthy of the universal Ruler. This conviction will preclude every doubt, every fear, concerning his future dispensations. The perfection of the past will be admitted without a question, as complete evidence of the perfection of the future. The soul therefore will cheerfully yield itself with implicit confidence to the guidance and conduct of its Creator throughout the never-ending progress of duration.

To the strength and growth of this emotion (than which none is more delightful, more excellent, or more

improving), the daily administration of the heavenly system of providence will mightily contribute. The emanations of forgiving, redeeming, and sanctifying love, and the smiles of infinite complacency, will on the one hand warm their hearts with gratitude, and on the other invigorate and enrapture: with a confidence forbidden by no law, confined by no bounds, and capable of no excess.

From all these views and emotions in the minds of the heavenly inhabitants, will flow their everlasting praise.

The praise of the mind, as every one will easily see who reads with attention the various songs contained in the Scriptures, is formed by the combination and exercise of the attributes which I have mentioned. Of this the praise of the lips is only the expression. To the Omniscient, it is obvious, no external worship can be necessary. The eye which looks into the mind with an intuitive view, sees in the union of just thoughts and virtuous affections, particularly in the combined efforts of piety to glorify its Author, an altar erected, and an oblation made, of the purest incense, and the sweetest of all perfumes. This offering is, however, perceptible to no other being. The ends for which external religious services are enjoined are, to make powerful impressions on the mind of the worshipper, and to awaken powerful sympathy, and increase devotion, in many minds by participation. For these ends, it is presumed, it exists in every world where religious worship exists, and will unquestionably hold a distinguished place in heaven. There, the Scriptures teach us, united praise will be offered up to God throughout the ages of eternity. This was the peculiar worship of paradise: it is the peculiar worship of heaven.

With immediate reference to this religious employment, the followers of Christ are said to be made by him 'priests unto God.' Every glorified spirit will there be a divinely commissioned minister of religion, whose proper business it will be to offer this pure and fragrant oblation for ever. The glorious character of God—a forgiving, redeeming, and sanctifying God—his wonderful works of creation, and the astonishing dispensations of his eternal providence, will intensely occupy, and delightfully engross, the minds of these happy beings. In the celebration of these, the first of all themes, will the souls, voices, and harps of the heavenly inhabitants unite with harmony and transport. 'The four living ones, the four-and-twenty elders, the innumerable company of angels, and the great multitude, which no man can number, of all nations, kindreds, and tongues,' will mutually kindle with devotion and ecstasy, while they resound the everlasting song; 'Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come! Amen. Blessing, and glory and honour, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne and unto the Lamb for ever and ever!'

From the same views and affections will spring the active service which the redeemed will render to God in the future world.

Heaven is styled 'the temple of God' (Rev. vii. 15), to denote the character of its inhabitants, as being all virtuous, and their employments as being all sacred. In this temple, it is said, 'they serve God' religiously, 'day and night;' to denote that, however they may be employed, their minds are in a perpetual state of devotion. Wherever they are, piety is their predominating character. Still, the Scriptures plainly appear to teach us, that their employments are not merely those which are involved in the word *worship*.

The redeemed are made 'kings,' as well as priests, 'unto God; and will reign with him for ever and ever.'

In the sentence of approbation pronounced upon them immediately after death, it is declared, that they shall be rulers over many things; as well as that they shall 'enter into the joy of their Lord.' They have 'overcome;' and, according to the promise of Christ, will 'sit with him in his throne, even as he overcame, and is set down with his Father in his throne.' Whatever difference of opinion may exist concerning the exact meaning of these declarations, there will, I presume, be no doubt concerning their general import. That they indicate high dignity of character, station, and employment, will not, I think, admit of a dispute.

In the universe, the immense kingdom of Jehovah, order, in the perfect sense, extends from the infinite Ruler, through all the gradations of virtuous beings, down to the humblest of its inhabitants. In such an empire, the services necessary to this order, and the accomplishment of the purposes for which it is established, are of necessity endless in their multitude, and sufficiently comprehensive to furnish his own part to every virtuous being. For this part each individual was formed and destined; and both his faculties and attainments were so directed by the divine prescience, as to qualify him to act in it, in a better manner than any other being. Thus no individual will be useless, forgotten, or unemployed. Every one will labour in his own place, and will perform the duties of that place in the happiest manner.

The system fills immensity, and endures through eternity. The plans, persons, faculties, attributes, and employments are fitted by supreme wisdom to the extent of the system. Ample room therefore is here furnished for the operations of every virtuous being; a boundless scope for every endowment, acquisition, and effort.

In this vast kingdom the redeemed will fill the honourable stations indicated by the passages quoted above, and by the character delineated in the preceding Discourse; and will be designated to employments of superlative honour and glory. They are sons, and kings, and priests, to God the Father. They are brethren of Christ, and joint heirs with him to the heavenly inheritance. Angels are their 'fellow-servants, and of their brethren.' They will therefore be united with angels in the magnificent employments which I have attributed to them in the second Discourse concerning these illustrious beings.

Of the happy agents who are thus employed, it is to be observed, that many who are now last and humblest in the mediatorial kingdom, will then be exalted to stations of peculiar distinction; as those 'angels who kept not their first estate,' will become the last and lowest of all intelligent creatures. The meek and humble virtues will then rise to their own proper estimation; and, while they shine with their inherent lustre and beauty, will be seen and acknowledged as copies pre-eminently lovely of the meek and lowly Redeemer.

In the exercise of these offices there will be no emu-

lation, jealousy, nor hatred. The system will be planned by God himself, and acknowledged with reverence and delight as his perfect work. In it wisdom will be displayed, and goodness operate, without limits. The single employment will be to do good, and glorify its Author.

3. Another employment of the redeemed will be to befriend each other.

Heaven is the world of friendship; of friendship unmingled, ardent, and entire. The disinterested love of the gospel dwells here in every bosom. Selfishness, since the ejection of the fallen angels from these delightful regions, has been here unknown and unheard of, except in the melancholy tidings which have reached the happy inhabitants, of its deplorable effects on our apostate world. Here every individual, in the strictest sense, fulfils the second great command of the moral law, and literally 'loves his neighbour as himself.' No private, separate interest is even proposed. A common good is announced by the voice of God; so great as to comprise all individual happiness; so arranged, as to furnish every one his proper portion, the part which he is to fulfil, and the means by which he is to act in it with absolute efficacy; and so noble, as to fix every eye, engross every heart, and summon every effort. It is a good, involving not only all that can be acquired, but all that can be wished, all that can exist. This great truth is also admitted with perfect confidence by every celestial mind. Every individual completely realizes the import and the truth of that glorious declaration of Christ, the foundation of all pure and lasting good, whether personal or social, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' Under its influence, all the hearts and hands, all the mighty faculties and unwearied efforts of the heavenly inhabitants are completely occupied in doing good. To what a mass must this good arise, where the work is carried on by saints and angels, in the great field of heaven, throughout the endless ages of duration!

As there are here no separate interests, and no selfish affections, there can of course be no jealousy, hatred, nor contention. Every individual will feel that his own place and portion are contrived by the wisdom which cannot err, and the love which cannot endure; that they are necessary and desirable parts of a perfect system of good; that no other being could so well fill the station which he occupies, and that he could not so well fill any other station. In a word, he will see that, had the whole arrangement of providence been left to his own choice, he should have chosen exactly what God has chosen for him. All his wishes therefore, all his views, will be satisfied.

Thus, wherever the mind roves through the immense regions of heaven, it will find, among all its innumerable millions, not an enemy, not a stranger, not an indifferent heart, not a reserved bosom. Disguise here, and even concealment, will be unknown. The soul will have no interests to conceal, no thoughts to disguise. A window will be opened in every breast, and show to every passing eye the rich and beautiful furniture within.

In this world of depravity, where the man who knew it better than any other, speaking with the voice of inspiration, could say, and say with obvious propriety, 'A faithful man who can find?' a few friends, nay, even one, is regarded as an invaluable treasure. In that world all will be friends; and the soul will, like the happy regions in which it dwells, contain ample room for the admission of all.

At the same time this friendship will endure for ever. No degeneracy will awaken alarm and distrust, no alienation chill the heart, no treachery pierce the soul with anguish. No parent will mourn over an apostate child, and no child over a profligate parent. No brothers nor sisters will be wrung with agony by the defection and corruption of those who, inexpressibly endeared to them in this world by the tender ties of nature, and the superior attachments of the gospel, have here walked with them side by side in the path of life, and have at length become their happy companions in the world of glory. Husbands and wives also, here mutually and singularly beloved, will there be united, not indeed in their former earthly relation, but in a friendship far more delightful; and, wafted onward by the stream of ages, without a sigh, without a fear, will become in each other's eyes, more and more excellent, amiable, and endeared for ever. That the redeemed, who have been known to each other in the present world, will be mutually known in heaven, I have shown in a former Discourse. That this knowledge will prove the means of mutual happiness, cannot be doubted. At the same time it is to be remembered, that their characters, universally excellent, their stations, universally honourable, and their employments, universally useful, will be endlessly diversified; so as to present to every eye worth, beauty, and glory, in forms always peculiar, and with loveliness always new.

Of the several ingredients which constitute this happiness of the redeemed, and which have been mentioned in these Discourses, it is to be universally observed, that they will be continually progressive towards higher and higher perfection. Concerning him, whose name is called 'Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Father of the everlasting age, and the Prince of peace,' it is declared, that 'of the increase of his government and of his peace there shall be no end.' The word government here denotes the administration itself, and the displays which it involves of the greatness, wisdom, and goodness of the Ruler. Peace often denotes in the Scriptures prosperity; and here intends the whole happiness of his subjects. Their residence, their bodies, their minds, their knowledge, their virtue, their stations, their employments, and their enjoyments, will form a system of glory and of good, refining, brightening, and ascending for ever. Their possessions will be rapturous, their prospects will be ecstatic.

To the eye of man the sun appears a pure light; a mass of unmingled glory. Were we to ascend with a continual flight towards this luminary, and could, like the eagle, gaze directly on its lustre; we should in our progress behold its greatness continually enlarge, and its splendour become every moment more intense. As we rose through the heavens, we should see a little orb changing gradually into a great world; and, as we advanced nearer and nearer, should behold it expanding every way, until all that was before us became a universe of excessive and immeasurable glory. Thus the heavenly inhabitant will, at the commencement of his happy existence, see the divine system filled with magnificence and splendour, and arrayed in glory and beauty; and, as he advances onward through the successive periods of duration, will behold all things more and more luminous, transporting, and sun-like for ever.

SERMON CLXXII.

CONCLUSION.—GENERAL REMARKS.

Hear! for I will speak of excellent things; and the opening of my lips shall be right things.—Prov. viii. 6.

In a long series of Discourses I have now gone through a System of Theology. I have considered the existence, character, decrees, and works of God—the creation, and primitive state of man—his apostasy, and condemnation—the state of human depravity, and the impossibility of justification by our own righteousness. I have inquired at length into the character of Christ—the offices which he sustains as Mediator—the justification which we obtain by his righteousness, and the faith, by means of which we are justified—the character of the Holy Spirit—his agency in our regeneration, the nature and necessity of that work; its antecedents, attendants, consequences, and evidences—the law of God, the principal precepts into which it is distributed, and the principal duties which they require—the nature of our inability to obey the law, and the manner of our restoration to obedience. I have also discussed the means of grace; and exhibited a view of the church, its officers, and duties. Finally, I have examined the nature of death, and its consequences; particularly the resurrection, and judgment, and the retributions of the righteous and the wicked.

Thus have I brought my original design to a termination. As a natural and proper close of the whole, I propose to make some general remarks on this great subject in the following Discourse.

In the text, mankind are commanded to listen to the things spoken by the wisdom of God, because they are 'right and excellent things.' So far as the present purpose is concerned, it is of no consequence whether we suppose these things to be spoken by the wisdom of God, literally understood; or by Christ, elsewhere called the wisdom of God, and generally, and in my view justly, considered as speaking throughout this chapter. The things here referred to are the things contained in the Scriptures. All these were spoken by the wisdom of God. All also were spoken by the Spirit of Christ, who inspired alike the writers of the Old and New Testament. Hence the Old Testament is called the Word, and the New, the gospel of Christ. (See Col. iii. 16; and 2 Cor. iv. 4.)

These things are in the text said to be 'right and excellent.' An attempt has been made, in the progress of these Discourses, to exhibit the most important of these things in a regular scheme to the view of this audience. It has been my design to exhibit them as they are actually contained in the Scriptures, and to let the sacred volume speak its own language. This design I have watchfully pursued, and I hope faithfully. There was a period in my life at which I regarded human systems of theology with more reverence than I can now justify, and much more than I am willing should be rendered to my own. 'Let God be true, but every man,' who wilfully contradicts his declarations, 'a liar!'

In studying the Scriptures, to which, as a theological employment, those who hear me know I have for a long time been in a great degree necessarily confined, by the peculiar state of my eyes, I have found no small difficulty in permitting them to speak for themselves. I have found texts in them, in various instances, thwarting opinions which I had entertained, with little or no suspicion that they could be erroneous. Such opinions, by an authority which I durst not oppose, I have been compelled to give up. Whether I have adopted better in their place, is yet to be determined. One consideration furnishes me with a satisfactory hope that what I have taught is, substantially at least, the truth of God. It is this: the system contained in these Discourses is, in substance, the same with that which is found in almost every Protestant creed and confession of faith, and with the scheme adopted in every age by that part of the Christian church which has gained everywhere the appropriate name of orthodox. There is another consideration from which I derive a similar hope: it is the system under the preaching of which, almost exclusively, the religion of the heart, whose genuineness is proved by its evangelical fruits, has revived, prevailed, and prospered. I will therefore for the present occasion only assume it as granted, that it is, in substance, the system of the Scriptures; and is therefore formed of the 'right and excellent things' mentioned in the text. Regarded in this manner, it furnishes a just foundation for the following

REMARKS.

1. How superior is the system of divine truth, contained in the Scriptures, as exhibited in this manner, to the moral schemes of philosophy.

The ancient philosopher, with scarcely an exception, and in my view without one, were polytheists, sceptics, or atheists. When they speak of God, in the singular number, they either intend the God universally, or the chief of them; not the one living and true God, made known in the Scriptures, and now acknowledged without a question by the Christian world. The miserable consequences of both atheism and polytheism have heretofore been summarily stated in these Discourses, and have been so amply presented to us by the page of history, as to satisfy the doubts of all incredulity, which does not proceed from choice. These gods of philosophy were all finite beings, universally limited in their attributes and operations. All of them also were deeply tinctured with the folly and vice of men. Not a virtuous being was found among them; not one, of a connexion with whom a Christian, nay, even a sober man, would not have been ashamed. At the same time they were engaged in continual hostilities against each other. They were indeed immortal; but were universally born as men are, were governed by the same self-

ish views, pursued similar employments, and derived their happiness from similar sources. The gods of Epicurus found their enjoyment in quiet, apathy, nectar, and ambrosia.

Some of these philosophers, when they spoke of God in the singular number, taught that his substance was fire; some, that he was a compound of the four elements, fire, air, earth, and water: some, that the sun was God; others, that God was the soul of the world, animating it as the human soul the human body; some, that the το παν, or the universe, was God, and that all things are only parts, or branches, of this universal Being; everything which we see being supposed by them to partake alike of the divine nature, and to be literally a part of God. This, as you know, was afterwards the doctrine of Spinosa. Zeno declared ether to be God; and Chrysippus, heaven. Marcus Antoninus addresses a prayer to the world. Seneca declares 'men to be fellows or companions, and members of God.' Epictetus, also, advises persons, when they are feeding, or exercising, to consider, that 'it is a god whom they feed and whom they exercise.' Many sects of them also held that there were *two* principal gods; the one good, the other evil.

Concerning the origin of the world, they seem universally to have held the doctrine, that matter was eternal. Some of them supposed that the beings in it were made by a divine power, which they denoted by the name Δημιουργος. Epicurus, and his followers, taught that 'all things owed their present state of existence to the casual aggregation of atoms.' Others supposed them to have existed in an eternal series. Others still, attributed their existence to destiny, fate, or necessity. None of them, so far as I have observed, considered the universe as created by the power of God.

Of providence their apprehensions were equally various and imperfect. Some of them, as the Epicureans and others, absolutely denied that God governed the world at all. Others supposed that an imperfect and limited providence, parted into shares among all the gods, was exercised within their respective limits by them all; but more extensively by the being whom they considered as supreme than by the rest. In this superintendence of earthly objects they were considered as often opposing each other, and as engaged at times in mutual abuse, and violent contentions. The providence actually exerted, some philosophers supposed to be confined to heaven, and in no respect concerned with the affairs of men. Those who believed providence to be extended to this world, with very few exceptions, considered it as employed about its great and general concerns only, and denied wholly its interference with those of individuals. Some of them, indeed, imagined that the gods were sometimes curious about individuals, and suspected that they might in some instances superintend the great affairs of great and distinguished men; but almost all of them appear to have supposed that the allotments of mankind are parceled out, and that the good and evil which they experience are determined by fortune, necessity, chance, or fate.

Moral good almost every one of them considered as produced by every man for himself, and not at all by the gods. Cicero, speaking in the person of Cotta, says, 'The gifts of fortune are to be asked of God; but a man is to expect wisdom only from himself;' and this he declares to be the judgment of all mankind. 'Who,' he asks, 'ever gave thanks to the gods for being a good man?' Accordingly, many of the ancient philosophers considered the wise man as being independent of the gods; and in some respects as even their superior.

Their views concerning the origin of evil were idle and indefensible. Some of them supposed it to be derived from pollution acquired in a pre-existing state; a scheme demanding the same explanation as its existence in the present state. Others attributed it to the connexion of the soul with the body; supposing matter to be the seat of moral turpitude. Others ascribed it to the evil deity; who, as they imagined, had sufficient power to bring it into existence, in spite of the good one.

Equally delusive and unfounded were their apprehensions concerning the manner of expiating sin, and cleansing the soul from its pollution. Socrates, with a vigour of investigation unprecedented and unrivalled in the annals of philosophy, advanced so far as to doubt whether it were possible for God to forgive sin. Generally, they taught that the safest way was for all men to adopt the religious system of their ancestors, and to rely on the established modes of expiation: these were sacrifices, oblations, prayers, penance, processions, pilgrimages, and ablutions. Their ideas of reformation seem rarely to have extended so far, and never farther, than common sobriety and decency of manners. Virtue, in the proper and evangelical sense, they plainly did not understand. Some of them, as I have heretofore observed, declared ambition, or the love of glory, to be virtue; some, the external observance of their religious ritual. Some placed it in imbibing one, and some in adopting another, scheme of philosophy, or what they were pleased to call wisdom. Some supposed it to consist in courage. Others believed it to be that *amor patriæ* which prompted the inhabitants of one country to carry fire and sword, death and desolation, into another.

Their views concerning the worship of God were wonderfully gross. Almost universally they supported the existing worship. This, as you know, was composed of a multitude of unmeaning superstitions, of human sacrifices, making voluntary incisions in the flesh of the worshippers, the ravings of a temporary frenzy, and the practice of unlimited pollution.

The morals of these men were even more unsound than their religion. A great part of them permitted fraud, falsehood, war undertaken for conquest or glory, profaneness, anger, revenge, filial impiety, parental unkindness, unlimited lewdness, unlimited pride, ambition, and suicide. Of all these doctrines, taken together, it is to be observed, that they never made a single good man; nor would they, if they were now to be embraced with the whole heart, and to control absolutely the whole life, constitute the subject of them a virtuous or praiseworthy being.

Concerning a future state, their conceptions were deplorably lame. A multitude of them denied such a state. The Stoics, and Epicureans, who encountered Paul at Athens, mocked him, and styled him a babbler, because he preached to them Jesus, and the αναστασις, or future state. Of those who did not deny it, some doubted, others conjectured, and others still, faintly and waveringly believed it. The views which they formed concerning it, particularly concerning its enjoyments, were very gross. Generally, the rewards which they assigned to the virtuous were the gratifi-

cations usually coveted in the present life, stripped of the inconveniences which attend them here. Pleasant fields and fine weather, songs and garlands, nectar and ambrosia, were the entertainments of their Elysium. As they knew not what virtue was, it is not wonderful that they could not devise proper enjoyments for the virtuous.

How immense is the distance between these things, and the system of religious truth which you have here been taught from the Scriptures. Here, as the foundation on which the system is erected, you find exhibited the self-existent, eternal, immutable, almighty, omniscient, and omnipresent Jehovah; infinitely wise, just, good, merciful, faithful, and true; the Creator, Preserver, Benefactor, and Ruler of the universe; by whose command all things came into existence; by whose hand all are preserved, governed, and blessed; to whom all intelligent creatures are accountable; and by whom all will be judged according to their works. The law by which this glorious Being rules the creatures whom he has made, you have seen to be perfect; divinely excellent in its nature, and infinitely desirable in its design. You have seen man, originally possessed of spotless purity, apostatizing from his Maker in the very same manner which we daily apostatize; coveting natural good, which he could not lawfully possess; and, forgetful for a time of his duty to God, yielding himself up to the wish for the prohibited enjoyment. Condemned for this transgression by the sentence of the law which he had broken, it became impossible for him to be justified by his own works, or to be restored to the favour of him, 'who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity.' In this situation you have seen the Son of God descend from heaven; become a substitute for man; expiate his sins on the cross; and, re-ascending to heaven, intercede for his deliverance. The way for his justification is thus completely opened. But man, too obstinate a sinner to embrace even these means of life, would be ruined, if we were left here. Accordingly, you have seen the Spirit of Truth enter this world on the professed design of renewing the soul, and infusing into it a disposition to return to God and its duty. The change you have seen to be essential; the very change which he needed to experience—an actual renovation, a resumption of the character which he had lost. By the same divine Guardian he is conducted also through the manifold dangers and difficulties which in this world continually arrest even Christians themselves; and under this conduct he is enabled, notwithstanding all his ignorance and folly, temptations and enemies, to persist in the progress which he has happily begun, and finally to obtain the promised reward.

You have heard the law of God explained throughout all its most important precepts; and have seen it require every human duty and forbid every human transgression, in thought, word, and action. You have seen the heart exhibited as the seat of both sin and holiness. The nature of that holiness, the virtue of the Scriptures, the moral character on which the omniscient eye looks with complacency, has been presented to you as consisting in supreme love to God, and universal good-will to mankind; as the energy of the soul, employed wholly in glorifying God, and doing good. The nature of sin, its opposite, has been explained to you as consisting in a disposition to pursue, supremely and exclusively, a private, separate interest, opposed to God, and hostile to his intelligent creation.

The inability of man to obey this law, the subject of such extensive altercation, has been exhibited to you as consisting merely in the disposition or inclination of the mind; and the means of renewing our ability to obey, have been shown to be repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ; the rational, the indispensable, the only possible means of this restoration. The means also of obtaining these attributes, commonly called the means of grace, have, it is believed, been set before you in such a light, together with the character and duties of those by whom they are to be used, and of those by whom they are to be administered, as to show their reality, divine appointment, and indispensable subserviency to the great design of salvation.

Finally, you have been taught the nature of death, as an important part of the great providential system; its immediate consequences in the intermediate state of the soul; the resurrection, the judgment, the miserable end of the wicked, and the glory of the righteous, beyond the grave.

The schemes of infidel philosophy concerning these great subjects, I have elsewhere exhibited; and have not time to repeat them here. It will be sufficient for the present occasion to observe, that they have added nothing which is material to what was taught by the ancient philosophers, beside what they have borrowed from the Scriptures. They have not, indeed, in many instances been polytheists; and the Bible has compelled them to speak more decently concerning the Creator; though I think with less appearance of reverence, than many of their predecessors. But their religion and morals, so far as they have proceeded from their own minds, have not been a whit more rational, more pure, or less deserving of severe animadversion, although perhaps somewhat more speciously taught, than those of the ancients.

Compare now the systems which I have summarily spread before you. How obvious, how universal, how incomprehensible, is the difference between them! They set out with Jehovah at the head of one, and Jupiter, accompanied by the herd of heathen gods and goddesses, at the head of the other. The distance between these two objects of contemplation is kept up, so far as the nature of the several subjects is susceptible of it, throughout every succeeding part of the respective schemes. The character, the works, the law, the government, the worship, are in the one case those of Jehovah, the Builder of the universe, the infinite Ruler, the Judge of the quick and the dead, and the final Rewarder of the righteous and the wicked. In the other they are those of Jupiter, the son of Saturn, the brother of Neptune and Pluto, and the husband of Juno, his sister; born in the island of Crete: dethroning his father, sharing his empire with his brothers; the father of a numerous race of gods and men; controlled by fate, sustaining his own life by eating, drinking, and sleep, passionate, petulant, revengeful, disappointed not unfrequently of his wishes and designs, lewd, gratified by the number, variety, and smell of his sacrifices; his character dependent and fluctuating; his government a succession of expedients and fetches. Trace both these schemes from the beginning to the end, and you will find these representations fair portraits of them both. The distinction between them,

which is formed by the different views which they contain of the character of God, runs through every part of the two systems, and cannot but be marked by a considerate eye in all the several branches. The scheme of providence; the views of virtue and vice: the means of restoration to the divine favour, of justification, and acceptance; the precepts of piety and morality, the worship, the final judgment, and the future state, are all suited in the one case to Jehovah; and in the other to Jupiter, united with the group of gods and goddesses.

II. *We are furnished with powerful evidence, that the Scriptures are a revelation from God.*

These different systems actually exist. One of them is actually found in the Scriptures. The others are all professedly, as well as really, schemes of human philosophy. For this difference between them there is a cause. What is that cause?

It is not the superiority of native talents. This infidels themselves will acknowledge. There is not, so far as I know, any reason to conclude, that any group of human beings have possessed greater native talents than can be found among the learned Greeks and Romans. Besides, we find the same system, in substance, exhibited by all the writers of the Old and New Testament. It certainly will not be pretended, that all these were superior to Homer and Aristotle, Cicero and Virgil, in original vigour of mind.

It cannot be superiority of education.

The arts and sciences of the Greeks and Romans were certainly far more advanced than those of the Jews. On moral subjects only do they write like children, and teach doctrines which children in this country, who are able to write at all, would be ashamed either to teach or believe. On all other subjects they write like men, and like men of capacious and superior minds. Even on moral subjects they write in one sense like men. The childish character they discover in embracing these errors; while in defending them they manifest the utmost strength and ingenuity of the human intellect.

At the same time, David, Amos, Christ, Matthew, Mark, John, James, Peter, and Jude, were all uneducated peasants; unpossessed of a single advantage of education which is not enjoyed by the plainest, humblest people of this State, and destitute of some which they enjoy.

It is not the advantage of prior instruction, derived from men of superior minds, whose wisdom and sublime discoveries they imbibed, and retailed to succeeding generations.

I admit that the Greeks were, to a considerable extent, obliged to form their own philosophy on these subjects. But Moses and Job (whom I consider as the author of the book which bears his name), are the two earliest writers whose works are now extant; and these men enter directly upon the subjects in question, with the same clearness and precision, with the same purity and sublimity, which are found in those who follow them. The same Jehovah reigns in their works, the same scheme of creation and providence, the same system of morals and religion, which prevail everywhere throughout the Scriptures.

Should it be said, that Moses was 'educated in all the learning of the Egyptians;' it is readily acknowledged. But it must be acknowledged also, that the Egyptians had no such doctrines as these. The laws and government of the Egyptians appear to have been wise, and deserving of respect; while their religious philosophy was puerile and contemptible.

Should it be said, that the Persian and Hindoo writings are in some instances prior in time to those of Job and Moses; I answer, that this is said gratuitously, without the least support from evidence. But should it be granted, it will not at all affect the point in debate. The Brahminical and Persian systems are even more absurd and childish than those of the Egyptians and Greeks. All of them contain some just and sublime doctrines; but they are blended with such a mass of despicable rubbish, as to prove, on the one hand, the immeasurable superiority of the scriptural system to them all; and on the other, that those who have delivered the superior parts of them to us, were not the discoverers of these just and sublime doctrines; but received them traditionally from revelations communicated to men of preceding ages.

It is here to be observed, that these philosophers, of every country, and of every age, differed endlessly from each other, concerning those parts of their respective systems which were of primary importance, as well as concerning others. The two most important of all subjects of contemplation are God and the supreme good. Concerning the former of these, Varro, who probably knew better than any other ancient, declares, that there were three hundred different opinions. In other words, there were three hundred different gods of the philosophy with which he was acquainted. Concerning the latter, the diversities of opinion among the same men were, as he asserts, two hundred and eighty-eight. If they differed in this manner concerning these all-important objects, it will be easily believed, that in forming a system, into every part of which these must enter as constituent materials, they must differ in a similar manner. Accordingly, they differ, contend, and contradict each other with respect to almost everything which has been called philosophy. Nor is this discordance found in different sects of philosophers only, but in different members also of the same sect, and in different discourses of the same writer.

How opposite to all this is the appearance of the Scriptures! They were written during the whole progress of fifteen centuries, with no considerable interval, except that between Malachi and Matthew; and were therefore liable to all the diversities of opinion which could be supposed to arise during this long period in a single nation, from any source whatever. There were at least one hundred writers and speakers concerned in them, as teachers of divine truth. They were of all classes of society, from the prince to the peasant. The modes in which they wrote may be considered as involving all those in which men have thought it desirable to write, except such as are professedly fictitious. The states of society and the spheres of life in which the writers lived, and the occasions which called forth their several compositions, were at least equally numerous and diverse. Still, an entire harmony runs through them all. Amos the herdsman, Matthew the toll-gatherer, and John the fisherman, exhibit the same just, clear, extensive, pure, and exalted views of divine subjects, the same religion, the same morality, and the same scheme of salvation, with those of Moses and Paul, notwithstanding all their learning, and those of Daniel, and Isaiah, David and Solomon, notwithstanding the high rank which they held in human society.

It is farther to be observed, that the scriptural writers have taught all which mankind at present know concerning morals and religion. There is no rule of faith and no rule of practice known by men at the present time, and fairly defensible, which is not either expressly declared, or unquestionably implied, in the Scriptures.

It cannot here be said, that these defects of philosophy arose from the want of sufficient numbers engaged in the pursuit of this great object; or of sufficient zeal, industry, and exertion on the part of those who were engaged. The number of men embarked in this pursuit was prodigious. Success in it was a source of distinction, coveted by kings and emperors. The zeal with which it was prosecuted was accordingly intense, and the labours employed in it extended through a long succession of ages.

For this mighty difference between the schemes of philosophy, and the system of the Scriptures, no infidel has hitherto accounted, and no rational account, it is presumed, can be given, not involving a cause, which if adequate to the effect, will be more difficult of admission, more miraculous, than inspiration.

SERMON CLXXIII.

CONCLUSION.—GENERAL REMARKS.

Hear! for I will speak of excellent things; and the opening of my lips shall be right things.—Prov. viii. 6.

In the preceding part of this Discourse, after recapitulating the great subjects, adopted as parts of a theological system in the series of Sermons, then brought to a close, and making a few observations on the import of the text, I proceeded to make some general remarks on the subject at large.

I. I considered *the superiority of the moral scheme of the Scriptures, which I had so long been employed in unfolding to this audience, to the moral schemes of philosophy.*

II. I mentioned, *that this view of theology furnished powerful evidence of the revelation of the Scriptures.*

I shall now proceed to finish the Discourse with two other remarks, which I had not then sufficient time to consider; and observe,

III. *How well does the theology of the Scriptures merit the diligent investigation of every man furnished with an enlightened education.*

In periods not long past, a great proportion of those who were liberally educated in this country, regarded extensive attainments in theology as being of the highest importance to the completion of their literary character. Nor is the date very distant, when the same views prevailed among the Protestant nations on the eastern side of the Atlantic. Many laymen may be mentioned, whose theological acquisitions would have highly adorned the desk, and might justly have been coveted by clergymen of distinguished reputation. It is hoped that the spirit which gave birth to these attainments is reviving.

But it must be confessed, that for a considerable period the disposition to become versed in theology has declined; and for a period of indefinite length has been too low not to excite a serious regret in the mind of a wise and good man. Clergymen are often censured, and it is to be feared in too many instances justly, for their want of sufficient knowledge in this science. Almost all laymen, even those of enlightened minds, and extensive acquisitions, are lamentably defective in their acquaintance with theology. Perhaps I should not wander far from the truth were I to observe, that among the judicious farmers of this country, particularly among those most addicted to reading, there is a more extensive and a more accurate knowledge of the doctrines and precepts of Christianity, than among most men who have enjoyed the advantages of a superior education.

Many causes have undoubtedly operated to the production of the ignorance of which I complain. Among these I shall at the present time specify the three following:

1. The want of that customary application to theological science among learned men, which would of course recommend it to those who followed them.

The neglect which has been specified above, and which has grown out of many co-operating causes, has itself become a powerful cause of generating similar negligence. Every rising generation is, to a great extent, controlled by that which went before. Peculiarly is it true, that customary opinions and practices possess this control. Whatever is generally adopted, especially by enlightened men, is naturally supposed by such as are young to be founded in wisdom and truth, and is therefore customarily followed with little examination. The youths of the present generation, seeing their superiors in age and understanding negligent of theological science, easily believe that it merits little attention from themselves. The subject they do not examine, but are satisfied with merely following this example. Persons destined to the ministry are supposed to addict themselves to this science, because it is indispensable to their future profession, and to the reputation, and even the subsistence, which it is expected to furnish. The examples of these persons has therefore no influence on others. Clergymen also are supposed to commend their own science, either from necessity, or decency; and, however able judges, are regarded as being interested, and therefore partial. Hence their recommendations have comparatively little weight. Were liberally educated laymen generally to make extensive attainments in theology an important part of their acquisitions, there can be no reason to doubt, that those who succeeded them would addict themselves to this science with a good degree of zeal and industry. The truth of this opinion has been amply supported by experience. In the former times to which

I have alluded, the customary application of men in all the liberal professions adopted in enlightened countries to divine knowledge, forced the same application on such as followed them, and that through a long period. Nor could even the progress of licentiousness exterminate the custom except by insensible degrees.

2. The same evil has been extended and prolonged not a little by the ridicule so assiduously thrown upon this subject by infidels.

These men have long arrayed themselves against Christianity. Their warfare they have carried on in every manner which has promised them the least success, and with a spirit worthy of the best cause. Arguments, learning, and facts they resorted to, until they became hopeless. When these failed; they had recourse to ridicule, sneers, and other expressions of contempt; clearly discerning that on young minds, especially, these weapons would prevail, where more honourable modes of attack would be powerless. 'Ridicule,' says Voltaire, a perfectly competent judge of this subject, 'will do everything; it is the strongest of all weapons. A *bon mot* is as good a thing as a good book.' Whatever is ridiculed, young minds are prone to think ridiculous; and nothing has been so much ridiculed as Christianity. Its Author was styled by the infidels to whom he preached, 'a gluttonous man, and a wine-bibber; a friend of publicans and sinners;' and the system of doctrines and precepts which he taught has in modern times been loaded with epithets equally destitute of justice and decency. In truth, there is no employment more absolutely without any foundation in good sense, none more sottish, none more contemptible, than that of ridiculing Christianity. Still it has had, and will hereafter have, its wretched influence on giddy, puerile minds. The sting will be felt, dreaded, and shunned; and the least effect which it can be supposed to have on such minds, will be to discourage them from studying the doctrines and embracing the precepts of the Scriptures.

3. The introduction of ignorant and separatical preachers into the desk, has had extensively the same unhappy influence.

Among all absurdities there is none perhaps more preposterous than that presented to us, when we see ignorance and vulgarity, enthusiasm and vociferation, seated in that desk, which ought to be exclusively appropriated to dignity and learning, wisdom and piety. Law, it is true, has its pettifoggers, and medicine its empirics; and both are means of deeply degrading the professions in which they appear. But these men are never employed in unfolding the truth of God, nor in pointing out the path to heaven. The sense of their unfitness for the business in which they act, though strong, is less deeply felt; their appearance, less public and regular; and the association of them in the mind with the sciences, into which they intrude, less uniform, alloying, and offensive. The knowledge which ignorance is publicly employed to teach, will, of course, be believed to be narrow indeed. The employment in which vulgarity is summoned to preside, will be regarded as possessing a strong tincture of debasement. The application of these remarks to the case in hand is sufficiently melancholy, and the more so, because the situation of this country, at least, holds out no immediate or adequate remedy. So long as men will rather hear bad preachers than support good ones; so long as they choose to drag out the hours of public worship in hearing folly, instead of learning wisdom; so long as deplorable avarice induces them to resign the desk into the hands of ignorance and impudence, the evil will exist, and must be borne.

The appearance of such men in the character of teachers of religion insensibly, but almost irresistibly, entails upon theology itself a character derived of course, from the men themselves. They are ignorant, vulgar, uncouth in their demeanour, coarse in their elocution, clumsy in their language, and full of mistakes in their opinions; halt lamentably in their constructions of Scripture; dissuade, rather than convince, by their arguments; and are yet vain, arrogant, censorious, magisterial in their decisions, and grossly calumnious towards those from whose opinions they differ. With all these characteristics, they still appear as teachers of religion; a religion of which, in the speculative sense, they know almost nothing, and in the practical sense, there is too much reason to fear, still less. In this character the mind is prone, in spite of itself, to associate them, not only with other and better teachers, but also with the religion which they profess to teach. In such a case it is not easy to avoid uniting with this subject, in a greater or less degree, these wretched characteristics of those with whom we see it united; or to avoid regarding it with some degree of that contempt and loathing with which it is impossible to fail of regarding these men.

It is highly honourable to the memory of those men by whom New England was planted, that they brought with them a body of ministers, distinguished not only for their piety, but also for their learning and wisdom; and that immediately after their establishment in this country, they founded a college expressly for the purpose of perpetuating among their descendants a ministry possessed of these attributes. It is to the honour of their descendants that they founded other seminaries, as from time to time they were necessary, for the same purpose, and that they have regularly and strenuously demanded these attributes in those who were candidates for the desk. No class of men has in any age since the colonization of this country possessed more learning than the clergy of its own churches. The episcopal church has also regularly demanded the same education in those whom it has destined to the pulpit. I wish the same observations were equally true of other churches.

When therefore ye look at these unauthorized intruders, and feel the regret and the disgust which perhaps you cannot avoid; turn your eyes to men of a superior character in the same office; not a small number of whom would be ornaments of any profession, and are actually ornaments of human nature. Let their wisdom and worth become an overbalance for the infirmities of these, and prove the means of effectuating in your minds a just reverence for the religion of the gospel. Look also beyond the Atlantic; and remember that Usher, Leighton, Butler, Berkeley, Jeremy Taylor, Jewel, Tillotson, Sherlock, Owen, Doddridge, Watts, and a long train of others, both in ancient and modern times, men who stand in the first rank of human intelligence, spent their lives in the study of theology; and that it was the glory of Bacon, Boyle, and Newton, of Grotius, Locke, Addison, Jones, and

Johnson, to be enrolled among the friends and supporters of the Christian religion.

The true reasons for which we should addict ourselves to the pursuit of any science, are the pleasures which it may yield, and the profit to which it may conduct us. With respect to theology, both these reasons lend their whole force, to encourage our most diligent and persevering researches.

1. The science of theology is capable of yielding more pleasure to the mind than any other.

The pleasures which science is capable of yielding to the mind, are addressed both to the imagination and the understanding. Of both these kinds of pleasure theology is eminently productive.

The pleasures conveyed to the mind through the imagination are derived from such objects as are new, various, beautiful, refined, great, and noble; and the more these attributes prevail, the more capable are the objects in which they are found of yielding this species of pleasure. But in no field of human pursuit are objects found in such numbers, and of such uniformity, which are invested with these attributes, or possess the power of yielding this pleasure in the same degree. In vain will you search for objects equally beautiful with multitudes which are presented to you in the Scriptures; with paradise and its inhabitants; with the innumerable and most delightful variegations of excellence which adorn the angelic character; with the endlessly diversified manifestations of kindness, compassion, and good providence of God towards his children; the grateful and unaffected effusions of their piety to him; the delightful scenery, if I may so style it, of the millennial world, drawn with such unrivalled elegance by several of the prophets, and particularly by the pencil of Isaiah; the charming features of a virtuous character, depicted by Christ and his apostles; and the wonderful exhibition of the future prosperity of the church, arrayed in glory and beauty, by the hand of St John.

The Scriptures are the native region of sublimity, both natural and moral.

'The single volume of the Scriptures,' says Sir William Jones, one of the best judges whom the world has ever seen, 'contains more and higher specimens of this excellence, than all the remains of Grecian and Roman antiquity united.' The God of the Scriptures is an object infinitely sublime; and, wherever he appears, whether his character is exhibited, or his actions are recited, he appears with power, wisdom, and goodness, glory and majesty, to which nothing is equal, nothing second. The works of God, here recounted, are possessed of a splendour suited to his character. The creation, the deluge, the wonders of Egypt, the Wilderness, and Canaan, the miracles attendant upon the death, resurrection, and ascension of the Saviour, the resurrection, the conflagration, the future judgment, and future existence of the righteous and the wicked, are objects compared with which all other events which have entered into the conceptions of man shrink into nothing.

In moral beauty, greatness, and glory, the Saviour stands alone. 'How beautiful,' says the prophet Isaiah, 'are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings; that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good: that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth.'—'Unto us,' says the same prophet, 'a Child is born; unto us a Son is given; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Father of the everlasting age, the Prince of peace.'

On this divine subject I have no room to expatiate; and shall only observe, that the Scriptures themselves have done more justice to it than can within the same compass be done a second time; when they inform us that Christ is 'the light of heaven,' and 'the effulgence of the divine glory.'

Not less distinguished is this science for the power which it possesses, and the means which it furnishes for refining the views and the taste of man. On the one hand, the Scriptures forbid everything which is impure and licentious; and, on the other, effectually discourage everything which is gross and grovelling. To accomplish this combined purpose, they commenced their efforts in the only efficacious manner, viz., purifying the affections of the heart. Wherever these are gross and debased, the imagination will be gross, and the taste debased. So universally is this true, that no advantages of education, no superiority of talents, no acquisition of learning, no refinement of society, have hitherto had sufficient power to purify the fancy and the taste, where the affections had been yielded to licentious indulgences. A gross heart will delight in gross objects; and on these objects, so long as they are relished, the imagination will love to dwell. Elegance of mind grows out of the refinement of the heart. It is hence, that the sentiments of Paul and John, of Peter and James, their images, and their language, are immeasurably removed from the gross efforts of heathen antiquity. Had Cicero's Oration for Cælius, or the third Eclogue of the polite and elegant Virgil, formed a part of the sacred volume, either would have furnished an argument against their inspiration, which all succeeding ages could never have refuted; and infidelity would long since have gained a final triumph over the gospel.

In the Scriptures we are presented everywhere with those objects which, more incomparably than any other, originate and establish refined affections, spotless views, and dignified excursions of the imagination. By a continual correspondence with the precepts of the gospel, the affections are gradually, and in a sense instinctively, purified. By a frequent recurrence to its sentiments and imagery, the imagination is exalted, and the taste wrought into elegance, as silver is beautified by the hand of the burnisher. By conversing with noble objects, the mind is ennobled in a manner and to a degree which will admit no parallel, is estranged from everything low and little, assumes insensibly a portion of the celestial character, and directs its flight, unceasingly, towards heaven.

On the variety and consequent novelty of objects everywhere presented by the Scriptures to the imagination, it is unnecessary here to expatiate. Both are unceasing, both are endless; and as they are successively unfolded to rational beings, will regularly enhance their enjoyments throughout the ages of eternity.

There is another and very important view in which this subject demands our consideration. Theology spreads its influence over the creation and providence of God, and gives to both almost all their beauty and sublimity. Creation and providence, seen by the eye

of theology, and elucidated by the glorious commentary on both furnished in the Scriptures, become new objects to the mind; immeasurably more noble, rich, and delightful, than they can appear to a worldly, sensual mind. The heavens and the earth, and the great as well as numberless events which result from the divine administration, are in themselves vast, wonderful, frequently awful, in many instances solemn, in very many exquisitely beautiful, and in a great number eminently sublime. All these attributes, however, they possess, if considered only in the abstract, in degrees very humble and diminutive, compared with the appearance which they make, when beheld as the works of Jehovah. Mountains, the ocean, and the heavens, are majestic and sublime. Hills and valleys, soft landscapes, trees, fruits, and flowers, and many objects in the animal and mineral kingdoms, are beautiful. But what is this beauty, what is this grandeur, compared with that agency of God, to which they owe their being? Think what it is for the almighty hand to spread the plains, to heave the mountains, and to pour the ocean. Look at the verdure, flowers, and fruits which in the mild season adorn the surface of the earth; the uncreated hand fashions their fine forms, paints their exquisite colours, and exhales their delightful perfumes. In the spring his life re-animates the world; in the summer and autumn his bounty is poured out upon the hills and valleys; in the winter, 'his way is in the whirlwind and in the storm; and the clouds are the dust of his feet.' His hand 'hung the earth upon nothing,' lighted up the sun in the heavens, and rolls the planets, and the comets through the immeasurable fields of ether. His breath kindled the stars; his voice called into existence worlds innumerable, and filled the expanse with animated being. To all he is present, over all he rules, for all he provides. The mind, attempered to divine contemplation, finds him in every solitude, meets him in every walk, and in all places, and at all times, sees itself surrounded by God.

How superior are the works of creation and providence, when considered in this manner, to the highest conceptions formed by a worldly mind, which merely looks at the things themselves; and with a folly, a stupidity which is extreme, stops short of their Author! How enhanced is their beauty! how exalted their sublimity!

The pleasures yielded by science to the understanding, are derived extensively from the same sources which furnish so much delight to the imagination: for the understanding also finds exquisite pleasure in that which is new, beautiful, and sublime. At the same time it is peculiarly delighted with such views as expand the intellectual powers, and with such objects as are seen to possess fitness for valuable purposes, the symmetry of parts happily arranged in a system, the rectitude apparent in their own nature, and their utility to moral beings, and to the universe.

Many sciences are without a question sufficiently extensive to employ and exhaust all the efforts of the intellect. This is true of mathematical and metaphysical science, of natural philosophy and astronomy, medical science, law, and civil policy. It is hardly necessary to observe, that this is eminently true of theological science, which has for its object the character, word, and works of God; the nature of man, his apostasy, his restoration to the divine kingdom, his virtue, existing as a principle, and operating practically in all his duties to God, his fellow creatures, and himself; the character, offices, and kingdom of the Mediator; the character of the Holy Spirit, and his agency in renewing and sanctifying man, and in conducting him to endless life; and that boundless scheme of dispensations, which controls all human concerns in the present world, and beyond the grave, directs the existence of men and angels, their employments and their allotments, for ever.

At the same time, theology is conversant, more than all other sciences, with that which is beautiful, and that which is sublime: I mean with that which is seen to be such by the intellect, and not merely that which is felt to be such by the imagination. The truths of theology are without limits conversant with moral excellence; and are extensively employed in unfolding to man whatever is lovely and dignified in the intellectual nature. There is no beauty or dignity of mind but virtue; and there is no virtue but that which is evangelical. It is noble and lovely when, in its fairest forms, it is seen in such beings as we are. In angels it is sublime and wonderful. In Jehovah it is exalted not only above all conception, but 'above all blessing and praise:' a summit which, receding beyond the utmost reach of finite minds, will, as they ascend through the endless succession of ages, rise higher, and higher, and higher, for ever.

As the student of theology travels over the scheme of creation and providence, disclosed distinctly to his view by the light of revelation; as he wanders especially through the moral world, and sees the objects which are presented to him continually new, beautiful, and exalted; as his prospects exceedingly expand, as his conceptions perpetually ascend, he is everywhere delighted, unless he is incapable of being delighted, with the splendour of moral excellence, shining upon him from every direction, investing every object with glory and beauty, and raising his thoughts concerning the Creator and his kingdom to greater and greater heights while he lives. In this respect, momentous and delightful beyond measure, all other sciences are comparatively limited, humble, and insignificant.

Nor is theology less distinguished by its tendency to make the student useful both to himself and his fellow men. To ourselves the highest point of utility is to become wise and good; to others, to establish in them the same character. The tendency of other sciences to accomplish these ends is at the best feeble and remote; that of theology is direct, and efficacious. How many persons, even in humble life, and possessing very limited views, have become virtuous by studying the Scriptures. The nobleness of the Bereans was obtained, undoubtedly, as well as exhibited, in searching this sacred volume with diligence and candour; and hence they were prepared to receive the preaching of the gospel 'with all readiness of mind.' The effects produced upon them will be found by others; and, there is the best reason to believe, will ever be found. By a solemn, daily, earnest intercourse with the truths of the gospel, the mind, not improbably in all cases, becomes habitually sober; purified from gross thoughts, furnished with those which are refined and noble, imbued with an increasing relish for that which is great and good, and withdrawn from that which is little, sordid,

and selfish. There is every reason to believe, that great multitudes of mankind have already become Christians merely by reading the Scriptures, sent so extensively through the world by the British and Foreign Bible Society.

Virtuous men are, essentially, the only useful men to others; the only men whose usefulness will extend its efficacy into the regions of future being, and promote the interests of immortality. Compared with this, all other usefulness is narrow and momentary. To 'save a soul from death,' and to 'cover a multitude of sins,' is to be a benefactor indeed, and to expand beneficence through eternal ages. Such men are also the essential benefactors to their fellow men in the present world; those from whom wise counsels, important kind offices, solid consolations, and beneficial examples are derived. Accordingly, to such men are regularly confided, in almost all cases where it can conveniently be done, the protection and the management of the important private concerns of those around them, when these things demand the assistance of others beside those who are immediately interested. There is no case of such a nature, where the superiority of virtuous men is not felt and acknowledged. To such men he who has a just cause will refer it; he who leaves children will commit them to his guardianship; he who makes a will, will constitute them his executors; he who is in distress will look to them both for assistance and consolation.

Among the modes in which laymen versed in theological science have been eminently useful to mankind, to elucidate and defend Revelation and its doctrines, and to enforce the observance of its precepts, and thus to contribute universally to the establishment of truth and righteousness, and the divine kingdom in the world, is one of the highest moment. The concerns of religion have, in most countries and ages, been left too exclusively in the hands of ministers. Ministers, it is to be remembered, however able, however faithful, are comparatively few in number; and are therefore ill-matched with an enormous multitude of opposers. Ministers also are regarded, and ever will be regarded, not only by their open enemies, but by all the stupid, worldly, cold-hearted men, as saying and doing, whatever they say or do, either for the defence or advancement of Christianity, officially; from necessity, imposed on them by a regard to their reputation; from prejudice in favour of doctrines which they have long taught; from party attachment to those with whom they have been long professionally united; and from selfish wishes to provide subsistence for themselves and their families. All these things can be said with some appearance of truth; and, however groundless, cannot always be satisfactorily refuted. None of them are, however, applicable to laymen, when employed in the same cause. They will ordinarily be acknowledged to act in this case from real conviction, under the influence of no necessity, without any particular attachment to party, without prejudice, without bias. The numbers also, and often their employments and character, are or may be such as to set at defiance the whole violence, the contempt, and the sneers of irreligious men.

Accordingly, many laymen have rendered to revelation services of the highest importance. The names of Bacon, Boyle, Newton, Locke, and Grotius; of Pascal, Addison, Johnson, Littelton, and West; of Jones, Teignmouth, Bryant, Sharp, and Wilberforce, together with many others, will be had in everlasting remembrance, as champions of truth and righteousness, illustrious supporters of Christianity, and glorious instruments of piety and salvation to mankind. What a sanction to this employment did Grotius leave at the close of his life; when, referring to his absorption in learning of other kinds, and lamenting that he had not devoted his days wholly to religion, he exclaimed, 'Heu! vitam perdidi, nil operose agendo!' 'Alas! I have lost life in laboriously doing nothing.' Who was ever an abler judge of this subject? In what circumstances could a judgment be more evidently sincere?

Nor ought it to be forgotten, that laymen, by assuming their proper part in the support of Christianity, awaken and increase a just sense of their own duty as the friends of the Redeemer; realize that his cause lies upon them, as well as upon ministers: and feel the importance of thinking, planning, and acting vigorously in his behalf. That in which we take no other concern than what is experienced in contemplation, will never be very near to our hearts. Its importance may be coldly acknowledged, but it will awaken neither interest nor efforts. When we begin to act, we begin to feel. Were laymen to act more generally and more vigorously in the cause of Christianity, its interests would come home to their hearts; and they would speedily become more virtuous and more useful members of Christian society.

I have dwelt thus particularly on this subject, not only because of its inherent importance, but also because it has not, within my information, been brought into the desk; and because there is no place where it can with more propriety be introduced than in this, and no audience to which it can with more propriety be addressed.

IV. *How solemnly does the scriptural system of doctrines and precepts demand the cordial reception of every man to whom it is published!*

Every one of those who hear me is a creature of God—an accountable creature, an immortal creature. Every one is bound to the grave, and the judgment. Every one is a candidate for heaven or hell. To every one life is a day of trial. On your conduct in this life is suspended your destiny in that which is to come.

All of you also are sinners. You have offended God. You have broken his most holy law times innumerable, with a bold hand, a hard heart, and a blind mind. By that law you are condemned, and cannot be justified.

Your sins also are gross and dreadful; not perhaps scandalous, and such as cover you with infamy, but such as have been committed in the meridian day of the gospel, against the dictates of an enlightened conscience, against blessings of high moment, daily and hourly renewed. Ignorance of your Lord's will you cannot plead, for you have known it from early life. Leisure for understanding it, books, instructions, motives, have been supplied to you with a munificent hand. Your allotments in life have been mercifully distributed by the great benefactor. He has called to you with a voice of unspeakable kindness. He has charmed you with continual testimonies of parental love.

In these circumstances, and amid so many inducements to hear and to obey, the Saviour of mankind has placed himself directly before your eyes, suspended on the cross, and expiring in agonies, to atone for your

sins, and to reconcile you to God. He has offered to you himself and all his blessings; and of you he has required nothing, but cordially to receive him. Instead of listening, there is but too melancholy reason to believe you have turned a deaf ear and a blind eye to all that he has said and done. He has called, but you have refused. To what has he called you? To purification from sin, to forgiveness, to sanctification, to the attainment of the everlasting love of God, to the possession of heaven, to the blessings of immortal life.

But he knew that your hearts were harder than the nether millstone. He therefore sent his holy and good Spirit into the world, to enlighten your minds, to convince you of your guilt and danger, to unfold to you the divine excellence of the Redeemer; and by the renovation of your hearts to persuade you to embrace him, as he is offered to you in the gospel. A thousand times has this glorious agent awakened in your minds a solemn sense of their worth and their immortality, led you to serious reflections on your guilt, excited in you alarming apprehensions concerning death and the judgment, and prompted you to sober resolutions of repentance and reformation.

All these benevolent efforts you have resisted. All the grace of the gospel, all the benevolent offers which Christ has made you, all his merciful invitations and promises you have rejected. On his cross you have cast contempt. To his character you have been hostile. You have 'grieved the Spirit of grace.' You have 'wronged your own souls.'

Still you are bound to eternity. You must die; you will be judged; you will be 'rewarded according to your works.' 'Consider this, ye that forget God; lest he tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver.'

In this solemn, this exposed situation, immeasurably interesting to every one of you, what measures will you take? Remember that, whatever you may think proper to do, God will take his own measures. You may wish that he would do otherwise. You may hope, you may believe, you may determine, that he will bend his purposes so as to make them more palatable to you. Under this determination, and with these hopes, you may feel yourselves safe; and say, Peace, peace, when there is no peace.' Like Agag, you may exclaim, 'Surely the bitterness of death is past;' when you are on the point of being 'hewed in pieces.' The providence of your Maker, whatever you may wish or believe, will move on uninterruptedly and immutably to the accomplishment of every one of his purposes; and of those which respect your salvation and your perdition, as truly as any other. When you come to the regions of woe, with what anguish will you look back upon your present life, and wish that you had now listened to the calls of mercy; that you had been roused from this sleep of death, and obtained life from the hands of the Saviour!

It is not necessary that every one should be learned in theology; but it is necessary that every man should be a Christian. The souls of the learned and the unlearned are alike immortal, and are alike destined to endless happiness or endless misery. How will you acquire this glorious blessing, and escape this absolute ruin? There is but one path which has hitherto conducted, there is but one path which will ever conduct mankind to eternal life. This has been pointed out by the finger of God, and was never discovered by human philosophy. The cell of philosophy is dug beneath the ground; is dark, cold, and comfortless; and was never visited by the sunshine of heaven. The miserable rush-light which glimmers along its walls, scarcely enables this goddess of man's creation to distinguish her own footsteps around the dreary cavern, and shows no avenue to the world above. Here no celestial messenger ever arrived, and no tidings from that world were ever announced. Here God is neither worshipped, loved, nor known; the voice of mercy was never heard; and salvation was never proclaimed, sought, nor found.

The gospel, at an immeasurable distance from this desolate mansion, is the garden of Eden in its pristine beauty. Here Jehovah manifests himself in the Shechinah: as of old, 'he caused the glory of his presence to dwell at the east of Paradise, above the cherubim.'* Here his answers are given to the inquiring penitent. Here angels are again heard 'praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest; peace on earth; and good-will towards men.' Here the 'Saviour is born,' and publishes the 'glad tidings of great joy.' Here the Spirit of grace fixes his divine abode, and sheds piety, and peace, and faith, and hope upon the assembly of the first-born. Here, finally, commences 'the highway of holiness,' which leads directly to the regions of immortality.

Who in this house can contemplate these things without the strongest emotions? Who can behold his all at hazard, his soul, his eternal well-being at stake, without inexpressible anxiety? Life and death, both eternal, are here the objects of choice. Whose bosom must not thrill, whose heart must not throb, when, famishing with thirst and perishing with hunger, he hears a voice from heaven, calling directly to himself, 'Ho! every one that thirsteth! come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk, without money, and without price. With what transport will he learn, that the voice which conveys this delightful invitation is the voice of the Son of God! Must not his soul expand with ecstasy to see the almighty arm of this glorious Person stretched out to seize him, while walking on the brink of perdition, and convey him to the world of joy?

On the brink of perdition every sinner in this house is walking at the present moment. The only way back to eternal life, the only safety, the only hope, is found in the gospel. 'Strive,' then, with all possible earnestness, 'to enter in at the strait gate' which stands at the head of this delightful path. Now the gate is open; soon to you it will be shut. Now the path is illumined by the Sun of righteousness; soon it will be lost in interminable darkness. Now heaven invites you to 'enter in, and be saved;' soon its doors will be closed for ever. Now God is reconcileable to you; the Saviour proffers himself and all his blessings, to your acceptance; and the Spirit of grace is waiting to renew you to repentance. How soon will all these blessings retire beyond your reach; the hope of salvation set, to rise no more; and the voice of mercy be dumb for ever!

* Gen. iii. 24, paraphrased by the Targums.

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